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The Institute of Biblical Studies

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## Articles



## Donne straniere nel libro di Rut e nell'inizio del libro dei Proverbi (capp. 1–9)

Foreign Women in the Book of Ruth and in the Beginning of the Book of Proverbs (1–9)

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**ABSTRACT:** The texts of Prov 1–9 and Ruth present the reader with contrasting visions concerning the relationship with the ‘other.’ In spite of the still-open extensive debate on the identification of the female figure described in Prov 1–9, it seems fairly certain that both texts can be ascribed to the post-exilic period and thus fall within the issue of mixed marriages, which can be read at various levels: religious, identity, economic, also thanks to the elaboration of an extensive exegesis of the biblical texts.

**KEYWORDS:** foreign woman/women, mixed marriages, Ruth, Post-Exile, extensive exegesis, identity, conflict

**PAROLE CHIAVE:** Donna/e straniera/e, matrimoni misti, Rut, post-esilio, esegesi estensiva, identità, conflitto

Questo articolo nasce nel contesto di un Simposio internazionale nel quale sono stati presi in considerazione personaggi femminili che rientrano nella categoria dello “straniero”, ad esempio, la vedova di 1Re 17, Rahab, la storia della concubina del levita. Adesso aggiungiamo ulteriore materiale alla riflessione proponendo il confronto tra altre donne straniere come Rut, la Moabita e quelle che si trovano nell’Introduzione al libro dei Proverbi (1–9).

Preciso subito che l’analisi che propongo non sarà esaustiva per diversi motivi, ad esempio perché la discussione relativa all’identificazione della figura della donna straniera in Pr 1–9 è ancora aperta e inoltre perché l’analisi di tutti i testi che si riferiscono a lei sarebbe troppo lunga. Avendo dichiarato i limiti del presente contributo, espongo fin dall’inizio qual è l’ipotesi euristica che guida la mia ricerca e i presupposti ermeneutici che la sostengono. Partendo da questi ultimi, io leggo il testo nella sua forma finale e canonica, senza entrare nel complesso e spesso ipotetico processo di formazione dei libri biblici. In secondo luogo, l’analisi, seppure rapida, che propongo, è orientata alla teologia, e non tanto all’aspetto filologico, storico, sociologico, ecc., anche se farò alcuni cenni a queste questioni.

Chiarisco infine qual è l’ipotesi euristica che ha guidato la mia ricerca: nella Bibbia ebraica Proverbi e Rut sono due libri contigui e in essi compaiono donne straniere, rispettivamente in Pr 1–9 e nel rotolo di Rut. Sono testi diversi, rispettivamente un libro poetico e un racconto, eppure ci offrono un’interpretazione differenziata del medesimo tipo umano, la donna straniera. Mentre la donna straniera di Pr 1–9 è caricata di tutte

le negatività possibili, Rut è invece presentata in modo estremamente positivo, come vedremo. Si potrebbe dire che la questione relativa al problema, o valore, o significato che assume la donna straniera riceve risposte diverse e complementari in questi due libri, come avviene pure in altri casi, si pensi, ad esempio, al ruolo che svolge Ninive nel libro di Giona e in quello di Naum. Si potrebbe suggerire l'idea che la risposta a domande complesse non è mai né semplice né univoca, anzi, forse non assume nemmeno la forma di una risposta, ma piuttosto quella di un appello al discernimento, che è sempre necessariamente contestuale.

Chiarite queste premesse di tipo ermeneutico e metodologico, procederò in maniera semplice: nella prima parte concentrerò l'attenzione sulla figura della donna straniera in Pr 1–9, mentre nella seconda, più brevemente, presenterò la figura di Rut, terminando con alcune considerazioni di carattere teologico.

## 1. La donna straniera in Pr 1–9

### 1.1. Interpretazioni di questa figura

Sintetizzando (e anche semplificando) una discussione ampia e diversificata, la domanda relativa all'identificazione della donna straniera in Pr 1–9 ha ricevuto varie risposte:

#### a) Approccio simbolico

In Pr 1–9 si fronteggiano due donne: donna sapienza e la donna straniera, entrambe figure metaforiche; in particolare, la seconda è associabile a qualunque tipo di devianza rispetto alla comunità e alla sua tradizione, espressa da donna sapienza. La donna straniera sarebbe un'immagine letteraria usata come figura di contrasto nei confronti della donna sapienza. Le due donne sarebbero metafore che rappresentano sistemi etici contrapposti. Su questa interpretazione tradizionale, sostenuta da molti autori<sup>1</sup>, tornerò in seguito.

#### b) Approccio religioso: una divinità

Gustav Boström<sup>2</sup> ha interpretato la donna straniera di Pr 1–9 come una fedele al culto di Ishtar associato alla prostituzione sacra<sup>3</sup>; Richard J. Clifford<sup>4</sup> ha compreso invece questa figura come il riflesso di divinità straniere femminili del Vicino Oriente Antico. La donna sarebbe una rappresentazione di pericolose divinità femminili presenti nella mitologia antica; Clifford si sforza inoltre di identificare tali miti nel background del libro dei Proverbi.

1 Menzioniamo, ad esempio, J.-N. Aletti, "Seduction et parole en Proverbes I–IX", *VT* 27/2 (1977) 129–144; A. Bonora, "La 'donna straniera' in Pr 1–9", *RStB* 6 (1994) 101–109.

2 G. Boström, *Proverbiastudien. Die Weisheit und das fremde Weib in Sprüche 1–9* (Lund: Gleerup 1935).

3 Urs Winter (*Frau und Göttin. Exegetische und ikonographische Studien zum weiblichen Gottesbild im Alten Israel und in dessen Umwelt* [OBO 53; Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag 1983] 613–625) ha suggerito una variazione dello stesso tema, ipotizzando che si tratti di un ritratto archetipico della donna straniera nell'AT.

4 R.J. Clifford, *Proverbs. A Commentary* (OTL; Norwick: SCM Press 1999) 48, 70–72, 84–90.

Un'altra variazione sullo stesso tema è stata proposta da Ralph Marcus<sup>5</sup>, il quale considera la donna straniera l'allegoria di una religione straniera.

### c) Approccio lessicografico degli aggettivi זר e נכרי

Alcuni autori<sup>6</sup> hanno analizzato dal punto di vista lessicografico gli aggettivi in questione, suggerendo l'idea che la donna non sia straniera, bensì un'Israelita adultera che si è resa un'estranea a motivo del suo comportamento immorale. Altri autori, sempre all'interno della medesima prospettiva, hanno suggerito variazioni sul medesimo tema. Ad esempio Crawford Howell Toy, ammette che זר e נכרי, quando appaiono insieme nell'AT indicano uno straniero; tuttavia, a suo giudizio, il ritratto della donna straniera in Pr 1–9 assomiglia maggiormente a quello di un'adultera e ritiene che זרה significhi “comportamenti strani”, e נכריה, “moglie di un altro uomo”<sup>7</sup>. Roger N. Whybray, nel suo commentario a Proverbi, traduce נכריה “donna avventurosa, amante del rischio”<sup>8</sup>. Altri autori<sup>9</sup> ritengono che i due termini in questione denotino il suo *status* come moglie di un altro uomo e ritengono che la descrizione del suo comportamento sia quello di un'adultera. Ci sembra che gli autori in questione traducano נכרי “adultera” a motivo di Pr 6,20–35 che descrive un adulterio; viene quindi creato un link non con l'essere straniero, ma con l'estraneità in termini di comportamento sociale.

### d) Approccio storico-sociale

Harold Washington<sup>10</sup> (e Joseph Blenkinsopp<sup>11</sup>) collegano l'idea della donna straniera alla comunità dei Giudei che avevano continuato a vivere in Giudea dopo la caduta di Gerusalemme e che erano stati rigettati da quelli che erano rimpatriati dall'esilio, la *gōlāh*. I vari testi di Pr 1–9 sarebbero da intendere come una campagna contro i matrimoni esogamici del periodo post-esilico. Su questo punto tornerò nella conclusione di questo contributo.

<sup>5</sup> R. Marcus, “On Biblical Hypostases of Wisdom”, *HUCA* 23 (1950–1951) 157–171.

<sup>6</sup> P. Humbert, “Les adjectifs zār et nōkrī et la ‘femme étrangère’ des Proverbes bibliques”, *Mélanges Syriens offerts à M. René Dussard* (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique; Paris: Geuthner 1939) I, 259–266; L.A. Snijders, “The Meaning of zār in the Old Testament: An Exegetical Study”, *OstSt* 10 (1954) 1–154; B. Lang, “rkn”, *TDOT* IX, 425–429.

<sup>7</sup> C.H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs* (ICC; Edinburgh: Clark 1899).

<sup>8</sup> R.N. Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1972).

<sup>9</sup> M. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9* (AB 18A; New York: Doubleday 2000) 120; A. Meinhold, *Die Sprüche* (ZBK 16; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1991) 69.

<sup>10</sup> H. Washington, “The Strange Woman of Proverbs 1–9 and Post-Exilic Judean Society”, *Second Temple Studies. II. Temple and Community in the Persian Period* (ed. T. Cohn Eskenazi – K.H. Richards) (LHBOTS 175; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1994) 217–242.

<sup>11</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, “The Social Context of the ‘Outsider Woman’ in Proverbs 1–9”, *Bib* 72 (1991) 457–473; cfr. anche H.R. Marbury, “The Strange Woman in Persian Yehud: A Reading of Proverbs 7”, *Approaching Yehud. New Approaches to the Study of the Persian Period* (ed. J.L. Berquist) (SemeiaSt 50; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 2007) 167–182.

### e) Approccio femminista

Claudia Camp è tornata sulla figura della donna straniera a più riprese. Sostanzialmente ritiene che i due aggettivi in questione indichino una figura sfaccettata che rappresenta tutte le donne cattive nella comunità<sup>12</sup>. In un altro saggio<sup>13</sup>, la medesima autrice suggerisce invece l'idea che tutte le donne siano come la donna straniera perché sono *outsiders* nell'ordine patriarcale.

Carol Newsom interpreta la donna straniera come un simbolo del “radical other”, un *locus* del conflitto di genere, “the symbolic figure of a variety of marginal discourses”<sup>14</sup>.

L'elenco delle varie interpretazioni potrebbe continuare, menzionando anche curiose variazioni sul tema. Ad esempio Karel van der Toorn considera la donna straniera una persona che ricorre occasionalmente alla prostituzione per poter pagare i voti religiosi che ha fatto<sup>15</sup>.

### 1.2. Conclusione

Chi è dunque la donna straniera di cui si parla in Pr 1–9? A tutt'oggi, come si diceva, non esiste consenso tra gli autori e il dibattito rimane aperto. Personalmente consideriamo poco convincenti alcune ipotesi suggerite in precedenza, ad esempio, la proposta di chi ritiene la donna straniera una divinità, variamente associata alla prostituzione sacra, perché non ci sembra che esistano elementi nel testo che suffraghino questo tipo di lettura. Analogamente ci sembrano forzate le proposte di alcune studiose femministe che arrivano a suggerire che la donna straniera rappresenti chiunque sia altro da sé, che è al di fuori della legge del levirato o dalla casta sociale, che sia, in ultima analisi, una metafora che incarna ogni forma di contaminazione<sup>16</sup>.

In senso positivo, poi, riteniamo ancora condivisibile l'approccio tradizionale, che interpreta la donna straniera in senso simbolico, mentre non ci pare sostenibile la proposta di chi considera la donna straniera una donna ordinaria, seducente, adultera, sposata, che minaccia la famiglia e la stabilità dell'ordine sociale<sup>17</sup> perché questa interpretazione non tiene conto del parallelismo con donna sapienza, presente nel medesimo contesto.

12 C. Camp, *Wisdom and Feminine in the Book of Proverbs* (BLS 11; Sheffield: Almond 1985) 265–271.

13 C. Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy. The Strange Woman and the Making of the Bible* (JSOTSup 320; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2000).

14 C. Newsom, “Proverbs”, *The Women's Bible Commentary* (ed. C.A. Newsom – S.H. Ringe) (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1992) 148–149.

15 K. van der Toorn, *From Her Cradle to Her Grave. The Role of Religion in the Life of the Israelite and the Babylonian Woman* (BibSem 23; Sheffield: JSOT Press 1994) 93–110.

16 Camp, *Wise, Strange and Holy*, 64.

17 T. Forti, “The *isha zara* in Proverbs 1–9: Allegory and Allegorization”, *HS* 48 (2007) 89–100.

## 2. Donna sapienza e donna straniera

In primo luogo, i testi in cui si parla della donna straniera sono i seguenti: Pr 2,16–19; 5,1–23; 6,20–35; 7,5–27, e andrebbero analizzati dal punto di vista esegetico per sostanziare le osservazioni che seguono, anche se noi, come anticipato nel paragrafo introduttivo del presente contributo, ci limitiamo a presentare solo alcune considerazioni che sono il punto di arrivo dell'analisi esegetica. In due testi (2,16<sup>18</sup>; 7,5<sup>19</sup>) compaiono i due aggettivi נכרייה וזרה, mentre in 5,3 la donna è definita זרה<sup>20</sup>, e in 6,24 נכרייה<sup>21</sup>.

In secondo luogo, in tutti i casi, come molti autori hanno fatto notare, la seduzione della donna è legata al suo parlare, non alla bellezza o al fascino. È nei confronti del discorso della donna che il “figlio” è messo in guardia, è il suo discorso che è considerato ingannevole e pericoloso. Ma perché questa preoccupazione per quello che lei dice? I saggi del libro dei Proverbi considerano la lingua uno strumento potente che ha il potere di far vivere e di morire (“Morte e vita sono in potere della lingua e chi ne fa buon uso ne mangerà i frutti”, 18,21), il potere di guarire o di distruggere (“Con la sua bocca il bugiardo rovina l'amico, i giusti con la loro scienza si salvano”, 11,9; “c'è chi chiacchierando è come una spada tagliente, ma la lingua dei saggi risana”, 12,18) e quello di ricompensare o di danneggiare (“Con il frutto della bocca ci si sazia di beni; ciascuno sarà ripagato secondo le sue opere”, 12,14; cfr. anche 18,6–7). Il giovanotto è messo in guardia contro il potere della parola e ha bisogno di discernere tra le molte voci che egli incontrerà durante la sua vita. Sia donna sapienza che la donna straniera parlano, e lo fanno in modo simile, ma opposto (2,10–12; 16–19). Due personificazioni femminili propongono dunque al semplice, all'inesperto, la stessa cosa, ma una augura il bene, l'altra il male. A questo proposito, è significativo che in tre casi<sup>22</sup> si faccia riferimento alla morte e all'oltretomba.

In terzo luogo, sorge spontanea una domanda: come praticare questo atto di dovuto e necessario discernimento? Il testo suggerisce, ad esempio, che la seduzione si può riconoscere dalla dolcezza del tono che la donna usa; il termine הַלְלֵךְ *hālāq* significa “dolce, untuoso” (2,16; 5,3; 6,24; 7,5,21). Quando questo vocabolo è usato per indicare una condotta umana, ha sempre un senso negativo<sup>23</sup>; nella maggior parte dei casi, infatti, הַלְלֵךְ *hālāq* qualifica parole o comportamenti idolatri e sincretisti<sup>24</sup>. Le parole della donna straniera sono dello stesso tipo: si oppongono a quelle dei sapienti che conducono al rispetto di YHWH (2,5a) e hanno delle conseguenze funeste per quelli che la seguono (2,19).

La preoccupazione principale del maestro è di mettere in guardia il giovane nei confronti di tale seduzione, invitandolo a fare discernimento tra le parole, apparentemente molto

18 “Per salvarti dalla donna straniera, dalla sconosciuta che ha parole seducenti”.

19 “Perché ti protegga dalla donna straniera, dalla sconosciuta che ha parole seducenti”.

20 “Veramente le labbra di una straniera stillano miele, e più viscosa dell'olio è la sua bocca”.

21 “Per proteggerti dalla donna malvagia, dalle parole seducenti della donna sconosciuta.” La traduzione CEI segue la LXX, “la donna altrui”, mentre noi manteniamo il TM.

22 Pr 2,18–19; 5,5; 7,22–27.

23 Cfr. Os 10,2; Sal 5,10; 12,3–4; Pr 26,28; 28,23; ecc.

24 Is 30,10; Ger 23,31; Ez 12,24; Os 10,2; Sal 5,10; 12,3–4; 36,3; 55,14.21, ecc.

simili, della sapienza e quelle della straniera, “la donna che non incarna la sapienza, cioè non è fedele al patrimonio culturale-religioso proprio di Israele”<sup>25</sup>.

### 3. Rut, la Moabita

Nel libro di Rut<sup>26</sup> compare solo la radice נָכַר, in un testo molto significativo: in 2,10 Rut domanda a Boaz: “Perché ho trovato grazia ai tuoi occhi cosicché tu mi guardi con benevolenza, mentre io sono una straniera?”. Il testo presenta un gioco di parole, riconosciuto da molti autori. Compaiono infatti sia la radice נָכַר *nākar*, che significa “riconoscere, notare”, sia l’aggettivo נֹכְרִיָּה, un vocabolo di tipo etnico, che designa qualcuno che appartiene ad un altro popolo, qualcuno che è fuori dal cerchio della propria famiglia. È discusso se il verbo נָכַר *nākar* e l’aggettivo נֹכְרִי *nokrî* derivino dalla stessa radice, ma questo non toglie niente al gioco di parole che si sviluppa sia a livello parasonantico (enfaticizzando i suoni נ e כ che le due parole condividono) sia metaforico (giocando sul significato di due parole simili) e che può essere reso: “Hai riconosciuto me che sono un’estranea”.

Rut la straniera, anzi, la Moabita, come continuamente verrà ripetuto nel libro, quindi l’appartenente a un popolo nemico, viene riconosciuta, guardata con favore, da Boaz, e, a sua volta, diventerà per lui una risorsa, dandogli un figlio, che sarà l’antenato del re Davide.

Si potrebbe dire che chi si ferma all’apparenza, magari anche osservando alla lettera la legge (Dt 23,4), si preclude la possibilità di incontrare il Messia. Anche nel caso di Rut, dunque, è necessario praticare un discernimento, andando al di là dell’apparenza (è una straniera, anzi, una Moabita!); nel suo caso, però, il linguaggio non è “untuoso, mellifluo”, anzi, appare deciso, chiaro, ma insieme rispettoso, come emerge dai discorsi tra Rut e Noemi, oppure con il giovane preposto sopra i mietitori e con Boaz, ed è confermato dal suo modo di agire e dalle scelte che fa.

Confrontando i due testi, Pr 1–9 e Rut, il lettore si trova di fronte a figure che in modi diversi incarnano l’estraneità al popolo, ma, mentre la donna straniera di Pr 1–9 è caratterizzata in modo assolutamente negativo: è adultera (2,17; 7,19), malvagia (6,24), prostituta (6,26), estranea (2,16; 5,20; 6,24; 7,5), Rut, che avrebbe potuto assommare in sé molte di queste caratteristiche, è presentata, in realtà, come una figura totalmente positiva, anzi, come un personaggio “perfetto” fin dalle prime parole che essa pronuncia (1,16–17), che non evolve nel prosieguo del libro perché non ne ha bisogno, anzi, confermando a più riprese la sua positività (soprattutto nei riguardi di Noemi e di Boaz).

Sempre mettendo a confronto Proverbi e Rut, si può aggiungere che la Moabita è più simile alla donna di valore del poema acrostico di Pr 31,10–31 che alla donna straniera dei

25 Bonora, “La ‘donna straniera’ in Pr 1–9”, 103.

26 Anche in questo caso, ci limitiamo a proporre alcune considerazioni di carattere teologico, rimandando ai commentari per l’analisi minuziosa delle varie questioni poste dal libro. Ci permettiamo di segnalare D. Scaiola, *Rut* (I Libri Biblici – Primo Testamento 23; Milano: Paoline 2009).



capp. 1–9. Infatti Rut è definita due volte לַיִל חַיִּיל *'ēšet hayil* (3,11). Il termine לַיִל *hayil* ricorre 222 volte nella Bibbia ebraica e si applica a vari contesti: alla forza, spesso nell'ambito militare, oppure alla ricchezza o al profitto. Il vocabolo si riferisce sempre a degli uomini, eccezion fatta per quattro casi in cui לַיִל *hayil* è applicato a delle donne. I casi in questione compaiono tre volte nel libro dei Proverbi (12,4; 31,10.29) e in Rt 3,11. A livello intertestuale è da valorizzare il fatto che il sintagma לַיִל חַיִּיל *'ēšet hayil* si trovi solo in Proverbi e nel libro di Rut, che precede immediatamente quello di Rut nella Bibbia ebraica. Esistono infatti delle analogie tra Rut e la donna di Pr 31: entrambe dimostrano una certa attenzione alla famiglia e alla vita domestica, sono intraprendenti, vengono lodate per le azioni da loro compiute. La domanda un po'consolata con la quale inizia il poema acrostico di Pr 31,10–31: “Una donna di valore chi potrà trovarla?”, trova la sua risposta nel libro di Rut che segue immediatamente. Tutto il racconto assume allora la forma di una sorta di parabola che risponde in maniera pratica alla domanda di Pr 31,10, un testo che si riferisce ad una donna chiaramente Israelitica. Rut, che è una straniera e per di più una Moabita, incarna un modello ideale tipico della letteratura sapienziale, il cui valore è universale. Non occorre cioè essere Israeliti per esprimere certi valori, chiunque li può vivere, persino chi proviene da un popolo maledetto; bisogna però scegliere di assumerli in modo consapevole, avendo anche il coraggio di fare scelte controcorrente, ad esempio quelle che portano a costruire un rapporto paritario, mettendosi in gioco in modo diretto ed evitando di nascondersi dietro la maschera di ruoli convenzionali e precostituiti.

Dall'analisi proposta, anche se breve, inoltre, sono emerse delle opposizioni, ad esempio, tra donna sapienza e la donna straniera, tra apparenza e realtà (nel caso di Rut e in quello precedente), in ultima analisi, tra vita e morte. Il discernimento è dunque necessario affinché il “figlio”, il giovane, l'inesperto, il semplice, sia in grado di fare una scelta che ha conseguenze determinanti per la sua vita. Analogo discorso vale nel caso di Rut, la Moabita, anche se con sfumature diverse.

#### 4. La donna straniera di Pr 1–9 e Rut: un approfondimento

Secondo molti autori, entrambi i testi, Pr 1–9 e Rut, provengono dal medesimo contesto socio-culturale, quello del primo post-esilio, caratterizzato da un conflitto tra la *gōlāh*, il gruppo di rimpatriati da Babilonia, e i popoli del paese, scontro attestato nei libri di Esdra e Neemia<sup>27</sup>. Ad esempio, Washington<sup>28</sup> ritiene che le polemiche nei confronti della donna straniera di Pr 1–9 corrispondano sia dal punto di vista terminologico che sostanziale alla campagna condotta contro i matrimoni endogamici, tipica del periodo post-esilico,

27 Esiste un'ampia discussione relativa ai libri di Esdra e Neemia che verte su numerosi punti, ad esempio sulla funzione esercitata dai due personaggi in questione, sulla successione delle rispettive missioni, sul ritorno dall'esilio di uno o più gruppi, ecc.; noi non entriamo nel merito delle varie problematiche perché ciò esula ampiamente dall'argomento precipuo del presente contributo.

28 Washington, “The Strange Woman of Proverbs 1–9 and Post-Exilic Judean Society”, 230.

descritta, tra l'altro, in Esd 9–10; Ne 10,20; 13,23–27, testi ai quali si può anche aggiungere Mt 2,10–16. A sostegno di questa ipotesi, si può aggiungere che la maggior parte delle occorrenze del sintagma “donne straniere” appaiono in Esdra-Neemia, proprio nel contesto della polemica relativa ai matrimoni misti. In Esdra-Neemia, inoltre, il problema relativo alle donne straniere è collegato a questioni più ampie, come, ad esempio, quella dell'identità, dell'auto-definizione dell'“autentica” comunità giudaica, dell'etnicità, del possesso della terra, dell'eredità, ecc.

Nel tentativo di riconfigurare la comunità giudaica vengono stabiliti vari confini che distinguono i Giudei dagli “altri”, dagli estranei o da coloro che sono percepiti, a vario titolo come “stranieri”. Una delle caratteristiche più sorprendenti di Esdra-Neemia è individuabile nelle descrizioni di espulsione dal culto e dalla comunità di determinati gruppi di persone considerate “aliene”; costoro includono: maschi stranieri che adorano YHWH, donne di origini straniere che hanno sposato dei Giudei, e i figli che sono nati da questi matrimoni misti. L'allontanamento di tali persone classificate come straniere/estranee è giustificato attraverso varie strategie, tra le quali menzioniamo un'esegesi espansiva e creativa di testi come Lv 18,24–30; Dt 7,1–6; 23,4–9. Alcuni interpreti dell'epoca hanno combinato insieme testi diversi, originariamente non correlati tra loro, caratterizzati da concezioni negative nei confronti degli stranieri, o da visioni contrarie ai matrimoni misti. Ogni testo è stato letto in riferimento agli altri, generando quindi un'esegesi espansiva che sosteneva la necessità di allontanare tutti gli stranieri, senza eccezione, dalla comunità giudaica, come mostrano Esd 9,10–12 e Ne 13,1–3. Anche in questo caso ci limitiamo a suggerire alcune piste di riflessione, senza poter affrontare la questione in maniera esaustiva<sup>29</sup>. Ad esempio, in Esd 10,3 viene dichiarata l'intenzione di stabilire una comunità pura, basata sulla Tòrah: “Si farà secondo la Legge”, recita Esd 10,3, e per questo la comunità aderisce alla proposta di stipulare un patto (Esd 10,3.5). Tuttavia la questione spinosa è la seguente: dove si trovano nella Tòrah indicazioni relative all'espulsione di donne straniere? Nel Pentateuco e nei libri storici ci sono, naturalmente, frequenti ammonimenti ad evitare matrimoni misti tra gli Israeliti e le popolazioni cananee<sup>30</sup>, ma cos'ha a che fare questo con la situazione post-esilica? Esd 9,1–2,

Terminate queste cose, sono venuti da me i preposti per dirmi: “Il popolo d'Israele, i sacerdoti e i leviti non si sono separati dalle popolazioni locali, per quanto riguarda i loro abomini, cioè da Cananei, Ittiti, Perizziti, Gebusei, Ammoniti, Moabiti, Egiziani, Amorrei, ma hanno preso in moglie le loro figlie per sé e per i loro figli: così hanno mescolato la stirpe santa con le popolazioni locali, e la mano dei preposti e dei governatori è stata la prima in questa prevaricazione”

ad esempio, allude deliberatamente a Dt 7,3 un testo in cui si proibisce agli Israeliti di sposarsi con la popolazione locale. Esd 9,1 elenca una serie di popoli: Cananei, Ittiti, Perizziti,

29 Per un approfondimento si vedano, ad esempio, M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon – Oxford University Press 1985); S.M. Olyan, “Purity ideology in Ezra-Nehemiah as a Tool to Reconstitute the Community”, *JSJ* 35/1 (2004) 1–16.

30 Cfr. Es 34,16; Dt 7,3; Gs 23,12–13; Gdc 3,5–6; ecc.

Gebusei, Ammoniti, Moabiti, Egiziani, Amorrei, mentre in Esd 9,2 si cita il “seme santo”, un sintagma che rimanda a Dt 7,6: “Tu sei un popolo santo/consacrato al Signore, tuo Dio”.

I capi della comunità che era tornata dall'esilio volevano sottolineare la somiglianza esistente tra la loro situazione e quella dei primi abitanti israelitici durante la conquista della terra di Canaan. Per raggiungere tale obiettivo, vengono aggiunti i nomi di Ammoniti, Moabiti ed Egiziani all'antica lista di popoli del Pentateuco. La menzione degli Ammoniti e dei Moabiti, che non sono inclusi tra i Cananei del paese, si comprende ricordando che alcuni Giudei avevano sposato donne che provenivano da quei popoli (Ne 13,23). Esd 9,1-2, dunque, si presenta come un'esegesi basata su Dt 7,1-6 e su 23,4-9, grazie alla quale i contenuti antichi vengono reinterpretati in funzione delle problematiche attuali relative ai matrimoni misti. Di conseguenza, la frase citata in precedenza: “Si farà secondo la Legge” (Esd 10,3) significa, in realtà, si farà secondo l'interpretazione della Tòrah sviluppata in un determinato ambito esegetico. Alla medesima interpretazione si riferisce anche l'allontanamento dei figli di queste donne straniere, di cui non c'è menzione nel Pentateuco. Il fatto che Ammoniti e Moabiti debbano essere esclusi dalla comunità fino alla decima generazione (Dt 23,4) e che i figli di Edomiti ed Egiziani lo siano fino alla terza generazione (Dt 23,8-9) giustifica il fatto che i figli di donne straniere bandite dalla comunità, debbano essere analogamente esclusi.

È sorprendente il fatto che Esdra non preveda né purificazione né conversione per le donne straniere e per i loro figli, sebbene la circoncisione fosse un mezzo antico per incorporare non Israeliti alla comunità<sup>31</sup>; inoltre, fin dall'epoca più antica una donna straniera poteva essere naturalizzata dal matrimonio, come avviene anche nel caso di Rut.

Per avallare la sua strategia ideologica e politica, Esd 9,11-14 rimanda a testi come Lv 18,3,23-30, in cui compaiono termini come “terra contaminata”, “abomini”, “impurità” dei popoli del paese di Canaan, ecc., proponendo, di nuovo un'esegesi amplificata del testo biblico, ottenuta mescolando citazioni tratta da Dt 7,1-3; 23,4-9, con allusioni a Lv 18, fornendo in tal modo un'ulteriore base scritturistica a sostegno della proibizione dei matrimoni misti tra la “comunità dell'esilio” e i “popoli del paese”, presentati come i discendenti degli antichi Cananei. Israele, “seme santo”, è illecitamente desacralizzato dai matrimoni esogamici, che sono definiti un “sacrilegio” in molti testi. Questo spiega anche perché Esdra non indichi nessun modo attraverso il quale le mogli straniere e i loro discendenti (presenti e futuri) possano essere incorporati in Israele.

Sembra che Esdra non abbia avuto del tutto successo nel suo programma di espellere le donne straniere dalla “comunità dell'esilio”, ameno se leggiamo il versetto conclusivo del libro secondo il Testo Masoretico: “E vi erano tra esse donne che avevano messo al mondo figli” (Esd 10,44).

Si immagina facilmente che la resistenza al programma di Esdra fosse imputabile a vari motivi, tra i quali l'emergere di un altro tipo di esegesi, che si trova, ad esempio, in Is 60,10-11 (“Stranieri ricostruiranno le tue mura, i loro re saranno al tuo servizio [...]).

31 Cfr. ad esempio Gen 34,14-16; Es 12,48.

Le tue porte saranno sempre aperte, non si chiuderanno né di giorno né di notte”), che sembra opporsi al divieto di far partecipare stranieri alla ricostruzione delle mura di Gerusalemme (Esd 4,2–5; Ne 3–4)<sup>32</sup>. Anche il libro di Rut, che parla di un matrimonio tra Boaz e una Moabita, e che termina con la genealogia del re Davide (Rt 4,18–22), può essere considerato il prodotto di queste polemiche religiose e interpretative.

Alle motivazioni religiose erano probabilmente collegate altre questioni di tipo economico, ad esempio, esistevano tensioni irrisolte relative al diritto o meno di possedere la terra tra la *gôlāh* i rimpatriati che si aspettavano di tornare in possesso delle loro abitazioni, e quelli che erano rimasti nel paese, i poveri del paese (2Re 24,14), “vignaioli e agricoltori” (2Re 25,12; Ger 40,7), i quali, nel frattempo, avevano lavorato la terra per generazioni e volevano continuare a farlo.

Quelli che erano tornati da Babilonia avevano la necessità di stabilire legami parentali per pretendere di tornare in possesso delle loro antiche terre<sup>33</sup>. Questa funzione è svolta dalle liste, che troviamo in Esd 2 e Ne 7,8–72, che avevano lo scopo di indicare chi costituiva il popolo cioè chi apparteneva ad un determinato gruppo etnico, e chi svolgeva certi ruoli in esso, come, ad esempio, l'essere sacerdote o levita<sup>34</sup>. Di fatto, secondo Esd 2,59–60 e Ne 7,61–62 alcune famiglie furono escluse appunto perché non potevano dimostrare di appartenere a Israele. I leaders della comunità post-esilica avevano l'ultima parola nel dibattito relativo all'identità del “vero” Israele, cioè di coloro che potevano dimostrare di possedere una genealogia che era iscritta nei registri. Chi poteva dimostrare per iscritto di appartenere alla comunità, faceva parte del tempio e possedeva anche la terra. Tale controllo da parte dei capi era però frustrato dai matrimoni esogamici di alcuni membri della comunità, legami che turbavano l'integrità genealogica e potevano anche rappresentare una minaccia economica relativa all'eredità. Esdra-Neemia, come Pr 1–9, si concentrano sulle donne, considerate come il pericolo principale<sup>35</sup>, perché all'interno del sistema del diritto patrilineare al possesso della terra, anche le donne potevano ereditare e disporre di proprietà. Ad esempio, la legge sacerdotale conferma l'eredità femminile nel caso delle figlie di Selofcàd (Nm 27,1–11; 36,1–9). In caso di mancanza di un erede maschio, la disposizione a favore di queste donne aveva lo scopo di assicurare/mantenere l'eredità all'interno dei confini della tribù patrilineare; di conseguenza, alle eredi donne era richiesto di sposarsi all'interno della casata del padre (Nm 27,7–8; 36,6–9). Queste leggi chiariscono che era possibile per le donne ereditare delle proprietà e questa possibilità causava conflitti all'interno del popolo anche in epoca post-esilica. I papiri di Elefantina e alcuni documenti mesopotamici mostrano infatti che nell'impero persiano, di cui faceva parte anche la Giudea, le donne potevano ereditare i beni e le terre<sup>36</sup>. Questa legislazione costituiva dunque una

32 Altri testi che svolgono analoghe funzioni interpretative contrastanti quelle di Esdra si trovano in Is 56,5–7.

33 M. Douglas, “Responding to Ezra: the Priests and the Foreign Wives”, *BibInt* 10/1 (2002) 1–23.

34 P.F. Esler, “Ezra-Nehemiah as a Narrative of (Re-Invented) Israelite Identity”, *BibInt* 11/3 (2003) 413–426.

35 Esd 9,2; 10,2–3.10–11.14.17–18.44; Ne 13,23.26–27.

36 C.R. Yoder, *Wisdom as a Woman of Substance. A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs 1–9 and 31:10–31* (BZAW 304; Berlin: De Gruyter 2001).

minaccia per i rimpatriati perché permetteva che beni e parte della terra divenissero proprietà di donne straniere. Le proprietà potevano inoltre passare ad un'altra tribù se queste donne avessero contratto un matrimonio misto.

Si può pertanto concludere che le riforme matrimoniali introdotte da Esdra-Neemia erano motivate dal bisogno di autodefinirsi in senso religioso, ma anche dalla volontà di mantenere il possesso della terra. Alla luce di questo retroterra socio-storico, appare chiaro che la polemica contro la donna straniera di Pr 1-9 coincide con la strategia ideologica di Esdra-Neemia.

## Conclusione

Sia la figura della donna straniera di Pr 1-9 che il libro di Rut possono essere compresi sullo sfondo delle problematiche tipiche del post-esilio, in cui l'endogamia, come "confine etnico", serve ad escludere dalla comunità i "popoli del paese". La comunità del "seme santo" è ristretta a coloro che sono tornati dall'esilio, una nozione che enfatizza la nozione di Israele come nazione santa (Es 19,6; Lv 19,2), che costituisce la motivazione per evitare matrimoni misti e ogni tipo di alleanza con le nazioni cananee (Dt 7,3.8; Esd 9,2.14). Usando il titolo "seme santo", Esdra sembra aver fuso l'idea dello statuto "santo" di Israele con la nozione sacerdotale di santità; di conseguenza, coloro che vogliono appartenere a "Israele" devono regolare le loro vite personali seguendo le restrizioni richieste ai sacerdoti. L'implicazione di tale autodefinizione è che quelli che non si trovano dentro i confini di questa comunità "santa", sono impuri, una fonte di caos e di disordine. Esdra trasforma il linguaggio della santità applicandolo all'etnicità. I matrimoni misti tra Israele e altre nazioni sono rappresentate nel testo come la causa principale del peccato che si è accumulato contro Israele e che ha in ultima analisi causato l'esilio babilonense (Esd 9,13-14). Di conseguenza, qualsiasi matrimonio misto tra il "seme santo" e le "donne straniere" potrebbe essere fatale per la comunità.

La separazione dalle donne straniere, che culmina nel divorzio e nell'allontanamento dei figli, rafforza dunque la coesione del gruppo interno, un progetto che risponde al problema dell'identità o autocomprensione di chi appartiene a giusto titolo al "vero" Israele. L'operazione condotta da Esdra-Neemia si fonda su un certo tipo di esegesi, che non appare però come l'unica presente nel testo biblico, se si considerano alcuni testi profetici e il libro di Rut.

Alla luce della conclusione del libro di Esdra, inoltre, non si può neanche affermare con certezza che il sacerdote abbia avuto successo, ma la questione ritorna anche nel libro di Neemia.

Alle motivazioni di tipo religioso si aggiungono inoltre problematiche di tipo economico, relative al possesso della terra e all'eredità, o forse si potrebbe anche suggerire che forse esse sono alla base delle ragioni "spirituali".

Aggiungiamo ancora alcune considerazioni: nonostante l'ampio dibattito relativo all'identificazione della donna straniera in Pr 1-9 e nei libri di Esdra-Neemia, non è ancora

chiaro chi siano queste donne: forse discendenti di quelli che non erano tornati da Babilonia, che vengono definite “straniere” per proteggere i diritti ereditari della nuova comunità; oppure donne che discendevano da un’etnia diversa, la cui presenza poteva essere percepita come una minaccia per la comunità che stava cercando di ridefinire se stessa. L’unica cosa certa è che esse sono anonime e che non parlano, mentre si parla di loro a lungo, anche elaborando un’esegesi dei testi che suscita perlomeno qualche interrogativo.

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## Suretyship in the Teaching of Ben Sira (Sir 29:14–20)

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**ABSTRACT:** The article is an analysis of the teaching of Ben Sira on becoming surety for individuals in need of that form of economic and material assistance contained in Sir 29:14–20. First, the way of functioning of suretyship in Israel and the approach to it is discussed, mainly based on the Book of Proverbs, which quite strongly and emphatically forbids that practice. This is followed by a delimitation of the pericope in the work of Ben Sira devoted to that issue and the presentation of its structure. The main part of the article is devoted to the exegetical analysis of Sir 29:14–20 based on the historical-critical method, taking into account elements of syntactic and semantic analysis. Ben Sira does not forbid becoming surety for those in need of such support; on the contrary, he encourages it (cf. 29:14a, 20a). However, influenced by abuses of that practice (cf. 29:16–19), he urges his disciple to be cautious and become surety only for acquaintances – neighbours (cf. 29:14a, 20a), not to risk and become bankrupt (cf. 29:16a, 17a, 20b) or be forced to leave the home country in case the borrower (cf. 29:18), for whom one had vouched, does not pay the obligations to the creditor. At the same time, Sirach reminds the person for whom someone has vouched of the need to fulfil the obligation towards the guarantor (cf. 29:15) as not doing so means becoming a sinner (cf. 29:16a, 19a). The main motive for Ben Sira's change in approach to suretyship, in relation to the Book of Proverbs, seems to be primarily drawing attention to the commandment to help one's neighbour, to which the Sage refers implicitly, and the desire to protect the Jewish community and strengthen it economically at a time when Hellenistic influence on it was increasingly stronger and more significant.

**KEYWORDS:** the Book of Sirach, suretyship, becoming surety for someone, Sir 29:14–20

The Book of Sirach is characterised by the fact that, like the Book of Proverbs, it deals with, albeit in a different form, not proverbs but slightly larger and more complex thematic units, various theological issues, as well as matters related to everyday life. Obviously, it is done from the perspective characteristic of the wisdom literature of the Old Testament. Apart from discussing the problems concerning human life, in addition to topics related to faith, religion and morality, such as the creation of man, free will, sin, the fear of God, etc., the Sage of Jerusalem also gives his disciples/readers advice to help them in the ordinary matters of everyday life, including, for example, the choice of a wife, raising children, friendship and friends, etc.<sup>1</sup> Among the latter issues, there are also economic

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Bonora, "Siracide," *Libri sapienziali e altri scritti* (eds. A. Bonora – M. Priotto) (Logos. Corso di Studi Biblici 4; Torino: Editrice Elle Di Ci 1997) 90–96; A. Minissale, *Siracide (Ecclesiastico)* (Nuovissima Versione della Bibbia 23; Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo 1989) 17–24; Minissale, *Siracide. Le radici nella*

matters. Sir 29 deserves special attention, particularly its first part, i.e. vv. 1–20, where lending is discussed first (vv. 1–7), followed by almsgiving (vv. 8–13) and suretyship (vv. 14–20).<sup>2</sup> Ben Sira presents the above three forms of helping a neighbour in need from a sapiential perspective, not only from an economic and financial point of view, although he also takes that into account in his considerations and refers to it indirectly.

This article deals with the third form of assistance to a person in financial distress, i.e. suretyship (29:14–20). First, the way of functioning of that form of support for the needy in Israel in the times before Ben Sira is outlined. Later in the article, the delimitation of the text of the pericope devoted to becoming surety for others in financial difficulties takes place, then, the Greek text of Sir 29:14–20 is translated and its structure is determined. Finally, the pericope is subjected to an exegetical analysis to gain a better and deeper understanding of the Sage's teaching on suretyship. It is done based on a historical-critical method with elements of semantic and syntactic analysis.

In the biblical literature so far, apart from commentaries on the Book of Sirach,<sup>3</sup> only two authors have devoted a little more space to Sir 29:14–20 (those are M. Gilbert<sup>4</sup> and B.C. Gregory<sup>5</sup>). However, the texts are not comprehensive and exhaustive studies of that literary unit of the work of the Sage of Jerusalem.

In this paper, the analysis of the teaching on suretyship in the Book of Sirach is based on the Greek (GI), shorter version of the text, since the Hebrew original of Sir 29:14–20<sup>6</sup> has

*tradizione* (Leggere oggi la Bibbia 1.17; Brescia: Queriniana 1988) 29–73; S. Potocki, "Mądrość uczonego w Piśmie (Księga Syracha)," *Mądrość starotestamentowego Izraela* (eds. S. Potocki et al.) (Wprowadzenie w Myśl i Wezwanie Ksiąg Biblijnych 6; Warsaw: Akademia Teologii Katolickiej 1999) 173–178, 198–202; P.W. Skehan – A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (AB 39; New York: Doubleday 1987) 4–6.

2 "Argomento delicato per il sapiente, molto più del prestito" (H. Duesberg – I. Fransén, *Ecclesiastico* [LSB. Antico Testamento; Torino – Roma: Marietti 1966] 223).

3 Cf. L. Alonso Schökel, *Proverbios y Ecclesiastico* (Los Libros Sagrados 11; Madrid: Ediciones Cristiandad 1968) 249; J. Corley, *Sirach* (New Collegeville Bible Commentary. Old Testament 21; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2013) 83; H. Langkammer, *Księga Syracha. Wstęp – przekład z oryginału – komentarz – ekskursy* (Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu 8.5; Poznań: Pallottinum 2020) 230–240; V. Morla Asensio, *Ecclesiastico* (El Mensaje del Antiguo Testamento 20; Estella: Ediciones Sigueme – Editorial Atenas 1992) 148–149; M.C. Palmisano, *Siracide* (Nuova Versione della Bibbia dai Testi Antichi 34; Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo 2016) 273–274; G. Pérez Rodríguez, "Eclesiástico," *Biblia Comentada IV. Libros Sapienciales*, ed. 2 (BAC 218; Madrid: La Editorial Católica 1967) 1207–1208; G. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach / Ben Sira* (ATD. Apokryphen 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2000) 210–211; Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 371–372; J.G. Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus or The Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach* (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1974) 145–146; G. Vignini, *Siracide* (Bibbia Paoline. L'Antico Testamento; Milano: Paoline 2007) 174; B.M. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51* (NechtB 39; Würzburg: Echter 2010) 181–182.

4 Cf. M. Gilbert, "Prêt, aumône et caution," *Der Einzelne und seine Gemeinschaft bei Ben Sira* (eds. R. Egger-Wenzel – I. Krammer) (BZAW 270; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 1998) 179–189; Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages* (Livre la Bible 129; Paris: Les Éditions du CERF 2003) 210–211.

5 Cf. B.C. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring. Generosity in the Book of Sirach* (DCLS 2; Berlin – Göttingen: De Gruyter 2010) 151–163.

6 Cf. P.C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew. A Text Edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTSup 68; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill 1997) 53–54, 182; P. Boccaccio – G. Berardi, *Ecclesiasticus. Textus hebraeus secundum fragmenta reperta* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio

not survived to our times, which makes it the oldest form of the text of that pericope currently known. Furthermore, the translation of the work of Ben Sira is the canonical version of the text of the book in question. The shorter Greek version (GI) was chosen because it is closer to the original Hebrew (HI) than the longer text (GII), which contains later additions to the original translation of the Sage's work into Greek.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it is secondary in relation to the GI.

## 1. Suretyship in Israel

Suretyship, according to the dictionary of the Polish language, is “an undertaking towards the creditor to fulfil the borrower's obligation in the event that the debtor fails to do it on time.”<sup>8</sup> It was, and still is, a practice by which the lender of money or other material goods is guaranteed the return of what was borrowed thanks to the guarantor's commitment to return the debt in the event that the borrower is unable or unwilling to return the borrowing to the lender. R. de Vaux claims that in Jewish legislation the guarantor “intervened” at the time of repayment of the debt in favour of the insolvent borrower, assuming the obligation to repay the borrowed money or return other material goods.<sup>9</sup> Most probably, although this is not certain, the guarantor derived some material benefits from the guarantee in the form of compensation for the risk of repaying someone else's debt.<sup>10</sup> Suretyship – as a way for the creditors to secure themselves against dishonest borrowers or their inability to repay the debt – was already known in ancient Mesopotamia and the neighbouring

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Istituto Biblico 1986) 16; R. Egger-Wenzel, *A Polyglot Edition of the Book of Ben Sira with a Synopsis of the Hebrew Manuscripts* (CBET 101; Leuven – Paris – Bristol: Peeters 2022) 353–357; C. Mopsik, *La Sagesse de ben Sira* (Les dix paroles; Lagrasse: Verdier 2003) 177; V. Morla, *Los manuscritos hebreos de Ben Sira. Traducción y notas* (Asociación Bíblica Española 59; Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino 2012) 160; *The Book of Ben Sira. Text, Concordance and an Analysis of the Vocabulary* (The Historical Dictionary of the Hebrew Language; Jerusalem: The Academy of the Hebrew Language and the Shrine of the Book 1973) 25.

7 Cf. J. Marböck, *Jesus Sirach 1–23* (HThKAT; Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder 2010) 24–26; A. Piwowar, “La storia testuale del Libro del Siracide,” *Roczniki Teologiczne* 1 (2008) 38–43; Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 55–56. See also S. Bussino, *The Greek Additions in the Book of Ben Sira* (AnBib 203; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2013); C. Kearns, *The Expanded Text of Ecclesiasticus. Its Teaching on the Future Life as a Clue to Its Origin. Enlarged with a Bibliographical Sketch of Kearns by Gerard Norton, an Introduction to Kearns's Dissertation by Maurice Gilbert and Bibliographical Updates (1951–1020) by Núria Caldach-Benages* (DCLS 11; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2011).

8 E. Sobol (ed.), *Mały słownik języka polskiego*, ed. 10 (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN 1993) 675. Cf. E. Lipiński, “Gage et cautionnement chez les Sémites du Nord-Ouest,” *Šulmu IV. Everyday life in ancient Near East. Papers presented at the International Conference, Poznań 19–22 September 1989* (eds. J. Zablocka – S. Zawadzki) (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM 1993) 213–214; I.L. Seeligmann, “Darlehen, Bürgschaft und Zins in Recht und Gedankenwelt der Hebräischen Bibel,” *Gesammelte Studien zur Hebräischen Bibel* (ed. E. Blum) (FAT 41; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2004) 326–329.

9 Cf. R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel. Its Life and Institutions* (Livonia: Eerdmans 1997) 172–173.

10 Cf. S. Potocki, *Księga Przysłów* (Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu 8.1; Poznań: Pallottinum 2008) 87, 179.

countries of Israel.<sup>11</sup> It can be assumed that it was from those circles that it penetrated and spread to the homeland of the Jews (cf. Gen 43:9; 44:33<sup>12</sup>). Prov 6:1–5 confirms that the practice of suretyship was abused and many borrowers failed to pay their debts, hence the creditor placed that obligation on the guarantor, who had to repay someone else's debt, thus losing some or even all of their property (cf. Prov 22:26–27).<sup>13</sup>

The provisions of the law say nothing about suretyship, but other biblical books, especially those described as wisdom books, refer to it, albeit not very often, which nevertheless confirms the existence of that practice in Jewish settings (cf. Prov 6:1–5; Job 17:3).<sup>14</sup> R.J. Clifford states that extra-biblical law codes also confirm the existence of that system, although he does not list or indicate which bodies of law he refers to.<sup>15</sup>

In the books of the Old Testament, a Hebrew word used to describe the act of becoming liable for someone else's debt is the verb **עָרַב** (together with *qal*: “to act as a guarantor”, “to vouch for”, “to be responsible for someone”, “to give as a pledge”<sup>16</sup>), the primary meaning of which was “to enter”, “to intervene”.<sup>17</sup> Based on the analysis of the use of that word in the Hebrew Bible, it can be concluded that suretyship and pledging were closely related and quite difficult to distinguish (cf. Ne 5:3<sup>18</sup>).<sup>19</sup> Two nouns are derived from the stem of that verb. The first one is **עֲרֵבוֹן** (“security”, “pledge”<sup>20</sup>; cf. Gen 38:17–18, 20; Job 17:3<sup>21</sup>) and

11 Cf. E. Kowalczyk, “Lending in the Bible – Law’s Exemplars and Social Practice,” *Prawo i Religia* 1 (2007), 198; E. Lipiński, “עָרַב I ‘*arab*,” *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (eds. G.J. Botterweck – H. Ringgren – H.-J. Fabry) (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2001) XI, 327, 330; Lipiński, “Gage et cautionnement,” 213, 215–217; Seeligmann, “Darlehen,” 328; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 172–173.

12 Cf. Seeligmann, “Darlehen,” 329.

13 Cf. L.G. Perdue, *Proverbs* (IBC; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2000) 124; Potocki, *Księga Przysłów*, 87.

14 Cf. B.L. Eicher, “Pożyczka,” *Encyklopedia Biblijna* (ed. P.J. Achtemeier) (Warsaw: Oficyna Wydawnicza Vocatio – Oficyna Wydawniczo-Poligraficzna “Adam” 1999) 992; Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 185; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 159; Lipiński, “Gage et cautionnement,” 222; R.E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (WBC 22; Nashville: Nelson 1998) 37; Palmisano, *Siracide*, 273; Seeligmann, “Darlehen,” 327–328; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 172–173; C.R. Yoder, *Proverbs* (AOTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press 2009) 71, 135.

15 Cf. R.J. Clifford, *Proverbs. Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1999) 75.

16 Cf. D.J.A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press 2011) VI, 546–547; M.V. Fox, *Proverbs 1–9. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 18A; New York – London – Toronto: Doubleday 2000) 212; L. Koehler – W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill 1995) II, 876–877; Lipiński, “עָרַב I ‘*arab*,” 327–328; R. Wakely, “עָרַב ( *ar* I ),” *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis* (ed. W.A. VanGemeren) (Carlisle: Paternoster Press 1996) III, 512. Cf. Seeligmann, “Darlehen,” 327; B.K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 1–15* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2004) 331.

17 Cf. Clifford, *Proverbs*, 75; Lipiński, “Gage et cautionnement,” 214–215.

18 Cf. Lipiński, “עָרַב I ‘*arab*,” 329–330.

19 Cf. Lipiński, “Gage et cautionnement,” 213, 220. “Hebrew terminology establishes a close connection between pledge and surety. Both practices served the purpose of protecting a creditor against a debtor’s inability to pay. It is easy to understand that a creditor would seek to minimize his risks by refusing to make loans that were not secured by a mortgage or pledge” (Lipiński, “עָרַב I ‘*arab*,” 329).

20 Cf. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* VI, 553; Koehler – Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, II, 881; Wakely, “עָרַב ( *ar* I ),” 517.

21 Cf. Wakely, “עָרַב ( *ar* I ),” 515–516.

עֲרָבָה (“security”, “guarantee”<sup>22</sup>; cf. 1 Sam 17:18; Prov 17:18).<sup>23</sup> The traditional sign confirming the becoming of surety was the gesture of striking hands (“handshake”; cf. Prov 6:1; 17:18; 22:26).<sup>24</sup>

The Book of Proverbs, which contains the most references to suretyship – taking all biblical books into account, is very critical of that practice and warns against offering it too hastily.<sup>25</sup> It almost forbids vouching for others (cf. Prov 31:22).<sup>26</sup> L. Alonso Schökel and J. Vilchez Lindez say straightforwardly that the Book of Proverbs condemns suretyship as a dangerous and unreasonable act.<sup>27</sup> S. Potocki goes even further, interpreting Prov 22:26 as a prohibition to stay among people who provide guarantees to others.<sup>28</sup> The Book of Proverbs warns that the one who vouches for another person will fall into evil, while whoever refrains from doing so is “safe” (cf. Prov 31:22).<sup>29</sup> In Prov 17:18, a guarantor is explicitly called a fool,<sup>30</sup> who, when vouching for strangers, will be deprived of own property, therefore, to protect oneself from that risk, one must take a pledge from such a person as security for becoming surety (cf. Prov 20:16–27:13).<sup>31</sup> The guarantor is obliged to fulfil the undertaken obligation and to pressure the debtor until that person pays the creditor back

22 Cf. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* VI, 553; Koehler – Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, II, 880; Wākely, “עֲרָבָה (‘rḇl),” 517.

23 Cf. D.D. Brown – S.R. Driver – C.A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers 1996) 786; Lipiński, “עֲרָבָה I ‘ārab,” 328–329; Lipiński, “Gage et cautionnement,” 218.

24 Cf. L. Alonso Schökel – J. Vilchez Lindez, *I Proverbi* (Commenti Biblici; Roma: Borla 1988) 245–246; Eichler, “Pożyczka,” 992; M. Cimosà, *Proverbi. Nuova versione, introduzione e commento* (I libri biblici. Primo Testamento 22; Milano: Paoline 2007) 87; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 208; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 212–213; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 37; Perdue, *Proverbs*, 124; Potocki, *Księga Przysłów*, 87, 179; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 1–15*, 331; Yoder, *Proverbs*, 71.

25 Cf. D.J. Harrington, *Jesus Ben Sira of Jerusalem. A Biblical Guide to Living Wisely* (Interfaces; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 2005) 97; Minissale, *Siracide*, 146; Palmisano, *Siracide*, 273; Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 371; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 1–15*, 331.

26 Cf. Cimosà, *Proverbi*, 87; Duesberg – Franssen, *Ecclesiastico*, 223; Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 185–186; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 161–162; A. Lelièvre – A. Maillot, *Commentaire des Proverbes. II: Chapitres 19–31* (LD. Commentaires 4; Paris: Les Éditions du CERF 1996) 125–126.

27 Cf. Alonso Schökel – Vilchez Lindez, *I Proverbi*, 246.

28 Cf. Potocki, *Księga Przysłów*, 179.

29 “This proverb encapsulates the warning of 6:1–5 about guaranteeing the debt of a stranger” (Yoder, *Proverbs*, 135). Cf. Clifford, *Proverbs*, 124; A. Lelièvre – A. Maillot, *Commentaire des Proverbes. Chapitres 10–18. Les Proverbes de Solomon* (LD. Commentaires 1; Paris: Les Éditions du CERF 1993) 74; M.V. Fox, *Proverbs 10–31. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYB 18B; New Haven, CT – London: Yale University Press 2009) 536–537; Potocki, *Księga Przysłów*, 115; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 1–15*, 496.

30 Cf. Alonso Schökel – Vilchez Lindez, *I Proverbi*, 431; Cimosà, *Proverbi*, 191; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 633; Lelièvre – Maillot, *Commentaire des Proverbes. Chapitres 10–18*, 249–250; Murphy, *Proverbs*, 131; Potocki, *Księga Przysłów*, 149; B.K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 15–31* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2005) 57–58.

31 Cf. Lelièvre – Maillot, *Commentaire des Proverbes. II: Chapitres 19–31*, 57; Cimosà, *Proverbi*, 204; Fox, *Proverbs 10–31*, 669–670; Potocki, *Księga Przysłów*, 164; A. Scherer, “Is the Selfish Man Wise? Considerations of Context in Proverbs 10.1–22.16 with Special Regard to Surety, Bribery and Friendship,” *JSOT* 76 (1997) 63–64; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 15–31*, 144–145; Yoder, *Proverbs*, 212.

(cf. Prov 6:1–5).<sup>32</sup> In practice, a person guaranteeing someone else's loan becomes a co-borrower.<sup>33</sup> According to R.J. Clifford, the risk of the guarantor consisting in losing some or all of their property was the main reason for the Book of Proverbs forbidding suretyship. This is because the book supports human freedom and responsibility and demands the two qualities from the readers,<sup>34</sup> therefore it forbids providing that form of support to people in a difficult economic and material situation.

It is clear from the texts of the wisdom books referred to above that the sages had a very critical approach to guaranteeing any loan. They saw it as a huge risk to those guaranteeing the return of borrowed money in the event that the debtor was unable to return it or did not want to do so. In such a situation, the guarantor was in danger of losing some or all of their property and becoming impoverished, hence it was prudent to avoid that risk. Outlined in a very synthetic way, the attitude towards suretyship that dominated in the Jewish community and the assessment of that form of assistance for those in need constitute the background for Ben Sira's teaching.

## 2. Delimitation, Sir 29:14–20

Sir 29:14 begins a new literary unit of the work of the Sage of Jerusalem, which is devoted to indications relating to becoming liable for the debt of a neighbour in need of that form of economic and material support in obtaining a loan. The previous pericope (29:8–13) concerns almsgiving. There, the noun ἐλεημοσύνη appears in vv. 8b and 12a, it is also the implied subject of the sentence in v. 13. Thus, it forms the framework for that entire literary unit. The binding elements of the pericope are also the personal forms of the verbs, the great majority of which (with the exception of v. 13 being an addition referring to almsgiving and the μὴ ἰωθήτω form [v. 10b] and λυσιτελήσει [v. 11b]) are expressed in the form of the imperative of the second person singular of the aorist (μακροθύμησον [v. 8a], ἀντιλαβοῦ [v. 9a], ἀπόλεσον [v. 10a], θές [v. 11a] and σύγκλεισον [v. 12a]) or structures having the meaning of prohibition addressed to that person (μὴ + *coniunctivus aoristi*: μὴ παρέλκυσῃς [v. 8b],

32 Cf. Gilbert, "Prêt, aumône et caution," 185; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 159–160; Seeligmann, "Darlehen," 329–330; Wakely, "דָּרַב ( 'rb I)," 513; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 172–173. See also Alonso Schökel – Vilchez Lindez, *I Proverbi*, 245–247; Cimosá, *Proverbi*, 87; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 212–214; A. Lelièvre – A. Mailhot, *Commentaire des Proverbes. III. Chapitres 1–9* (LD. Commentaires 8; Paris: Les Éditions du CERF 2000) 120–121; Potocki, *Księga Przysłów*, 86–87; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs. Chapters 1–15*, 331–335; Yoder, *Proverbs*, 71–72.

33 Cf. Alonso Schökel – Vilchez Lindez, *I Proverbi*, 246; Cimosá, *Proverbi*, 226; Clifford, *Proverbs*, 206; Eicher, "Pożyczka," 992; Fox, *Proverbs 1–9*, 211.

34 "Proverbs normally prizes personal freedom and responsibility. The warning does not primarily arise from lack of sympathy with the poor, for the book elsewhere urges almsgiving" (Clifford, *Proverbs*, 75). "[...] the cautious avoidance of going surety in Prov 11:15; 17:18 and 20:16 has nothing to do with selfishness and does not contradict the general high esteem for charity in the Old Testament and even in Proverbs itself. Nevertheless, the responsible man cannot afford to risk his own existence and the existence of the family committed to his care" (Scherer, "Is the Selfish Man Wise?," 64). See also Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 161–162.

μὴ ἀποστρέψῃς [v. 27b]). The use of the above verb forms gives the whole pericope the character of a speech addressed directly to the disciple of Ben Sira. Furthermore, it is important to note the persons towards whom the action of the Sage's disciple encouraged to help those in need of support should be directed. These are a poor man (ταπεινός [v. 8a] and πενής [v. 9a]), a brother and a friend (ἀδελφὸν καὶ φίλον [v. 10a]).

In 29:14, the form of help that should be provided to someone in need of support changes. It is no longer almsgiving, as in the previous pericope (29:8–13), but suretyship expressed using the verb form ἐγγυάω – “to vouch”, “to guarantee” (v. 14a) and the related ad-noun ἐγγυος – a “guarantor” (vv. 15a, 16a) and the noun ἐγγύη – “guarantee” (vv. 17a, 19a). The above Greek words give thematic coherence to the pericope 29:14–20.

Moreover, in 29:14 the Sage no longer addresses his disciple directly, but the subject of his teaching is a good man (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός, v. 14aα). In turn, the person who should be helped is referred to as a neighbour (τὸν πλησίον, v. 14aβ). That character also appears in v. 20a (τοῦ πλησίον). Thus, the noun “neighbour” forms the framework of the pericope referring to suretyship.<sup>35</sup>

The ending of the literary unit on suretyship also emphasises the reference to the idea of help. In its first verse, the Greek text speaks of becoming surety (ἐγγυήσεται), while at the end, it addresses that idea directly by using the imperative form of the verb ἀντιλαμβάνω (“to help”; ἀντιλαβοῦ). M. Gilbert confirms the indicated ending of the pericope started in 20:14, referring to the Syriac text in v. 20,<sup>36</sup> which mentions becoming surety for one's neighbour.<sup>37</sup>

Based on the above arguments, it should be concluded that the literary unit initiated in 29:14 ends in v. 20. This is emphasised and confirmed by the change of subject in v. 21 (ἀρχὴ ζωῆς – literally “the beginning of life”) and the theme of a man's economic independence and self-reliance.

### 3. The Text and Its Translation

The textual analysis of Sir 29:14–20 is done based on the Greek version of the pericope. The critical edition of the Greek version of the work of the Sage of Jerusalem published by J. Ziegler<sup>38</sup> is adopted as the source text, along with the proposed numbering of the verses.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 372; Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 181.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 183; Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 211.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. N. Caldich-Benages – J. Ferrer – J. Liesen, *La Sabiduría del Escriba / Wisdom of the Scribe* (Biblioteca Midrásica 26; Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino 2003) 184; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 152; Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 369.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. J. Ziegler, *Sapientia Iesu Filii Sirach*, ed. 2 (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum 7.2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1980) 262.

<sup>39</sup> In the middle part of the pericope, the numbering of the verses in Ziegler's edition (Z) differs from that proposed by A. Rahlfs (R) and concerns vv. 16–18: 16a (Z)=16a (R), 17 (Z)=16b(R), 18a(Z)=17a(R), 18b(Z)=17b(R), 18c(Z)=18a(R) and 18d(Z)=18b(R) (cf. A. Rahlfs, *Septuagint. Id est Vetus Testamentum*

- 29<sup>14</sup> A good man becomes surety for their neighbour,  
only someone who has lost the sense of decency refuses to do so.
- 15 If someone does such a favour to you, don't forget it  
for they have risked their souls for you.
- 16 A sinner will destroy the guarantor's property,  
17 and the ungrateful will deliberately leave the saviour.
- 18 Suretyship has ruined many prosperous people  
and shook them like a sea wave.  
Influential people have lost their homes over it  
and had to go wandering in foreign countries.
- 19 A sinner will get involved in the act of surety,  
and a profit-chaser will face court judgements.
- 20 So help your neighbour while taking your possibilities into account,  
and protect yourself so that you don't fall.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4. The Structure of the Pericope

Three views on the structure of Sir 29:14–20 have been presented so far. These will be discussed in chronological order. M. Gilbert gave the first proposal on the structure of that literary unit. In 1998, in an article entitled “Prêt, aumône et caution”, he divided the literary unit under discussion into two parts. The first one, according to the scholar, covers vv. 14–17. It focuses on the person benefiting from the act of surety, and v. 15 is the centre of it. Gilbert based the identification of these verses of Sir 29:14–20 on the use of the verb ἐγκαταλείπω (“to desert”, “to abandon”, “to leave”), which appears in v. 14bβ (ἐγκαταλείψει) and v. 17β in the same inflectional form (ἐγκαταλείψει). The second part of the pericope (vv. 18–20), in turn, is devoted to a deceived guarantor. It ends with an order containing an antithetical message addressed to the guarantor.<sup>41</sup> The use of the verb ἐγκαταλείπω in vv. 14bβ and 17β is a strong argument for recognising vv. 14–17 as forming the first section

*graece iuxta LXX interpretes* [Stuttgart: Duetsche Bibelgesellschaft 1979] II, 427). See also F.V. Reiterer, *Zähl-synopse zum Buch Ben Sira* (FSBP 1; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2003) 172–173.

40 The Greek text was translated by the author of the article. Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 152; W. Kraus – M. Karrer (eds.), *Septuaginta Deutsch. Das griechische Alte Testament in deutscher Übersetzung* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 2009) 1130–1131; M. Wojciechowski (trans.), *Księgi greckie. Przekład interliniarny z kodami gramatycznymi i indeksem form podstawowych* (PSBib; Warsaw: Vocatio 2008) 613–614; Palmisano, *Siracide*, 273–275; A. Pietersma – B.G. Wright (eds.), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint. And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007) 743; R. Popowski (trans.), *Septuaginta czyli Biblia Starego Testamentu wraz z księgami deuterokanonicznymi i apokryfami* (PSBib; Warsaw: Vocatio 2013) 1232.

41 See Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution”, 184. “Bref, sont soulignés tout d’abord les devoirs de qui bénéficie d’une caution, (29:14–17 [verse numbering according to Ziegler’s edition – author’s note]), puis les risques courus par qui cautionne (29:18–20)” (*Ibidem*, 184).



of the analysed pericope. However, it should be noted that only four of the six stichs constituting that section refer to the person taking advantage of suretyship, these are vv. 15, 16, 17. The first two stichs, i.e. v. 15, reminds of the obligations towards the guarantor; while vv. 16–17 speak of a dishonest man – a sinner for whom someone else becomes surety and of the consequences of that person being unfair towards the guarantor. The first verse of that section (v. 14) does not refer to the person someone takes liability for but to the one who guarantees to take responsibility for the obligation of that individual. Therefore, it does not fit very well into the structure proposed by the Belgian exegete. As for the second part of the pericope, isolated in that structure by Gilbert, by analogy to the objection relating to the first part of Sir 29:14–20, i.e. vv. 14–17, it should be noted that the last verse of that section (v. 20) does not refer to a deceived guarantor but to the necessity of becoming surety for a person in need of that form of support. Based on that, it would be appropriate to distinguish the border verses in the structure of 29:14–20, i.e. vv. 14 and 20.

In 2010, a commentary was published by B.M. Zapff on the second part of the work of Ben Sira (chapters 25–51), in which he proposed dividing the pericope about suretyship into four parts. Verse 14 introduces the theme of the new literary unit that concerns suretyship. Then, vv. 15–18ab, according to the German scholar, present the conduct of the beneficiary of suretyship, and the following two verses (18cd–19) mention the risks that the person becoming liable for someone else faces. The final verse, i.e. 20, contains a warning addressed to the one becoming surety for someone else along with the encouragement to support someone in need despite the possible risks.<sup>42</sup> With regard to that proposal of the structure of Sir 29:14–20, it should be noted, first of all, that it does not take any determinants contained in the text of the pericope into account. It is based solely on the content of the individual verses. Moreover, in vv. 15–18ab, it does not distinguish between the duty to fulfil the obligation towards the guarantor (v. 15) and the dishonest conduct of the beneficiary of suretyship (vv. 16–18ab). Verses 16–19 are separated into two different sections of the pericope, while they all mention the dangers associated with being a guarantor if the person for whom someone vouches is dishonest.

In 2020, B.C. Gregory published a monograph on generosity in the Book of Sirach entitled *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring. Generosity in the Book of Sirach*. In chapter IV, discussing generosity shown through offering a loan and guarantee, he presented the structure of Sir 29:14–20 in section 4.3.2. He referred to the structure proposed earlier by M. Gilbert (see above), but noted that a more likely division could be seen between v. 18 and v. 19, since vv. 16–18 deal with the risks to which a guarantor is exposed when becoming surety for a dishonest borrower, which, according to Gregory, Ben Sira already warns about in v. 15. Based on the above, the scholar argues that the pericope under analysis consists of two sections. The first one (vv. 15–18) deals with the role of a person for whom someone else becomes surety, while the second one (vv. 19–20) speaks of a guarantor.<sup>43</sup> The above

<sup>42</sup> See Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 181.

<sup>43</sup> See Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 153.

proposal of a structure is incomplete as it does not take into account the function of v. 14 in the pericope as a whole.

Reservations can be made regarding each of the structures of Sir 29:14–20 presented above, and the ambiguities contained therein can be pointed out. For that reason, a new structure of the entire pericope under study is proposed below, which takes both the content elements and those relating to the vocabulary of that literary unit into account.

Verse 14 is the introduction to the literary unit on suretyship, which, on the one hand, introduces its main theme, i.e. the provision of support in the form of becoming liable for the debt of someone else (*ἐγγυήσεται* – “will vouch”), and on the other hand, presents a person becoming surety for another person, based on anthropological criteria (goodness and shame). It can be said that it is an expression of a person’s obligation to become surety for someone in need of such support. Verse 15 speaks of the obligation of the one for whose debt someone else becomes liable towards the one who becomes surety. Further verses, i.e. 16–19, outline the risks associated with suretyship. They are of a concentric structure, the framework of which, i.e. vv. 16–17 and v. 19, speaks of the conduct of the sinner, while the central verse (v. 18) mentions the dangers directly associated with the act of suretyship. The last verse of the pericope (v. 20) constitutes its conclusion, which is also a reference to the initial v. 14. Both verses framing the entire pericope express an encouragement to become surety for a person in a difficult economic and material situation.

In v. 14b, a reference is made to a shameless man who ignores those asking for becoming surety for them. The verb form *ἐγκαταλείψει* found in that verse also appears in the same form in v. 17. It is used to juxtapose the wrongful attitude of the one who refuses to become surety for someone else with the conduct of the sinful person to whom this is offered, i.e. the first section of the pericope under study (v. 14) with the third one (vv. 16–19). The juxtaposition is based on the principle of analogy relating to misconduct resulting in serious trouble for the ignored person, i.e. to whom the wrongdoing described in these verses refers. Although the occurrence of *ἐγκαταλείψει* in the mentioned verses is a strong argument for considering vv. 14–17 as an independent section of Sir 29:14–20, as Gilbert did, but from the point of view of the topics the verses discuss, it is rather difficult to accept that.

In turn, the second section of the pericope on suretyship (v. 15) is linked with the third one (vv. 16–19) by the genitive singular (*ἐγγύου*; vv. 15a and 16) of the noun *ἐγγυος* (“guarantor”). The initial verse of the literary unit under study (v. 14) is linked with the last one (v. 20) through the noun “neighbour” (*πλησίον*), which, as stated above, forms the framework of the entire pericope. The noun *ἁμαρτωλός* (“sinner”), found in vv. 16β and 19αα, forms the framework of the third section of the pericope that speaks of the dangers awaiting guarantors due to the dishonest conduct of the suretyship beneficiaries. The indicated words form important connections between the different sections of Sir 29:14–20.

To sum up, the structure of Sir 29:14–20 is as follows:

- v. 14 – introduction – encouragement to become surety for someone else;
- v. 15 – the need to fulfil the assumed obligations towards the guarantor;
- vv. 16–19 – dangers awaiting the one becoming surety for another person;

- vv. 16–17 – conduct of the sinner;
- v. 18 – risks associated with becoming surety for someone else;
- v. 19 – conduct of the sinner;
- v. 20 – conclusion – the order to become surety for someone else.

It should be emphasised that the structure of 29:14–20 is quite similar to the structure of the pericope devoted to a loan (29:1–7); although both are different, they contain many common elements, similarly arranged in both literary units. Both pericopes talk about the duty to help those in need, either by means of a loan (29:1–2a) or guarantee (29:14, 20). The risks in the event of the dishonesty of the recipients of the two forms of support are also presented (29:4–7 and 29:16–19). Moreover, both literary units indicate the obligations of those who are helped in relation to those who assist them (29:2b–3 and 29:15).

## 5. Exegetical Analysis of Sir 29:14–20

The exegetical analysis of the pericope being the subject of this article is conducted according to its structure proposed in section 4.

### 5.1. Introduction – the Order to Become Surety for Someone Else (v. 14)

Sir 29:14 is an introduction to a new topic that the Sage of Jerusalem intends to discuss in his wisdom teaching addressed to his disciple or listener. The new theme is the issue of becoming surety for someone else. It is expressed by means of the future tense form of the verb ἐγγυάω (“to vouch”, “to assure”<sup>44</sup>) ἐγγυήσεται. It should be noted that the above verb form appears in the mediopassive voice, which should be interpreted as an indirect mediopassive voice,<sup>45</sup> i.e. mentioning the benefit for the one becoming liable for someone else. This is not certain though, since the verb always appears in the mediopassive voice in the Septuagint Greek text (cf. Tobit 6:13; 6:1, 3; 17:8; 19:28; 28:17; Sir 8:13.13<sup>46</sup>), which may suggest that in the Greek Old Testament, it should be regarded as *medium deponens*.<sup>47</sup> F. Montanari argues that the mediopassive voice of that verb takes the meaning of “to take as pledge” or “to accept as surety”.<sup>48</sup> However, this is difficult to accept, because if the verb

44 See G.A. Chamberlain, *The Greek of the Septuagint. A Supplement Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers 2011) 47; H.G. Liddell – R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. 10 (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1996) 468; F. Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca* (Torino: Loescher 2004) 615; T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Louvain – Paris – Walpole, MA: Peeters 2009) 185.

45 Cf. A. Piwowar, *Składnia języka greckiego Nowego Testamentu*, ed. 2 (Materiały Pomocnicze do Wykładów z Bibliistyki 13; Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL 2017) § 285.

46 See E. Hatch – H.A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint. And the Other Greek Versions of the Old Testament (Including the Apocryphal Books)*, ed. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 1998) 363.

47 See J. Lust – E. Eynikel – K. Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 1996) I, 125. T. Muraoka also seems to confirm that view, since in his dictionary, he points out that the verb ἐγγυάω occurs only in the mediopassive voice in the Greek text of the Old Testament (cf. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 185).

48 See Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 615.

in the mediopassive voice were to take on the above meaning, Sir 29:14a would have to be translated: “A good man accepts his neighbour as a guarantee.” If indeed ἐγγυήσεται were to be regarded as a form of the indirect mediopassive voice, it would mean that the man becoming surety for someone else derives some benefit from that act. This could be, for example, the gratitude of the person for whom responsibility is taken or some merit with God, since the person vouching for someone else is described by Ben Sira as being good (ἀγαθός). The benefit to the guarantor would have been some money, which the guarantor was likely to gain (earn) by becoming surety to the one in need of support, despite the existing prohibition of usury (cf. Lev 25:35–36). The remainder of the pericope, especially vv. 16–19, emphasises the risks and dangers to which the guarantor is exposed by becoming surety for another person, which is not consistent with the idea of deriving some benefit from that act, although it does not mean that this is ruled out. Based on the above considerations, it seems appropriate to consider the verb form under analysis as *deponens* rather than indirect mediopassive voice.

In the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira, the verb ἐγγυάομαι, apart from the occurrence in 29:14a, appears twice in 8:13 (ἐγγυήση). In the first stich of that verse, the Sage warns his disciples not to take responsibility for liabilities exceeding their own material and economic capacity, i.e. to consider – whenever vouching for another person, whether this would not lead to bankruptcy or serious financial difficulties if that person is unable or unwilling to return the borrowed goods and there is the need for the guarantor to repay the debt and settle the obligations. This is confirmed by the second stich in that verse, in which Ben Sira says that those who become surety for others should consider themselves debtors. They are not obliged to repay the debt in the first place, for this is the obligation of the borrower, but if that person is unable to settle the debt or does not want to do so, the loan must be paid back by the guarantor. It should be emphasised that the statement of the Sage of Jerusalem in 8:13 follows the teaching of the Book of Proverbs on suretyship (cf. sec. 1).<sup>49</sup> Thus, the Sage recommends great caution and prudence, since recklessness in that area may result in serious consequences, very risky for the guarantor.

Bearing in mind the warning relating to becoming surety for someone else contained in Sir 8:13, Ben Sira, at the beginning of the pericope under review, encourages becoming liable for the debt of a person who is in economic distress and in need of such support. The form of the future tense, ἐγγυήσεται, may be considered as the future perfect tense (“will have vouched for”),<sup>50</sup> progressive, i.e. the future perfect continuous tense (“will be vouching for”)<sup>51</sup> or the gnomic tense (“vouches for [implicitly, whenever asked to do so]”).<sup>52</sup> It seems that the last proposal of the interpretation of that form of the future tense best fits the context, as it gives not only the first stich in 14, but the whole pericope, a general – universal – meaning.

49 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158.

50 Cf. Piwowar, *Skladnia*, § 356.

51 Cf. Piwowar, *Skladnia*, § 357.

52 Cf. Piwowar, *Skladnia*, § 360.

The direct object of ἐγγυήσεται is the substantivised adverb πλησίον (“near”), which takes on the meaning of “a neighbour”. In the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, the resulting noun ὁ πλησίον always appears with an article,<sup>53</sup> so that it may refer to a specific, individual person with whom someone is related by some ties or it may have a general – generic meaning.<sup>54</sup> It is in the latter sense that one should understand the word in 29:14aβ. It may refer to a neighbour, friend, acquaintance or someone belonging to the Chosen People, i.e., to the same social and religious community.<sup>55</sup> It should be noted that the Sage of Jerusalem always encourages adopting a positive attitude toward one’s neighbour. Relatives<sup>56</sup> are excluded from the group of people to whom the noun ὁ πλησίον may refer, but this does not mean that Ben Sira’s teaching does not apply to them. Since he encourages becoming surety for a close person, it can be inferred that the call applies all the more to relatives in trouble and in need of help as well. The fact of knowing the neighbour, i.e. the person for whom Ben Sira recommends becoming responsible, may be considered the first manifestation of the caution that Sirach mentions in 8:13. Sir 29:14a does not refer to supporting any stranger or someone not known, but a close person, well known to the one offering the assistance. Knowing one’s neighbours and being aware of what kind of persons they are (honest or not, dutiful or neglectful of their obligations, etc.) should allow the guarantor to make the right and prudent decision. Therefore, the awareness of who the borrower is should be the first limitation when it comes to suretyship since Ben Sira does not encourage becoming surety for anyone in need of that form of financial assistance, but only for a neighbour, i.e. a person linked by some close ties or known to the one offering help.

The one who vouches for their neighbour is called good (ἀγαθός) by the Sage of Jerusalem. In the Greek version of the work of the Sage of Jerusalem, that adjective most often appears in a substantivised form, in the neuter, in reference to material goods or prosperity<sup>57</sup> or to good understood as an abstract noun.<sup>58</sup> As an adjective, it refers both to items,<sup>59</sup> body parts (the heart and the eye)<sup>60</sup> and persons, especially to a wife.<sup>61</sup> It is often used in relation to the moral and religious sphere of man. In 12:7, a good man is contrasted with a sinner. Wealth is good, but only that acquired without committing a sin (13:24). Persons good

53 See Sir 5:12; 6:17; 9:14; 10:6; 13:15; 15:5; 16:28; 17:14; 18:13; 19:14, 17; 22:23; 25:1, 18; 27:18, 19; 28:2, 7; 29:1, 2, 5, 14, 20; 31:15, 31; 34:22.

54 Cf. Piwowar, *Składnia*, § 96.

55 Cf. J. Fichtner, “B. πλησίον in the LXX and the Neighbour in the OT,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (eds. G. Kittel – G. Friedrich) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995) VI, 313–315.

56 Cf. U. Falkenroth, “ὁ πλησίον (ho plēsion), the neighbour,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown) (Carlisle – Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster 1986) I, 258; J. Fichtner, “B. πλησίον in the LXX,” 312–313; X. Léon-Dufour, “Bliźni,” *Słownik Teologii Biblijnej* (ed. X. Léon-Dufour) (Poznań: Pallottinum 1990) 75.

57 Cf. Sir 2:9; 6:11; 11:12, 14, 19, 23, 25b, 31; 12:1, 3, 5, 8, 9; 13:25, 26; 14:4, 14, 25; 16:29; 18:15; 20:16; 22:23; 28:3; 29:16; 30:18; 31:11; 32:13; 39:4, 27; 42:25; 45:26. See also 22:7a (GII).

58 Cf. Sir 7:13; 17:7; 18:8; 33:14; 37:18; 39:25; 51:18.

59 Cf. Sir 6:19; 11:25a; 13:24; 18:17; 41:11; 44:11; 51:21.

60 Cf. Sir 26:4; 30:25; 35:7, 9. See also 26:26c (GII).

61 Cf. Sir 7:19; 26:1, 3, 16.

to themselves cannot be bad to others (14:5). From the beginning, good was intended for good people (39:25). All the works of the Lord are good (39:22). The name of a sinner is not good (41:11), while a good life is equivalent to a good name (41:3). Thus, calling someone a good man indicates their religious and moral value, not just their good attitude towards other people (humanitarianism). Good is therefore defined from a religious perspective. A good person is the one following the Law and staying in the right relationship with God. The two elements are essential for calling someone a good person.<sup>62</sup> Based on the above, the good man, being the subject of the sentence in 29:14a (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός), should be considered a religious person – pious and living in accordance with the indications of faith in God, i.e. someone who follows the provisions of the Law and implements them in life. Therefore, the ultimate justification for the action of such a person is not humanitarian but religious motives. Whatever the good man does is done because of the faith in God and the need to keep God's commandments, hence it is about a religious criterion in its deepest essence. Ben Sira, by encouraging becoming surety for another individual in 29:14a, does not refer to specific orders of the Lord, since there were no orders in the Torah relating to becoming surety for one's neighbour (cf. sec. 1), but urges one to do so based on the idea of helping one's neighbour in general, which stems from the commandment to love the neighbour (cf. Lev 19:18) and the order to be generous towards the poor (cf. Deut 15:10),<sup>63</sup> inter alia.

The second stich in 14 is a counterposition to the first one.<sup>64</sup> The conjunction καί, at the beginning of it, should be read in the opposite sense (“but”, “however”). Both stichs in 14 form antithetical parallelism, in which a good person (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός) is contrasted with the one who has lost shame (ὁ ἀπολωλεκώς αἰσχύνην), while suretyship (ἐγγυήσεται) is contrasted implicitly (ἐγκαταλείψει) with not offering help. The third person singular pronoun in the masculine accusative αὐτόν (v. 14bβ) refers to the neighbour (τὸν πλησίον in v. 14aβ). B.C. Gregory claims that the second stich in 14 is unclear – ambiguous because, in his view, it could refer to a guarantor or to a borrower who took a loan and refuses to repay it making the whole debt attributable to the person who had vouched for the debtor (in which case the pronoun αὐτόν should refer to ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός in v. 14aa). In the opinion of Gregory, the second interpretation of v. 14b is supported by v. 17, which summarises possible problems related to becoming surety for someone else (both of these verses contain the ἐγκαταλείψει form).<sup>65</sup> M. Gilbert interprets v. 14b in the same way, i.e. as referring to a dishonest debtor for whom someone else becomes surety.<sup>66</sup> It is rather difficult to agree with Gregory's interpretation, according to which v. 14b refers to a dishonest borrower who

62 Cf. E. Beyreuther, “ἀγαθός,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (ed. C. Brown) (Carlisle – Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster 1986) II, 99; W. Grundmann, “ἀγαθός,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (eds. G. Kittel – G. Friedrich) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995) I, 13–14.

63 Cf. Pérez Rodríguez, “Eclesiástico,” 1205.

64 Cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 181.

65 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 154.

66 Cf. Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 206.

does not want to pay the obligations towards the creditor and, consequently, the obligation is attributed to the guarantor, since both stichs in v. 14 form antithetical parallelism and, based on that, it must be assumed that both the first and the second one relate to the moment when someone needs a guarantee, which the good man offers (v. 14a) and the person devoid of shame refuses, ignoring the one in need (v. 14b). Gregory and Gilbert's interpretations are acceptable but, in the view of the authors of this paper, less likely, as it would break up the content coherence (antithetical parallelism) of v. 14 – the first stich of which expresses the need to support the one in need of a guarantee and the second stich condemns the person who refuses to do so.

The character in v. 14b is identified in the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira by means of a substantivised *participium perfecti activi* of the masculine singular of the verb ἀπολλυμι – “to destroy”, “to devastate”, “to annihilate”, “to extirpate” (ὁ ἀπολωλεκώς), which means that the person is someone who has lost shame and does not possess that attribute (the article ὁ emphasises the substantivisation of the participle and, at the same time, gives the created noun a general – generic – meaning). Shame was not lost permanently (it may be regained), but the consequences last at the moment the man is referred to. Apart from 29:14, the verb ἀπολλυμι appears 27 more times in the Greek text of the work of Ben Sira.<sup>67</sup> Due to its meaning, the word almost always refers to a negative situation or state (an exception is 46:6) of losing someone or something. These can be important goods, both spiritual and material (e.g. patience [2:14], gold [8:2], inheritance [9:6], trust [27:16], friendship [27:18], money [29:10]) or persons (e.g. the whole people [10:3], whole countries [10:16, 17], peaceful [28:13], prosperous [29:17] or many people [30:23; 31:25]). It can also refer to fools exposing themselves to some danger causing them to lose themselves (cf. 6:4; 20:22, 22; 22:27). In the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, the verb under analysis was used three times in the form of a substantivised *participium perfecti*. In 2:4a, the Sage is sorry for those who have lost patience (τοῖς ἀπολωλεκόσιν τὴν ὑπομονήν). In 41:2d, in turn, he says that death is good for that type of people (ἀπολωλεκότι ὑπομονήν). In 8:12 the ad-noun refers to a man stronger than the Sage's disciple (ισχυροτέρῳ σου), who was granted a loan. In such a case, the person is to be regarded as if lost (ὡς ἀπολωλεκώς), i.e. the relationship with that man is destroyed and the individual becomes a sort of stranger to the disciple of Sirach. The man referred to in 29:14b has lost shame (αἰσχύνην). It might seem that this is not a very great loss, bringing some serious harm and depriving of something important in life. This, however, is not the case, for in the teaching of Ben Sira, shame plays a crucial role in man's life and in the quest for wisdom. It should protect man from committing inappropriate acts that may bring the person into disrepute and deprive of a good name, thus depriving of respect from other people. The preventive role of shame is also to help man to keep God's commandments and to stop the person from committing offences on the one hand, and on the other, it is to be a motive for right behaviour (observance of

<sup>67</sup> See Sir 2:14; 3:26; 6:3, 4; 8:2, 12; 9:6; 10:3, 16, 17; 17:28; 20:22, 22; 22:27; 27:16, 18, 18; 28:13; 29:10, 17; 30:23; 31:25; 41:2, 6; 44:9; 46:6 and 49:7.

the commandments of the Lord) so that the person does not fall into disgrace.<sup>68</sup> Ben Sira confirms the above in 4:21, where he says that there is shame which brings sin (ἔστιν γὰρ αἰσχύνῃ ἐπάγουσα ἁμαρτίαν), but there is also shame that brings glory and is a grace to man (ἔστιν αἰσχύνῃ δόξα καὶ χάρις). Thus, shame plays a double role. On the one hand, it should protect man from committing injustice; on the other hand, it should motivate a person to behave properly (cf. 41:16). Shame lies in store for a thief (5:14), an evil man (5:15), a liar (20:26), a father of an ill-mannered son (22:3) and a man supported by his wife (25:22). In the consideration of 29:14b, an important passage is 20:22, which states that there are people who destroy themselves because of shame and foolishness (ἀπολλύων τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ). Shame is a very important category of human conduct because it motivates people to take (20:23) or refrain from some action, which brings to a person certain consequences – good or bad. In 29:14, the loss of shame has a negative outcome. A good man helps the one in need by becoming surety for them, whereas the one who has lost shame ignores that person, i.e. does not follow the commandment to love the neighbour.<sup>69</sup> Such a person is not explicitly called an evil or unrighteous man, but the context, based on antithetical parallelism, clearly and unambiguously suggests the above by contrasting the two attitudes.

The approach of a shameless person to a neighbour in need of support in the form of suretyship is expressed by the verb form ἐγκαταλείψει, derived from ἐγκαταλείπω (“to desert”, “to abandon”, “to leave”). The future tense of that verb form should be considered the same (i.e. *futurum gnomicum*) as the future tense of ἐγγυήσεται in v. 14a (see above). Both stichs in v. 14 form antithetical parallelism, hence both verb forms found there should be interpreted in the same way. The verb ἐγκαταλείπω is a compound and comes from λείπω (“to leave”, “to abandon”). It was formed by adding two prepositions to the simple verb: ἐν (“in”) and κατά (“downward”),<sup>70</sup> thanks to which it further emphasises the persistence of the state of being abandoned, as it were, “at the bottom” of some situation or state (literally, to leave in a situation of being down – below the average – normal state). Therefore, it does not mean just leaving someone to themselves, but it refers to the abandonment of a person who is in a very difficult situation, unable to cope and get out of it. That individual is not able to handle the situation on their own, relying only on own possibilities or material resources. In the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, the subject of that verb may be God or man. The Lord never abandons upright people who fear Him and strive to gain wisdom (cf. 2:10; 51:20). Therefore, one should beg Him and ask Him not to be forgotten in a difficult situation (cf. 23:1 and 51:10). The one who abandons their father is a blasphemer (cf. 3:16). If one goes astray in the pursuit of wisdom, that person will be abandoned by it (4:19). The ungodly are those who have abandoned the law of the Most High (cf. 41:8). The Sage urges his disciples not to neglect or forsake the priests (cf. 7:30) or an old friend (cf. 9:10). Leaving someone always has negative associations, and such conduct should be

68 Cf. A. Piwowar, *La vergogna come criterio della fama perpetua. Studio esegetico-teologico Sir 40:1–42:14* (Kato-wice: Wydawnictwo Emmanuel 2006).

69 Cf. Pérez Rodríguez, “Eclesiástico,” 1208.

70 Cf. R. Romizi, *Vocabolario greco italiano etimologico e ragionato*, ed. 3 (Bologna: Zanichelli 2007) 388.



seen as being in contradiction with the action of God, who never abandons people who are close to Him. Leaving a neighbour in need of support in the form of becoming surety for them is therefore, in a way, a double evil. First, the commandment to love and help one's neighbour is not fulfilled, and second, it is an action contrary to the conduct of God, who never abandons people in need and always supports them. Ben Sira does not explicitly express that negative judgement relating to the approach of a man lacking in shame towards their neighbour in distress asking for support and help and to become surety for them, but the immediately preceding context clearly speaks very negatively about such a person.

Sir 29:14 outlines the socio-economic tension relating to becoming surety for a man in a difficult material and economic situation. This is developed in the following verses of the pericope.<sup>71</sup> Already in the introduction to the pericope, the Sage indirectly states that not everyone asked to become surety for someone else agrees to do so.

## 5.2. The Obligation Towards the Guarantor (v. 15)

After expressing, in v. 14, the encouragement to become surety for a person in need of that form of support, the Sage draws attention to the obligation of the borrower towards the guarantor. B.C. Gregory describes the content in v. 15 as an exhortation (a call, encouragement), which contrasts with v. 14.<sup>72</sup> Not only the one who is able to become surety for another individual is obliged to help the person in need of that form of aid, but also the one who receives such assistance assumes an obligation towards the guarantor. Thus, the act of suretyship connects them and brings them jointly into a difficult economic and material situation, into the position of the one in need of such support.

Ben Sira directly addresses the person in whose favour someone has vouched and urges that individual not to forget (μη ἐπιλάθῃ – “do not forget”) the benefits received from the guarantor (χάριτας ἐγγύου). In the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, the order not to forget the kindness or favour received from another person is expressed by means of the syntagma μη ἐπιλάθῃ, which is equivalent to the expression μη + *imperativus aoristi*. It thus means a firm prohibition against forgetting any good, even one-off or experienced only for a short while, received from the guarantor. The one for whom someone else becomes surety should always – at every moment of their life – remember the received help. Therefore, the prohibition does not relate only to the period until the debt is settled, but also to the subsequent period, after the repayment of the loan obtained through the act of suretyship. The person for whom someone else becomes surety should always remember that gesture of kindness. Apart from 29:15aα, the verb ἐπιλανθάνομαι (“to forget”, also in the broader sense “to neglect”) occurs eight more times in the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira. Kindness to a father will not be forgotten (cf. 3:14a). The Sage advises not to stay away, so as not to be forgotten (cf. 13:10b). One must not forget oneself in the presence of important people (cf. 23:14c). The offering of a just man and the virtues of a merciful

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 154.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 154.

man will not be forgotten (cf. 35:6b; 44:10b). Furthermore, there is a prohibition expressed three times using the same syntagma as in 29:15aα (μὴ ἐπιλάβῃ<sup>73</sup>). In 7:27b, the Sage asks his disciples not to forget the labour pain suffered by their mothers. In turn, in 37:6a, he asks not to forget friends in their hearts, and in 38:21a – he warns that while mourning the death of a loved one, one should not forget that there is no return to the world of the living once a person dies. Thus, the prohibition of not forgetting relates to relevant issues, i.e. attitude towards a mother, friend and death. Similarly, the Sage's disciple should not forget the good received from the guarantor, who showed kindness and trust by becoming their surety, helping to get out of a difficult economic and material situation.

The remaining two words of the first stich *χάριτας ἐγγύου* cause some difficulty from the syntactic point of view as the first of the nouns is in the plural accusative and the second in the singular genitive, and the verb *ἐπιλανθάνομαι* can be combined with both the first (cf. 3:14a; 7:27b; 35:6b) and the second (cf. 37:6a) of the two cases. When considering that it is connected directly with the accusative *χάριτας* as a direct object, the genitive *ἐγγύου* should be considered as *genetivus subiectivus* (“[do not forget] the good received from/done to you by the guarantor”) or *originis* (“[do not forget] the good coming from the guarantor”). Whereas, if the prohibition *μὴ ἐπιλάβῃ* was combined with the genitive *ἐγγύου*, the accusative *χάριτας* would have to be considered as *accusativus relationis* (“[do not forget] the creditor as to/with respect to/with regard to the good”). From a syntactic point of view, both interpretations of the first stich of v. 15 are acceptable. It should be noted, however, that in the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, the verb *ἐπιλανθάνομαι* is more often combined with the accusative than with the genitive. Based on that premise, it should be assumed that it is combined with *χάριτας* as a direct object in 29:15a, while the genitive *ἐγγύου* should be regarded, as stated above, as a *genetivus subiectivus* rather than *originis*, since the former puts a greater emphasis on the involvement of the guarantor in helping the person in need of support (the person is, in a way, an acting entity, rather than merely a passive source of help in the form of becoming surety for someone else). It should be noted that neither of the two nouns found in v. 15aα is preceded by an article, which means that they do not refer to specific benefits and the individual person of the guarantor, but have a general – generic – meaning.<sup>74</sup> This makes the statement in the stich a general prohibition to be applied to any benefits received from any person becoming surety for another individual. M. Gilbert and G. Vigni claim that the best form of not forgetting the guarantor is to pay the debt.<sup>75</sup>

73 Cf. Deut 4:9; 6:12; 8:11; 9:7; Ps 9:33; 73:19, 23; Prov 4:5; Jer 14:9. H. Langkammer emphasises that by means of this syntagma in the Book of Deuteronomy, Israel's forgetfulness of God is particularly condemned (cf. Langkammer, *Księga Syracha*, 240). Cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 181.

74 Cf. Piwowar, *Skladnia*, § 118.

75 Cf. Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 210; Vigni, *Siracide*, 174. “This remembering also naturally includes the timely repayment of the debt for which he stood surety, in conformity with the admonitions of vv. 2b–3” (Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 154).

The noun χάρις may refer to an aesthetic aspect of a person or item (“grace”, “charm”, “allure”; cf. Sir 7:19b; 24:17b; 26:13a, 15a; 40:22a), or may express kindness/graciousness towards someone (“mercy”, “friendliness”, “favour”, “kind assistance”).<sup>76</sup> In the latter sense, when referring to a particular expression of grace – kindness, it may take on the meaning of “boon”, “kindness”, “a gesture of graciousness”. H. Conzelmann argues that the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira shows a certain preference towards that noun,<sup>77</sup> which occurs 31 times there, including the texts of various codices.<sup>78</sup> From the perspective of the interpretation of 29:15α, an important text is 3:31, where the Sage states that the one who repays the received benefits finds support when falls. In 40:17b, in turn, the Sage states that charity is like a paradise abounding with blessings. He recommends adopting the attitude of benevolence towards the living and the dead (cf. 7:33). If one does good, one will receive gratitude for the good done to others (cf. 12:1). God protects man’s benevolence like the pupil of the eye (cf. 17:22). It should be offered to friends (cf. 30:6b). Kindness done to another person or benevolence towards someone else are of great importance to the Sage. For it ensures respect and appreciation from others (cf. 41:27; 45:1) and, in a sense, can be considered one of the indicators of wisdom (cf. 20:13, 16; 21:16; 32:10; 37:21). The above statements can be applied to the guarantor who supports a person in need by becoming their surety. Not only the guarantor does something very positive and important for the other person but also gains something extremely important (respect and recognition), which is of great value not only in the eyes of others but also in the eyes of God. It should be noted that in the Greek version of Sir 29:15α, the noun χάρις is used in the plural, which may mean that the good done by the guarantor is not a single act but many of them. The plural of the word may also refer to a one-time act with many positive gains for the person someone else becomes surety for (it has an impact on many aspects of life, e.g. economic, social, personal, family, etc.).

According to the interpretation adopted by the authors of the article, the noun “guarantor” denotes a subject who provides benefits to the one in need. Taking the Greek language into account, it is a substantivised adjective ἔγγυος, derived from the stem ἐγγυ found in the verb ἐγγυάω, to which a suffix is attached, with the use of which adjectives -οσare formed.<sup>79</sup> It does not occur in the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, except in the pericope under study, where it appears once more in v. 16αβ.

The second stich in v. 15 indicates the reason for the attitude of gratitude (this is expressed by the conjunction γάρ, which in 15βα introduces the reason, cause or rationale for

76 Cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 1978–1979; Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, II, 513; Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 2337–2338; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 729. See also H. Conzelmann, “χάρις κτλ. C. Judaism,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (eds. G. Kittel – G. Friedrich) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995) IX, 389; H.-H. Esser, “χάρις,” *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. 2 (Carlisle: Paternoster 1986) II, 116–117; C. Spicq, *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers 1994) III, 500–506.

77 Cf. Conzelmann, “χάρις κτλ. C. Judaism,” 389.

78 Cf. Conzelmann, “χάρις κτλ. C. Judaism,” 389; Hatch – Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 1455.

79 Cf. Romizi, *Vocabolario*, 386.

saying something beforehand) shown by not forgetting by the surety's receiver the one who supported that person in a difficult financial situation. For the guarantor did something exceptional, which the Sage of Jerusalem describes as giving one's soul/life away for a person in distress (ἔδωκεν γὰρ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ σοῦ). Except for the stich under analysis, the syntagma διδόναι τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ does not occur anywhere else in the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira.<sup>80</sup> The Greek translation of the Book of Sirach, apart from 29:15b, also does not speak of offering something or someone for someone else (διδόναι τι ὑπὲρ τινός). The noun ψυχὴ ("life", "soul") in the context of v. 15b, refers to life rather than a soul, implying that the guarantors providing assistance to persons in financial distress and in need of such help and support give their life away with all its aspects, including those relating to the spiritual sphere.<sup>81</sup> The guarantors risk everything they have and who they are, i.e. not only material goods but also put their lives at risk. A.A. Di Lella claims that to speak of giving one's life away for the sake of the other person is an overstatement – an exaggeration of the guarantor's gesture.<sup>82</sup> However, this is not an exaggerated statement<sup>83</sup> because if the person the responsibility for whose debt is taken is unable to repay the loan or does not want to do so, the guarantor has to do it and, consequently, the one is deprived of some or even all of the property, which could result not only in serious economic difficulties for the guarantor but – in extreme cases – in the loss of life, and perhaps also the life of the family members, due to lack of means of subsistence. Indeed, by vouching for someone else, that person puts their life in the hands of the one who asks for it. Therefore, defining the act of the guarantor towards the receiver of the benefit may be called a hyperbole, but it should also be emphasised that there is a large dose of realism in the assessment of that gesture.

Ben Sira reminds the person for whom someone else becomes surety to fulfil the indirectly assumed obligation towards the guarantor. By borrowing some material goods from someone else, a person not only agrees to repay the debt to the creditor but also promises the guarantor to pay it back, who might have to repay someone else's loan if the one is unable or unwilling to do so. The guarantor, by becoming surety for another individual, shows great courage, for they risk not only own property<sup>84</sup> but, as the Sage states, also their life. Therefore, the receiver of the benefit in the form of liability for their debt must remember that extraordinary act of kindness and graciousness. One should make every effort not to

80 In 7:20b, reference is made to the prohibition of doing evil to a hired servant who works diligently (literally giving their soul – μηδὲ μίσθιον διδόντα τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ). This text is most similar to the syntagma in 29:15b, but it clearly differs from it in the use of the verb δίδωμι. Ben Sira speaks three times of the prohibition to give oneself away (literally to give one's soul away) to a woman (9:2a – μὴ δῶς γυναῖκα τὴν ψυχὴν σου) and to a harlot (9:6a – μὴ δῶς πόρναις τὴν ψυχὴν σου), and in 30:21a – to sorrow (μὴ δῶς εἰς λύπην τὴν ψυχὴν σου). In the last three texts, the giving of one's soul away metaphorically expresses the giving of power over oneself to someone or something else, allowing that person's life to be completely dominated by someone or something to whom/what the soul is given (met. inner life with all its aspects).

81 Cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 181.

82 See Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 371.

83 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 155.

84 Cf. Palmisano, *Siracide*, 273; Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 181.

create any problems for their guarantors, moreover, although the text of 29:15 does not say it directly, one should show a huge gratitude for the help and support,<sup>85</sup> proportional to the risk undertaken by the one becoming surety for somebody else.<sup>86</sup>

### 5.3. Risks Faced by Persons Becoming Surety for Someone Else (vv. 16–19)

Having presented the general principles concerning suretyship, i.e. the encouragement to grant it and the need to fulfil the obligation towards the guarantor and repay the loan, Ben Sira moves on to show the risks associated with vouching for someone, i.e. assuming the obligation to repay the debt in the event that the borrower is unable or unwilling to pay the creditor back. It should be emphasised that the Sage devoted more than half of the pericope under study (eight stichs out of fourteen constituting the whole literary unit) to the description of the risks – they dominate Ben Sira’s reflection on the issue of suretyship.

#### 5.3.1. Attitude of the Sinner Towards the Guarantor (vv. 16–17)

The sinner in v. 16 contrasts with the good man (ἀνὴρ ἀγαθός) in v. 14a. The latter becomes surety for someone else even though it may expose that person to serious difficulties and dangers, hence the man does good and acts for the benefit of another person in a difficult economic and material situation. The sinner, on the contrary, as the very term indicates, acts with a completely different purpose. The person does not do good and is not concerned about the fate of the benefactor, i.e. the one who becomes surety for them, but undertakes acts that involve harm and damage on the part of the guarantor. The substantivised adjective ἀμαρτωλός, apart from the pericope under analysis (see vv. 16 and 19a), appears 38 more times<sup>87</sup> in the Greek shorter version of the text of the work of Ben Sira, and is found twice in GII (cf. 11:1a and 19:6a).<sup>88</sup> The man defined using that word is someone who opposes piety (cf. 1:25b; 33:14b), is double-faced (cf. 2:12b; 5:9b, 15d), full of anger and violence (cf. 27:30b), spreads discord (cf. 28:9a), multiplies sins (cf. 3:27b; 21:6a) and stays far away from wisdom (cf. 15:7b, 9a; 19:22b) due to avoiding admonition and interpreting the Law to their advantage (cf. 32:17a). The wrath of God will fall on such a person (cf. 5:6c), whom the Most High hates (cf. 12:6a), therefore the Sage warns his disciples to act in such a way that they are not included in the ranks of sinners (cf. 7:16b), who will bring evil upon man (cf. 11:32b) and whom God does not need (cf. 15:12b) and for whom He has created terrible things (cf. 39:25b). Furthermore, the Sage recommends not to have any contact with them (cf. 8:10a; 11:9b; 12:14a; 13:17b). He even advises ignoring and not helping them (cf. 12:4b, 7b). One should not envy them their glory

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Duesberg – Fransen, *Ecclesiastico*, 223.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 154. “In the event that circumstances require the guarantor to satisfy the creditor, this gratefulness would then include the recompensing of the guarantor for the debt since he has now become the ‘new’ creditor” (*Ibidem*, 154).

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Hatch – Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 64–65.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. J.-M. Auwers, *Concordance du Siracide (Grec II et Sacra Parallela)* (CahRB 58; Paris: Gabalda et C<sup>ie</sup> Éditeurs 2005) 20.

(cf. 9:11a) nor show honour and respect (cf. 10:23b) or admiration (cf. 11:21a) because the destruction awaits them (cf. 21:10a; 25:19b; 39:27b; 40:8b). Their offspring also deserve the same fate because of them (cf. 41:5a, 6a). Even their names will be erased from human memory (cf. 41:11b). For they only strive to destroy and do evil (cf. 16:6a, 13a; 23:8a). The above-mentioned texts clearly show that the image of the sinner presented by the Sage of Jerusalem in his work is clearly negative. The persons thus described oppose God due to their lack of piety and wisdom, they do evil and iniquity, for which they will be punished severely. In 29:16β, the noun ἀμαρτωλός lacks an article, which indicates that it is used in a general – generic – sense. Therefore, it does not refer to a specific, individual man, but to any sinner, i.e. a godless person who strives to do evil and unrighteousness. In the event of suretyship, their actions will have very dangerous and negative consequences. For they will destroy (ἀνατρέψει) the goods of the one who helps them by becoming surety for them (ἀγαθὰ ἐγγύου). According to H. Langkammer, the character in v. 16 is called a sinner because the person forgot about the guarantor, thereby breaking the order to fulfil the assumed obligations.<sup>89</sup>

The verb ἀνατρέπω (“to overturn”, “to knock down”, “to destroy”, “to upset”<sup>90</sup>), with which the act of the sinner involving the guarantor’s goods is described in Sir 29:16β, occurs only two more times in the Greek translation of the work of Ben Sira. In 12:12, the Sage advises his disciples not to keep their enemies close to them, so that they, having destroyed the adept of wisdom, do not take that place. In 12:16, he warns that the enemy praises with their mouth, but in their hearts, they plot how to trap the man praised by them. In both texts, the verb under analysis refers to overturning – knocking someone down, which brings a certain disadvantage to that person – the loss of the held social position – and a fall, which is a metaphoric expression of defeat and failure – misfortune. In 29:16β, it should be rather understood in its second sense, derived from the original meaning of the word (“to overturn”, “to upset”<sup>91</sup>), i.e. “to destroy”. Destruction is equivalent to the annihilation of someone or something, in this case – goods, i.e. the guarantor’s property. The action expressed by the form ἀνατρέψει can also be interpreted in a slightly less strong way compared to destruction. Sir 29:16 may also mean not a complete destruction of the guarantor’s property but an introduction of serious perturbations into the economic and material sphere of life of the guarantor (almost turning “upside down”), which is also dangerous and risky for the one who becomes surety for the sinner. The *futurum* form of ἀνατρέψει may be considered as expressing the future perfect tense (“will have destroyed/knocked over”), the future imperfect (“will be destroying/knocking over”) or the gnomic tense (“destroys/knocks over”). Each of those interpretations fits into the context of v. 16 perfectly well. The direct object ἀνατρέψει is the syntagma consisting of a substantivised adjective in

89 Cf. Langkammer, *Księga Syracha*, 240.

90 Cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 124; Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, I, 33; Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 200; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 47; Romizi, *Vocabolario*, 107.

91 Cf. Romizi, *Vocabolario*, 107.

the neuter plural accusative ἀγαθά, combined with the genitive of the substantivised adjective ἐγγυος (ἐγγύου). That genitive is to be regarded as *genetivus possessoris*, or possession, meaning that the goods in question belong to the guarantor. Both substantivised adjectives are devoid of articles, which supports their general – generic meaning (cf. ἀμαρτωλός). This, in turn, gives the whole v. 16 a universal meaning, i.e. it does not speak of the behaviour of a particular individual but of a popular in the Jewish community way of conduct. This statement seems to support the recognition of the form ἀνατρέψει as *futurum gnomicum*.

Sadly, the events described in v. 16 are not exceptions but a common practice of sinful and wicked people in their relations with their benefactors – those becoming surety for them and rescuing them from a difficult economic and material situation. This emphasises their ingratitude, baseness and meanness. Thus, Ben Sira presents to the reader a sad picture of the Jewish community of his time, or at least some part of it.

The dramatic consequences of the way of treatment by the sinner of their guarantor are also emphasised by the very structure of v. 16, in which the direct object is placed before the predicate (ἀγαθὰ ἐγγύου ἀνατρέψει), which should most likely be considered an emphatic emphasis on the disastrous results of the actions of an unjust person towards their benefactor.

Sir 29:16–17 constitutes synonymous parallelism, in which the sinner (ἀμαρτωλός; v. 16β) corresponds to the ungrateful man (ἀχάριστος; v. 17α), while the destruction of the guarantor's goods (ἀγαθὰ ἐγγύου ἀνατρέψει; v. 16α) means the deliberate ignorance of the saviour (ἐν διανοίᾳ ἐγκαταλείψει ῥυσάμενον; v. 16β).<sup>92</sup> Moreover, a concentric structure can be noticed there, at the centre of which there are expressions concerning its main character – the sinner, i.e. the ungrateful man (v. 16: direct object – predicate – subject // v. 17: conjunction – subject – adverbial – predicate – direct object).

The sinner referred to in v. 16β, based on synonymous parallelism, is defined in v. 17α as an ungrateful man. The noun ἀχάριστος (“ingrate”, “ungrateful person”) was formed through the substantivisation of the adjective. Like ἀμαρτωλός, it is not preceded by an article, which also gives it a general – generic – meaning, i.e. it does not refer to a specific, individual or an ungrateful person but to all people who do not express their gratitude for the good received from other people who have supported them and offered them some sort of assistance. In the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira, the adjective ἀχάριστος (“ungrateful”) occurs only one more time – in 29:25αβ. The text of that verse speaks of the ungratefulness of a guest. The visitor eats a meal, quenches thirst and rather than being grateful for the kindness and hospitality, the person is ungrateful (literally εἰς ἀχάριστα) and, instead of thanking the host, says unpleasant (literally bitter) words to the one who offered the welcome. It should be noted that in that text, the adjective in question was also substantivised in the accusative plural of the neuter. Thus, it does not refer to persons, but forms the abstract noun – “ingratitude”. It is worth paying attention to the fact that it is in the plural, which means that the act of ingratitude was not a single act but was repeated

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 155.

many times, which increases the scale of the lack of gratitude for the experienced kindness and hospitality. Both the man who does not show gratitude and the very ungratefulness are judged negatively, even condemned *imlicite*, as there is a lack of gratefulness and the good offered to someone in need is not recognised. In the Greek version of Sir 29:17, the sinner, i.e. the man who is unrighteous and does evil, is defined as an ingrate, since the person does not show gratitude to the one becoming surety for them, which contributed to saving the man from economic and material hardship. The sinfulness consists in the lack of justice towards the saviour, who, by becoming surety for someone else, sacrificed their life for the one in need (cf. v. 15b). This is not about justice relating to the material sphere but to the spiritual one, i.e. the internal attitude. The lack of gratitude is also considered a sin because it is a lack of respect and appreciation towards the guarantor, i.e. forgetting about that person (cf. 15a). The one who becomes surety for another individual is deprived of the above and thus, one might say, is robbed in some way of what was rightfully theirs.

Verse 17, on the one hand, based on synonymous parallelism, explains how the sinner/ungrateful person destroys the guarantor's property and, on the other hand, shows what the ingratitude consists in. The one who becomes surety is forgotten by the one who received the assistance and thus becomes dependent on the mercy of the creditor (*ἐγκαταλείψει ῥυσάμενον*). The Sage emphasises that the ungrateful man does this deliberately and premeditatedly (*ἐν διανοίᾳ*). Thus, it is not some unfortunate coincidence or unintentional and ill-considered action, but a deliberate act on the part of a dishonest borrower who does not intend to pay the incurred debt, which makes the loan attributable to the guarantor. The verb *ἐγκαταλείπω*, meaning the action of an ungrateful person, was already noticed in the pericope under study. In 29:14b, it describes the attitude of a shameless person towards the one asking for help, looking for someone else to become surety for them. The shameless man ignores the person in need of that form of support. A sinner, i.e. an ungrateful person, treats in the same way the one who helps them and offers to take responsibility for them. The future tense form *ἐγκαταλείψει*, analogous to *ἀνατρέψει* in v. 16, may be considered as predicative *futurum* ("will ignore"), progressive ("will be ignoring" i.e. will continue ignoring the benefactor) or gnomic ("ignores"). The direct object of the predicate in v. 17 (*ἐγκαταλείψει*) is *ῥυσάμενον* – the substantivised *participium aoristi* of the mediopassive voice (the *medium deponens*), in the masculine accusative singular, making it refer to a person (the man who is the saviour – the one who saves/rescues). In the Greek translation of the work of Ben Sira, the verb *ῥύομαι* ("to save", "to rescue", "to deliver", "to liberate") occurs only one more time – in 40:24bβ. The verse says that brothers and helpers are good to have in times of trouble, but a better form of salvation is almsgiving/mercy (*ἐλεημοσύνη*). The context of both verses, in which forms of that verb occur, is very similar. Indeed, both verses speak of rescuing and delivering someone from a difficult position/situation. Although it should be noted that the context of Sir 29:17 is economic and material hardship, whereas the situation referred to in Sir 40:24 is, literally, the time of trouble (*καιρὸς θλίψεως*), which may mean the material sphere but generally



expresses a hardship of a social or personal nature (e.g. persecution, rejection, hatred, etc.). On the basis of the presumption based on v. 14a, the one who offers help (the guarantor) in 29:17 is the neighbour, not the brother from 40:24. Nevertheless, it is a person close to the one for whom someone else becomes surety, which makes the situation all the more dramatic. If this was a stranger or a person with whom the relationship was less close and intimate, one could still understand the fact of leaving to the guarantor the obligation to repay the debt to the creditor, although even in that case it would be reprehensible behaviour. Even more so in the case of a relative, this is absolutely unacceptable, given the close interpersonal relationship between those people.

The perfidiousness of the person for whom another individual becomes surety is emphasised by the syntagma ἐν διανοίᾳ (“deliberately”, “intentionally”). It was formed by putting in front of the noun διάνοια (“thought”, “mind”, “intention”, “aim”<sup>93</sup>) the preposition ἐν. The whole expression can be regarded as *dativus modi* (“intentionally”, “deliberately”) or *causae* (“following the intention/aim”). The first of the above interpretations of the syntagma ἐν διανοίᾳ emphasises the manner in which the person who becomes surety for someone else is abandoned and left alone, while the second one shows the reason why the sinful ingrate does so and abandons the saviour, following the intention/aim. Both interpretations of the syntagma under analysis emphasise the fact that the one who receives the benefit in question abandons their benefactor consciously and deliberately, which further increases their responsibility and the immorality of the conduct. B.C. Gregory believes that the behaviour of the ungrateful sinner is due to their internal tendency, i.e. the lack of gratitude, which results in not recognising and acknowledging the merits and good nature of the saviour, i.e. the guarantor, the man who saved them. The scale of ingratitude is so great that, having been saved by means of suretyship, through their conduct, the sinners bring upon their benefactors the trouble which they were rescued from.<sup>94</sup> The roles are reversed and it is the guarantor who becomes the debtor to the creditor.

Sir 29:16–17 indicates the first risk associated with becoming surety for someone else. If one vouches for an unrighteous person (sinner) or an ingrate, the guarantor may lose their property or some part of it, depending on the amount of the debt. This happens when dishonest debtors, having received the guarantee, ignore their benefactor who took pity on them and offered the assistance, i.e. they fail to give the creditor the money back and, consequently, the guarantor has to pay the debt. Thus, the first danger arising from becoming surety for someone else is the risk for the guarantor to lose their assets.

### 5.3.2. Other Risks Associated with Becoming Surety for Another Person (v. 18)

The first risk associated with suretyship is that on the part of the one being supported due to their difficult financial and material situation. The second group of risks, which Ben Sira

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 405; Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, I, 106; Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 536; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 155.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 155–156.

presents in his reflection, relates directly to the act of suretyship, and indirectly to the person who receives such support, since suretyship – a non-living entity, cannot act. The noun ἐγγύη (“surety”, “guarantee”, “warranty”, “deposit”) is, in fact, the grammatical subject of the three stichs of the verse under consideration (18a–c), while the subject of stich 18d is the guarantors, persons facing the consequences of becoming surety for someone else (in the previous stichs, they were referred to by the complements of verbs expressing the fatal effects of becoming surety for another person). The noun ἐγγύη is etymologically related to the verb ἐγγυάω (cf. v. 14a and 8:13a, 13b) and the adjective ἐγγυος (cf. vv. 15a and 16). It was derived from the same stem (ἐγγυ) as the above two words, to which the noun suffix -η was added to indicate the effect of the action.<sup>95</sup> Apart from the pericope under study, it does not occur in the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira (cf. v. 19aβ), while in other books of the LXX, it is used two more times: Prov 17:18b and 22:26 (cf. sec. 1). It can be said that in the analysed stich of the work of the Sage of Jerusalem, the act of suretyship is personified since it is the subject of the predicate ἀπώλεσεν (“lost”). Obviously, in his text, the author does not mean the very act of suretyship, for it being an inanimate noun cannot take any action, but describes the effects that it may bring upon someone who offers support in the form of becoming surety for someone else. The verbal form constituting the predicate in the first stich in v. 18 should therefore be considered as the active causative voice, similarly to ἐσάλειυσεν in v. 18b and ἀπώκισεν in v. 18c.<sup>96</sup> The verb ἀπόλλυμι means the annihilation of someone or something, i.e. death or destruction. The effect of the action expressed by this word is the death of someone<sup>97</sup> or the complete disappearance of something that has existed.<sup>98</sup> Among the things that can be lost, Ben Sira includes: patience (2:14a; 41:2d), the fruit of the tree (6:3a), material goods (8:12b), inheritance (9:6b; 41:6a), trust (27:16a), friendship (27:18b), money (29:10a), shame (29:14a). Loss befalls the one who lends to a stronger person (cf. 8:12), a prostitute (cf. 9:6), the one who reveals the secret (cf. 27:16), as well as the one who gives money to the poor (cf. 29:10), an old man (cf. 41:2) and the offspring of sinners (cf. 41:6). Therefore, it quite often concerns sinful people who act in an unrighteous or unreasonable manner. The exceptions here are the old man and the person giving money to the poor. The latter group includes people who support those in need by becoming surety for them. Their good, righteous and noble deed, which should not expose them to the loss of their property or part of it, nevertheless is the reason for the above due to the dishonest conduct of the person they vouched for.

The Sage emphasises that the loss of part or perhaps even all of the guarantor’s property is not a one-off and rare case but it happens frequently and has affected many people (πολλούς).<sup>99</sup> Moreover, this concerns not only poor or not very wealthy people but also

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Romizi, *Vocabolario*, 386.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Piwowar, *Skladnia*, § 278.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. 3:26b; 6:4a; 8:2c; 10:3a, 16b, 17a; 17:28a; 20:22a, 22b; 22:27d; 27:18a; 28:13b; 30:23c; 31:25; 44:9b; 46:6b.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. 2:14a; 6:3a; 8:12b; 9:6b; 27:16a, 18b; 29:10a; 29:14b; 41:2d, 6a; 49:7c.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 156.

prosperous individuals (κατευθύνοντας), i.e. fairly rich ones, whose property does not allow them to worry about the future, as their possession ensures economic and financial security for them. Once again, it should be emphasised that the Greek text does not speak of specific prosperous people but of many from that group (the substantivised adjective πολλούς and the participle that serves as an adjective connected to it in the manner of an adnominal κατευθύνοντας are not preceded by articles, which makes them have a general – generic meaning). The verb κατευθύνω (in the transitive sense “to make straight”, “to lead straight”, “to guide” [cf. 39:7a; 49:3a; 50:20a]<sup>100</sup>; and in the non-transitive sense “to achieve/be successful” [cf. 49:2a]<sup>101</sup>) in 29:18aβ refers to those who are fruitfully engaged in a business activity, which is profitable and makes them rich. It can also be applied to the moral sphere of the guarantors. They may be people who live righteous and honest lives (the biblical metaphor of walking upright). It is important to note that both of the aspects expressed by that participle are not just temporary or realised over a given period of time, but are permanent and happen continuously in the lives of the many people referred to in v. 18a (this is emphasised by the *participium praesentis* form, which has an imperfective aspect, i.e. it refers to an ongoing action, stretched over time). Although those people skilfully conducted their economic and financial activities and managed their businesses very well, which brought them certain wealth and possession, they got into trouble by becoming surety for someone else and their assets were destroyed, i.e. they went bankrupt.<sup>102</sup> The described outcome of becoming surety for another person is identical to that presented earlier, in v. 16 – the destruction of the guarantor’s property.

The second risk associated with becoming surety for someone else, which the Sage draws attention to, though less dangerous and not causing the downfall of prosperous people, is a major shake-up in their lives (ἐσάλειψεν αὐτούς, v. 18ba), which Ben Sira compares to the impact of a sea wave (ὡς κύμα θαλάσσης, v. 18bβ).<sup>103</sup> The verb σαλεύω (“to rock”, “to sway”, “to shake”, “to joggle”, “to move”) expresses the loss of a physical, inner or spiritual balance (cf. 16:18; 43:16; 48:19), which may have serious consequences in a person’s life since it may lead to a fall in a physical sense (falling over; cf. 13:21) or in a metaphorical sense (some serious perturbations as a result of which someone loses important moral, religious or material goods – cf. 28:14; 48:12). In 29:18b it is a reference to a situation posing a significant danger that does not lead to a fall but is a shake-up to the lives of prosperous people (they are referred to by the third-person plural personal pronoun in the masculine accusative αὐτούς). It is such a strong shake-up of their entire lives that it may contribute to a great disaster, i.e. total destruction or bankruptcy.<sup>104</sup> Ben Sira compares that loss of

100 B.M. Zapff interprets the participle κατευθύνοντας as referring to a person who steers a sinking ship (cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach* 25–51, 182).

101 Cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 925; Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, II, 249; Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 1119; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 389.

102 Cf. Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 184; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 156.

103 Cf. Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 211.

104 Cf. Vignini, *Siracide*, 174.

stability to the impact of a sea wave, which may lead to the destruction of the whole ship or serious damage (cf. 43:24a). In this case, becoming surety for another person does not destroy the guarantor completely but seriously affects their entire life and many of its aspects. They may come close to a fall, which it does not happen after all, and their life and property are saved.<sup>105</sup> The situation of the guarantor described in v. 18b may be compared to the fate and life of a man ignoring the Law, who, in 33:2b, is compared to a ship tossed by waves and close to destruction – annihilation.<sup>106</sup>

The third effect of becoming surety for another person mentioned by the Sage is the risk of being forced to leave one's home country and ending up in exile in foreign lands, among unknown people (v. 18cd). Once again, it is not the very act of suretyship that directly forces the guarantors to leave their home country (cf. vv. 18a and 18b). The necessity to leave one's homeland is the consequence of the dishonest attitude of the suretyship beneficiary towards the payment of their debt. The active voice of the form ἀπόκισεν (from the verb ἀποικίζω – “to drive out of one's home, country”, “to remove”<sup>107</sup>) should therefore be considered, like the predicates in the previous two stichs (v. 18ab), as the active causative voice.<sup>108</sup> Both the very meaning of the verb ἀποικίζω, from which the aorist form ἀπόκισεν is derived, and the tense in which it is expressed emphasise the leaving of the homeland by the guarantors, who, in v. 18ca, are referred to as prosperous men (ἄνδρες δυνατοί). The syntagma ἄνδρας δυνατούς, which is the direct object of the predicate ἀπόκισεν, is not preceded by an article (neither the noun that forms part of it nor the adjective linked to it in the manner of an adnominal have articles), therefore it has a generic meaning that emphasises the nature of those people. Its plural form, in turn, indicates again (cf. πολλούς in v. 18aa) that the fact of becoming surety for somebody else had negative consequences not only for some, i.e. individual people, but it had a widespread socio-economic impact on many people who became liable for someone else's debt and who used to be prosperous individuals. Apart from 29:18c, the adjective δυνατός (“having power”, “great”, “mighty”, “strong”) is found two more times in the Greek translation of the work of Ben Sira. In 21:7aβ, it is substantivised and used to denote a man “strong in speech”, while in 47:5c, it is used to express the physical strength of Goliath defeated by David. In 29:18c, it is used to describe power associated with both financial and material resources, in which case the adjective would refer to the property and wealth of a mighty man and their position in the social hierarchy. Thus, it would be a reference to a man holding a high position or having some authority over a community (e.g. leader of the people, judge, etc.), which allowed that person to dominate others. In antiquity, it was quite common for these two types of power to

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 184.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 155.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 200; Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, I, 50; Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 290; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 74. The verb is derived from the stem ἀπ.οικ of the verb ἀποικέω (“to emigrate”, “to colonise”), to which the causative suffix -ίζω - was added (cf. Romizi, *Vocabolario*, 178).

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Piwowar, *Skladnia*, § 278.

be held by the same person, therefore v. 18c might refer to someone who might have had both attributes described by the adjective *δυνατός*. Thus, it was not a “mere-ranking member of the community” but someone occupying an exceptional social position or somebody very wealthy – or both. If the negative consequences of becoming surety for someone else affected those performing such important roles in the Jewish community, it might have been even worse for ordinary people. They were much more exposed to the risk of having to flee their home country in order not to be deprived of their possession than wealthy and influential people who had connections in the circle of important people and were most probably protected in some way by their influential colleagues.

The fourth stich, v. 18, specifies and further determines the effect of becoming surety for another person, mentioned in the preceding stich (v. 18c). Having left their home and their homeland, the guarantors, who were once powerful people (rich and holding important positions in the social hierarchy), find themselves among strangers, far away from their country (*ἐπλανήθησαν ἐν ἔθνεσιν ἄλλοτριούς*). In v. 18d, the subject is no longer the act of suretyship, but the mighty men who had to leave their own country as a consequence of once becoming surety for other individuals. Those are subjects in plural form connoted by the form *ἐπλανήθησαν* – the predicate in the fourth stich in v. 18. The verb *πλανάω* in the passive takes on the meaning “to stray”, “to wander”, “to be lost”, “to get lost”. In the passive voice, in the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, it appears seven more times, apart from 29:18dα. A beautiful woman led many astray (cf. 9:8c). A man who is lost in his life wonders about silly things (cf. 16:23b). Whoever chases money will get lost looking for it, possibly because of it (cf. 31:5b). Whoever has travelled (*ἀνὴρ πεπλανημένος*) has come to know many things and matters (cf. 34:9a) and enriched their wisdom (cf. 34:10b). A man without a wife is a sighing wanderer (cf. 36:25b). Ben Sira began to travel while he was still young (cf. 51:13a). As can be seen from the cursory use of the analysed verb in the passive in the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira, it may take on two meanings: first, it may refer to wandering – understood as morally wrong conduct, and second, it may mean travelling. It is in the second sense that *ἐπλανήθησαν* in 29:18dα should be understood, which should be regarded as a complexive aorist, i.e. determining an activity continued or repeated in the past that has come to an end.<sup>109</sup> Their wandering might have ended with their death or they might have finally found a new place to live, where they might have settled down and started a new life. Powerful people had to abandon their homeland, so they kept on wandering, unable to find a permanent place to stay in the distant places among foreign nations. In ancient times, this was associated with great risks, which involved – like travelling, even the loss of life.

It is worth paying attention to the syntagma defining the place to which the poor guarantors, forced to leave their homelands, went. It is described not by a reference to a space – a place – but to persons. They escaped and stayed, wandering, leading a non-sedentary lifestyle among foreign nations. The fact of changing the place of stay is emphasised by

109 Cf. Piwowar, *Składnia*, § 331.

the plural dative ἔθνεσιν (“[among] nations”), which means that they constantly changed their place of stay in exile, moved over long distances, since the reference is made not to one but many nations. The syntagma ἐν ἔθνεσιν ἀλλοτρίοις highlights another aspect of the escape of the regrettable guarantors. They did not move far away from their homeland, but moved very far away from that place, since the Greek text mentions nations and yet foreign nations. Both the noun ἔθνος (“nation”, “people”, “foreign peoples” – in the plural, “pagans”<sup>110</sup>) in the plural form and the adjective linked to it in the manner of an adnominal ἀλλότριος (“belonging to another”, “somebody else’s”, “foreign”<sup>111</sup>; cf. 8:18a; 9:8b; 11:34a; 23:22b, 23d) emphasise that the guarantors, who had to leave their homeland, radically changed their environment and were forced to stay among strangers, people not associated with Jews in any way. This highlights even more the tragedy of the unfortunate benefactors. The analysed words indicating the places of relocation of the unlucky guarantors are not preceded by articles, thus they do not indicate specific nations but emphasise their quality, i.e. the fact of being completely unfamiliar. Apart from 29:18dβ, the syntagma ἔθνος ἀλλότριος appears three more times in the Greek version of the Book of Sirach. In 36:2a, it refers to enemies – not only of God but also of Israel, while in 39:4c, it refers to people living in the vicinity of the Jewish state who have different customs and culture, although they are not hostile. Sir 49:5b, in turn, speaks of the last rulers of Judah giving their power and glory to a foreign nation, hostile to them. When mentioned in the Greek text of the Book of Sirach, foreign nations do not necessarily always mean enemies of Israel, as is the case in 36:2a and 49:5b. They may have had a tolerant attitude towards Jews (cf. 39:4c and 29:18b), but were always foreign, i.e. of a different religion, culture and traditions. There were no close relations between the two groups, except perhaps in the sense of geography, economy and commerce.

Commenting on the necessity for the one who has become surety for someone else to leave their country, H. Langkammer wonders whether in v. 18cd Ben Sira refers to the Babylonian Captivity. He states that this is not certain, however, in his opinion, “some similarities are noticeable.”<sup>112</sup> Sadly, he does not specify the details, and based only on the necessity of leaving one’s homeland is not enough to give a positive answer to that question.

When discussing the necessity for powerful people to flee from their country as a consequence of the suretyship referred to in Sir 29:18cd, the question must be asked why they had to leave their homeland and go to an unfamiliar place. The preceding context suggests that those people had to do so as they had been driven to bankruptcy, i.e., they lost

110 Cf. G. Bertram, “ἔθνος, ἔθνικός. A. People and Peoples in the LXX,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (eds. G. Kittel – G. Friedrich) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995) II, 366–369; H. Bietenhard, “ἔθνος,” *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. 2 (Carlisle: Paternoster 1986) II, 791–792.

111 Cf. H. Bietenhard, “ἀλλότριος,” *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, ed. 2 (ed. C. Brown) (Carlisle: Paternoster 1986) I, 684–685; F. Büchsel, “ἄλλος, ἀλλότριος, ἀπαλλοτριώω, ἀλλογενής, ἀλλόφυλος,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (eds. G. Kittel – G. Friedrich) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1995) I, 265.

112 Langkammer, *Księga Syracha*, 240.

their property and therefore had to go to a foreign land to start a new life there. There is, however, another possibility, i.e. that they did so in order not to be deprived of all their possession. They did not want to pay the debt of another person – whom they had become surety for, so they fled not to lose everything they owned, especially real property. If this was the reason for them leaving their home country, they would turn out to be dishonest towards the creditor to whom they had promised to pay the debt in question. In that case, the guarantors would be dishonest because they did not want to repay the loan they took responsibility for and run away so as not to go bankrupt. Ben Sira, however, does not seem to have had that kind of case in mind but speaks of people who paid off the debt of those who were unable or unwilling to do so, which ruined them and made them lose everything they owned, which led them to go to foreign lands to seek happiness and start a new life there. Thus, the Sage does not assume the dishonesty of the guarantors, which he does in relation to the suretyship beneficiaries, but speaks of reliable and upright people who fulfilled their obligation to repay the debt of another person whom they had vouched for, therefore they lost everything they had and were forced to go to foreign countries seeing no prospects for themselves in their current place of residence.

The central stichs (v. 18) of the section on the risks associated with suretyship, directly related to becoming surety for someone else, clearly show the dangers the guarantor was exposed to, even if that person was a man of wealth and prominence.<sup>113</sup> Even rich people, with power and extensive influence and contacts, were at risk of losing everything they owned, or just part of their property, if they became surety for a dishonest man who took advantage of their good heart and generosity. They once rescued a person in need, but following that gesture of support, they got into serious trouble and needed help themselves.<sup>114</sup>

### 5.3.3. Attitude of a Sinner Towards Suretyship (v. 19)

In the last verse of the section on the risks associated with suretyship, Ben Sira goes back to the figure of a sinner (*ἁμαρτωλός*; cf. v. 16β). Verses 16–17 and v. 19 form the framework of that section of Sir 29:14–20, the centre of which is the description of the dangers directly associated with becoming responsible for someone else's debt. It should also be noted that both verses concerning the sinner are constructed using synonymous parallelism. Based on that observation, it should be noticed that in v. 19, the sinner (*ἁμαρτωλός*) in v. 19aα corresponds to the profit-chaser (*διώκων ἐργολαβίας*) in v. 19ba,<sup>115</sup> while getting involved in suretyship (*ἐμπεσεῖται εἰς ἐγγύην*) in v. 19aβ is synonymous with being subjected to court judgements (*ἐμπεσεῖται εἰς κρίσεις*) in v. 1bβ.<sup>116</sup>

The sinner referred to in v. 19a may be identified with *ἁμαρτωλός* in v. 16 or it may be considered that it is about another person. That noun is not preceded by an article, hence it has a general – generic meaning in both verses, i.e. it emphasises the nature of that man

113 Cf. Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 206.

114 Cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 182.

115 Cf. Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 371.

116 Cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 182.

but does not indicate a specific person. If both words refer to the same category of people, then the punishment for the injustice done to the guarantor by not paying the debt would be for the one vouching for someone else to fall into the trap of suretyship. This can be understood in two ways. First, the guarantor would be forced to ask someone else to become surety for them, and second, that person would risk ruining their life as a consequence of becoming surety for somebody else. The syntagma *ἐμπεσείται εἰς ἐγγύην* (literally “will fall into the trap of suretyship”) may be understood in the two indicated ways. According to the first possible interpretation, being in a situation where the person has to ask for help in the form of a guarantee is a punishment because it means that their economic and material position is so bad that without the loan and someone else becoming responsible for them one cannot handle it – the individual got into trouble and needs assistance. The situation is all the more risky since that person has betrayed their guarantor, therefore most probably no one will want to vouch for them and, consequently, there is no chance of getting a loan thus they will go bankrupt and will have to beg in the streets to survive. That person has to suffer as a consequence of being dishonest in the past. Based on the second way of interpretation of the syntagma *ἐμπεσείται εἰς ἐγγύην*, falling into the trap of suretyship means that the sinner became surety for someone else exposing themselves to the danger of being cheated on – just as they took advantage of the trust on the part of their guarantor and dealt with them in an unjust and treacherous manner. Both interpretations indicate that the sinner finds themselves in a difficult situation that poses a serious direct threat to their property and, indirectly, to their life.

If, in turn, the noun *ἀμαρτωλός*, having the generic meaning indicated by the absence of an article, does not refer to the character mentioned in v. 16, it would mean any person who commits any wrongdoing, not necessarily relating to the field of suretyship or economy. In this case, stich 29:19a would have a general meaning and would be a warning addressed to all sinners indicating that if they continue their wrong behaviour they will be punished with all the dangers involved in suretyship, described by the Sage in the previous verses (cf. vv. 16–18).

B.C. Gregory claims that the main character in v. 19, i.e. the sinner, can be considered either a lender who hopes to take over the guarantor’s property in the event of the borrower’s insolvency, or a guarantor who demands payment for becoming liable for the debt.<sup>117</sup> J. Corley confirms the latter possibility, arguing that the character in v. 19 is an ambitious guarantor who tries to gain some profit by getting involved in the suretyship, and who will be subjected to a lawsuit for that reason.<sup>118</sup>

Apart from 29:19, the verb *ἐπίπτω* (“to fall into”) occurs eight more times in the Greek version of the Book of Sirach (cf. 2:18a; 8:1b; 9:3b; 13:10a; 27:26a; 28:23a; 29:20b and 38:15b).<sup>119</sup> Aside from 13:10a, where it takes on the meaning of “to push, to

117 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 156–157.

118 Cf. Corley, *Sirach*, 83. Cf. also Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus*, 146.

119 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158.



press”, it expresses finding oneself in some difficult, risky situation. The object of the verb, expressed by the syntagma εἰς + *accusativus*, may mean the hands of God or a man/doctor, the snare of a woman of debauchery, a pit or a flame. The objects alone emphasise the extremely difficult situation of the person fallen into the trap since they express either a punishment or an imminent threat to human life. Also, the very construction of the object highlights the effective finding oneself in danger, since the preposition εἰς (“into” in the sense of towards the interior – inside) is used based on a “preposition competition”<sup>120</sup> instead of ἐν (“into”, the use of this preposition would be expected since the compound verb ἐνπίπτω\* should be combined with ἐν or the dative, not with εἰς). In 29:19a the sinner will fall into the trap of suretyship, which will be both a punishment for them and a threat to their standard of living so far. This emphasises the drama of their fate, since it means that their material and economic situation is very bad and they need help or may be deceived by the persons they have vouched for, just as they did to the one who had vouched for them, if ἁμαρτωλός in v. 16 and 19a is the same person. The first as well as the second interpretation indicates that they are on the verge of bankruptcy and losing their property. The analogous position of the sinner, which threatens their life, is referred to in 38:15. Although both situations in which the unvirtuous men find themselves are completely different (illness in 38:15 and the spectre of bankruptcy in 29:19), they actually pose a threat to their lives.

With the use of synonymous parallelism in Sir 29:19, the sinner is defined as a man chasing after gain (διώκων ἐργολαβίας<sup>121</sup>).<sup>122</sup> The *participium praesentis activi* διώκων poses a difficulty in its interpretation, since it may be regarded as having the function of an adverb – an adverbial referring to ἐμπεσεῖται (v. 19bβ; “chasing...will fall into”) or it can be considered substantivised and expressing the subject of the second stich in v. 19 (“chasing [by implication a man]”). The lack of an article before this participle makes both interpretations acceptable. However, based on the construction of the entire v. 19, i.e. synonymic parallelism, it should be considered that the verb form under analysis must be interpreted as a substantivised participle that functions as the subject of the second stich in v. 19. Besides 29:19b the substantivalised *participium praesentis* of the verb διώκω occurs two more times in the Greek version of the Book of Sirach. In 31:5, the man who loves god (ὁ ἀγαπῶν χρυσίον) is compared to the one who chases after money (ὁ διώκων διάφορα). The former will not be justified (οὐ δικαιωθήσεται), while the latter will go astray because of material goods (ἐν αὐτοῖς πλανηθήσεται). Sir 34:2, in turn, says that the one who believes in dreams is like the one chasing after the wind (διώκων ἄνεμον) and trying to grasp

120 Cf. Piwowar, *Składnia*, § 242.

121 The noun ἐργολαβία is *hapax legomenon* in the LXX (cf. Hatch – Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, 541). In classical Greek, it can mean “profit”, “contract (related to admission to work)” or “use” referring to the work of others (cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 682; Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, I, 180; Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 841; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 289; also Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 184; Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 182). Etymologically, it means to employ someone (cf. Romizi, *Vocabolario*, 545), but it may also relate to receiving/obtaining the fruits of labour, i.e. profit/earning.

122 Cf. Vignini, *Sinacide*, 174.

the shadow. In the context of the interpretation of Sir 29:19b, the aforementioned quotation of Sir 31:5 is very telling and important. For this verse states that the pursuit of and attachment to the greatest possible wealth and riches leads to destruction, manifested by lack of justification and going astray. A similar bad fate awaits the profit seeker in 29:19b. Thus, Ben Sira condemns the pursuit of profit and increasing one's wealth as dangerous for man.<sup>123</sup> For facing court judgements is to be understood as being guilty of some crime. In the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, apart from 29:19bβ, the noun κρίσις (“judgment”, “conviction”, “condemnation”, “punishment”, “court”) is found eleven more times<sup>124</sup> in GI and one more time in 19:25c (GII).<sup>125</sup> When it refers to a court judgment or the act of judgment in the sense of legal proceedings against the accused, it is generally associated with the wrongdoing of someone and finding that person guilty, especially if the judge is God (cf. 33:13d; 35:18b, 23a). Why will a profit seeker be subjected to legal proceedings? From the context of the entire pericope on suretyship, it can be concluded that such a person, while chasing after profit, helped someone else, i.e. became surety for somebody else, not selflessly – as the Law required (prohibition of lending at interest and usury; cf. Ex 22:24–25; Lev 25:36; Deut 23:20; 24:12–13; and Amos 2:8), but demanded from the person being in a difficult material and economic situation, who asked for such support, money or some other goods in return. By doing so, that individual violated the provisions on selfless help to one's neighbour, therefore was handed over to the court for breaking the Law.<sup>126</sup> The person got into trouble due to the desire to make a profit and become rich by taking advantage of someone else. B.M. Zapff believes that v. 19b may also refer to various types of suretyship-related schemes leading to the seizure by the creditor of the guarantor's property or some part of it.<sup>127</sup>

The rather enigmatic v. 19, because of the difficulty of identifying the sinner to whom it refers,<sup>128</sup> summarises the risks associated with suretyship. Any malpractice in this regard may turn out to be a disaster for the one who committed it and was dishonest. Ben Sira indirectly condemns self-interest in suretyship, i.e. the demand of some form of compensation by the guarantor who wants to make a profit and gain something for incurring the risk in the form of taking responsibility for someone else's debt. At the same time, he warns against that kind of iniquity. According to the Sage, assistance should be selfless because it is not acceptable to enrich oneself at the expense of others in need of support and who are in a difficult material situation. Such unworthy conduct will be punished and the one who acts that way is a sinner as they break the Law.

123 Cf. Langkammer, *Księga Syracha*, 240.

124 Cf. Sir 3:2b; 11:9b; 16:26a; 18:20a; 25:4b; 33:13d, 30b; 35:18b, 23a; 38:16c.

125 Cf. Auwers, *Concordance du Siracide*, 50.

126 Cf. Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 210–211; Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 184; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 156; Langkammer, *Księga Syracha*, 240; Palmisano, *Siracide*, 274; Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 371–372; Vignini, *Siracide*, 174; Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 182.

127 Cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 182.

128 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 156–157.

#### 5.4. Summary of the Sage's Teaching – The Order to Become Surety for Someone Else (v. 20)

Verse 20, ending the teaching of Ben Sira on suretyship, clearly refers to v. 14, which is the introduction to the pericope 29:14–20. The two verses are linked by a noun τὸ πλῆσιον (“neighbour”; cf. vv. 14aβ and 20aα)<sup>129</sup> and the idea of helping a person in need – expressed by ἀντιλαβοῦ (“help”, v. 20aα)<sup>130</sup> and ἐγγυήσεται (literally “will vouch/will become surety for”, v. 14aβ).<sup>131</sup> It should be emphasised that the opening verse of the pericope on suretyship does not order getting involved but states that a good man supports a person in need by becoming surety for them, whereas v. 20a explicitly orders the reader, despite the associated risks (vv. 16–19), to support the one asking for assistance in the form of becoming their guarantor.

The predicate in the first stich in v. 20 is a form of the aorist imperative mode (ἀντιλαβοῦ), the implied subject of which is the Sage's disciple/listener. The wise teacher addresses his disciple directly with a firm command to support their neighbour. Indeed, the *imperativus aoristi* is an order for the immediate performance of the action it refers to. The Sage leaves his disciple no opportunity to discuss the command; the order should be performed with no hesitation, without questioning it, and with no further negotiation. The verb ἀντιλαμβάνομαι (“to grasp”, “to secure”, “to help”, “to stand up for someone”<sup>132</sup>) in the LXX and the Greek version of the Book of Sirach is *medium deponens*, i.e. it is in the mediopassive voice but with the meaning in the active voice. It is of great importance as the mediopassive voice of the imperative aorist ἀντιλαβοῦ does not relate to the action of the subject for their own benefit, but the object of the action is the neighbour (τοῦ πλῆσιον). Based on the etymology of that verb (the improper preposition ἀντί [“instead of”, “in exchange for”] and the verb λαμβάνω [“to take”]<sup>133</sup>), it is about acting for the benefit or in the place of someone else. Apart from 29:20a, that verb occurs five more times in the Greek version of the work of Ben Sira. God is its subject only once (cf. 2:6a). In all other cases, it refers to the action of man. It should be emphasised that whenever its subject is a human being, it means an order (ἀντιλαβοῦ, cf. 3:12a and 29:9a) or a prohibition addressed to a sinner (μὴ ἀντιλάβῃ τοῦ ἁμαρτωλοῦ, cf. 12:4b, 7b) and the message is dedicated directly to the Sage's disciple (second person singular, as in 29:20aα). In the context of the analysis of 29:20a, 29:9a is a very important text speaking of the necessity to help another person, since it urges coming to the aid of a poor person, following the commandment (χάριν ἐντολῆς – literally “for the sake of/because of the commandment/order”, “because of the commandment/order”). Thus, helping another person is not based solely on compassion or mercy but, first and foremost, it is the fulfilment of the commandment of the Lord. This confirms

129 Cf. Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 372.

130 Cf. Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 182.

131 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158.

132 Cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 157; Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, I, 40–41; Montanari, *Vocabolario della lingua greca*, 242; Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 59.

133 Cf. Romizi, *Vocabolario*, 139.

the intuition expressed earlier that becoming surety for another person in economic and material distress is the fulfilment of the commandment to love the neighbour.

The command to help expressed by Ben Sira in 29:20a is not universal, i.e. always valid, in any circumstances, or applicable to every person. It has some limitations and applies only to a neighbour, i.e. a person with whom the Sage's disciple has some sort of relationship. The same limitation applies to suretyship (cf. v. 14a). It is necessary to help, that is, in the context of the whole pericope, to vouch only for one's neighbour, i.e. for a person whom one knows and has a certain relationship with – some kind of closeness. This is to avoid the risks associated with suretyship. By vouching for a stranger, one cannot be sure whether that person will act in an appropriate way and won't ignore their guarantor in the future driving them to bankruptcy and forcing them to go to a distant country (cf. vv. 16–18). By assisting someone familiar, one risks much less than in the case of helping a stranger, although even then one may be deceived by the person whom one supports and trusts.

Therefore, the first limitation relating to suretyship is the individual one assists. The second, but no less important, is the property of the guarantor. Based on the above, V. Morla Asensio concludes that the message in 20a – compared to v. 14a, is more neutral,<sup>134</sup> i.e. there is more prudence and caution. This is expressed by the syntagma *κατὰ δύναμίν σου*. In the Greek version of the Book of Sirach, the noun *δύναμις* (“power”, “might”, “strength”) in the sense of “possibility/ability” is found only in 8:13a (*μὴ ἐγγυήσῃ ὑπὲρ δύνάμιν σου* – literally “do not vouch beyond your ability”), which is a reference – like the whole pericope under study – to suretyship. Uttering these words, Ben Sira warns his disciples not to vouch beyond their ability, i.e. not to provide a guarantee that would exceed their financial capability and assets, which could lead to trouble or cause serious economic and financial problems for them (cf. Tob 4:8). Taking one's possibilities into account is a call not to overestimate one's wealth and property, and thus – not to provide a guarantee exceeding the value of one's assets, and not to risk losing an amount that could pose some risk to the guarantor if the borrower is unable or unwilling to repay their debt to the creditor and the guarantor is forced to do it instead. Each guarantor should reasonably and prudently assess their ability to help their neighbour and offer support only if their assets allow them to do so and their possession will not be seriously threatened.<sup>135</sup> The same idea is presented in 8:13a – the prohibition of becoming surety beyond one's capability, i.e. material resources, property.<sup>136</sup>

These are two limitations that anyone asked to become a party in the act of suretyship should take into account and consider before becoming liable for someone else's debt. They are also the basis for refusing to vouch for someone, which Ben Sira implicitly (*implicite*) allows, despite the express (*explicite*) commandment to help. Thus, the Sage allows the refusal of becoming surety for someone else if the two above-mentioned restrictions are not observed. The reason for refusal should not be a reluctance to help a person in need, but

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Morla Asensio, *Eclesiastico*, 149.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 210–211; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Gilbert, “Prêt, aumône et caution,” 185; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158–159; Skehan – Di Lella, *The Wisdom*, 372.

concern for one's life and one's family, which may be at risk in the event of becoming surety for a stranger, thus acting in an imprudent way, offering assistance beyond one's possibilities.

The second stich confirms the reasons for refusing the type of help under study, drawing attention to prudence towards oneself (πρόσεχε σεαυτῶ μὴ ἐμπέσης – “beware, lest you fall”) as the main argument for not becoming liable for someone else's debt. Sir 29:20b consists of a main sentence expressing a command – an order (πρόσεχε σεαυτῶ) and an intentional subordinate clause (μὴ ἐμπέσης), in which the conjunction ἵνα, possibly ὅπως (“in order to”, “so that”), introducing that type of subordinate sentence is omitted.

In v. 20bα, Ben Sira again directly addresses his disciple using the imperative form of the present tense, the active voice and the second person singular πρόσεχε (“beware”). This time, it is a command uttered using *imperativus praesentis*, which refers to repeating or continuing the action expressed by the verb. Thus, the Sage urges his disciple to be constantly on guard and careful, not to make some mistake involving a lack of prudence or reason. Apart from 29:20b, the verb προσέχω (“to pay attention to something”, “to watch something closely”, “to pay attention to someone”) can be found sixteen more times in the Greek version of the work of the Sage of Jerusalem, of which as many as eight times in the identical form as in the stich under analysis (cf. 1:29a; 6:13b; 7:24a; 11:33a; 13:8a.13a; 16:24b and 28:26a). Πρόσεχε always means a warning, an admonishment to watch over some aspect of one's life (cf. 1:29b; 13:8a, 13a; 16:24b; 28:26a) or towards others (cf. 6:13b; 7:24a; 11:33a). Of all these texts, in the context of the analysis of 29:20b, attention should be drawn to 13:8a and 28:26a, since the former calls for vigilance so as not to be deceived (πρόσεχε μὴ ἀποπλανηθῆς) and the latter recommends staying aware so as not to slip, i.e. not to lose balance and fall (μήπως ἄλισθης ἐν αὐτῇ μὴ πέσης) into someone else's trap. Also in 29:20b, Ben Sira encourages his disciple to be mindful of whom they want to help and stay prudent while acting. The above is emphasised by the use of the reflexive pronoun σεαυτῶ (“himself/herself”) instead of the personal pronoun in the singular dative (σοι/σοί – “you”).

The intentional subordinate clause states the danger against which Ben Sira warns his disciple. It is a fall (μὴ ἐμπέσης) or, more literally, falling into. In the Greek text, the same verb ἐπίπτω – as in vv. 19a and 19b, is used.<sup>137</sup> Verse 20b, however, does not specify what the disciple of the Sage may fall into (there is no object expressed using the syntagma εἰς + *accusativus*), but one can guess from the context that it refers to falling into the trouble and danger associated with becoming someone else's surety.<sup>138</sup>

In the conclusion of his reflection on suretyship, Ben Sira goes back to the initial idea, according to which a person who needs support in the form of a guarantee should be helped.<sup>139</sup> However, this is not an absolute order, i.e. independent of the circumstances, applicable in every case and every request of that type. The Sage encourages caution and

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Vigni, *Sinacide*, 174.

not to offer that form of support to unknown persons or strangers or in situations where it might pose a risk of getting into serious financial trouble.<sup>140</sup> An order for support by means of becoming surety for another person has two limitations: personal (it should be offered only to a neighbour) and economic (the amount should not exceed the financial possibilities of the guarantor). Taking these two factors into account before becoming a party in the act of suretyship is a manifestation of reason and prudence,<sup>141</sup> i.e. one of the main indications of wisdom.

## Conclusions

Ben Sira, in his teaching on suretyship, encourages (cf. v. 14a and v. 20a) – despite the risks associated with that type of assistance, offering help to the person in need of financial and material support (cf. vv. 16–19) and becoming surety for such an individual. He is a realist who closely observes the events around him, therefore he notices the possible risks associated with such a form of assistance and thus does not want to stay silent (cf. vv. 16–18) and warns his disciple of the dangers. Despite the serious threats (the possibility of bankruptcy and the necessity to leave the home country), he supports the act of becoming surety for someone who asks for such help. However, being aware of the consequences of the improper conduct of the suretyship beneficiaries towards the creditors and guarantors, he advises to stay prudent and use common sense when it comes to such aid. As per the Sage, that form of help might be refused if one does not know the one asking for it, or if the amount of the loan threatens the position of the guarantor. The order to help is therefore not bounding but involves the above-mentioned limitations relating to the assistance in the form of becoming liable for someone else's debt. Taking them into account is an indication of reasonableness and prudence, i.e. one needs to take a wise and well-thought-out decision so as not to expose themselves or their family to financial problems.<sup>142</sup>

Ben Sira also reminds the person who was vouched for of the need to fulfil the obligation to repay the debt, so as not to expose the guarantor to the loss of part or even all of their property (cf. v. 15).<sup>143</sup> The one who is dishonest and unfair in this regard is called by the Sage of Jerusalem a sinner.<sup>144</sup>

Ben Sira's teaching on suretyship differs fundamentally from the message of the Book of Proverbs, which radically forbids that form of assistance.<sup>145</sup> B.C. Gregory describes

140 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158.

141 Cf. Palmisano, *Siracide*, 274; Vignini, *Siracide*, 174; Zapff, *Jesus Sirach 25–51*, 182.

142 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 163.

143 Cf. Gilbert, "Prêt, aumône et caution," 186; Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 211.

144 Cf. Morla Asensio, *Eclesiastico*, 149.

145 "Ben Sira ne s'oppose donc pas au cautionnement. Il demande seulement que le débiteur soit loyalvis-à-vis de son garant et que celui-ci ne soit ni naïf ni malhonnêtement assoiffé de profit" (Gilbert, "Prêt, aumône et caution," 185). "De todos modos, esta unidad literaria es un buen botón de muestra del profundo sentido de la misericordia que tenía el autor del Eclesiástico" (Morla Asensio, *Eclesiastico*, 149). "[...] the generosity

the teaching of the Sage of Jerusalem as a true and real progress in the approach to the issue of suretyship compared to the message in the Book of Proverbs.<sup>146</sup> The Sage, being influenced by the commandment to help one's neighbour, significantly relaxes the prohibition in the Book of Proverbs (B.C. Gregory, in turn, claims that the change noticeable in the teaching of Ben Sira might be the outcome of the teaching in Gen 43:9 and Isa 38:14<sup>147</sup>). He does so guided primarily by religious motives, seeing the act of suretyship as a form of magnanimity and generosity towards those in need,<sup>148</sup> whereas the Book of Proverbs seems to have been influenced by rational thinking and purely human caution relating only or mainly to the financial dimension. Ben Sira recognises the risks, but despite them encourages becoming surety for others, which should be preceded by a rational assessment of the situation of those in need. The form of assistance in question does not release from the obligation to stay prudent and cautious. The above may be the only reason for refusing to become liable for someone else.

Perhaps another reason for the change in Ben Sira's approach to suretyship in relation to the Book of Proverbs was the economic and material situation of the people in the time of the Sage.<sup>149</sup> The spreading Hellenistic influence brought changes in economic and financial matters. Many Jews might have been in a difficult financial situation and needed support and someone becoming surety for them so that they could obtain a loan that would enable their survival and maintain their current standard of living. Suretyship was to support them and allow them to make ends meet without having to leave their country and emigrate to the neighbouring lands. Therefore, the motive for the change in Ben Sira's teaching on suretyship might have also been the will to strengthen the Jewish community in Palestine, keep it in their home country and preserve their identity and culture.

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recommended by Ben Sira despite the dismal social portrait of vv. 16–19 stands out as a unique development within Israelite and Jewish tradition" (Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 158). Cf. Alonso Schökel, *Proverbios y Eclesiastico*, 249; Gilbert, *Les cinq livres des Sages*, 211; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 160–162; Lipiński, "Gage et cautionnement," 222; Pérez Rodríguez, "Eclesiástico," 1208; Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 211; Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus*, 145–146; de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 173.

146 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 160.

147 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 162. See also Seeligmann, "Darlehen," 328.

148 Cf. Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 162–163, 169–170. "Ben Sira riporta la cauzione a una forma di elemosina" (Duesberg – Fransen, *Ecclesiastico*, 223).

149 Cf. Alonso Schökel, *Proverbios y Eclesiastico*, 249; Gregory, *Like an Everlasting Signet Ring*, 160–161; Sauer, *Jesus Sirach*, 210; Snaith, *Ecclesiasticus*, 146.

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## Critical Edition and Philological Analysis of the Last Chapters of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 54–55) Based on the Coptic Manuscript sa 52 (M 568) and Other Coptic Manuscripts in the Sahidic Dialect and the Greek Text of the Septuagint

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**ABSTRACT:** This article is a critical edition and philological analysis of the last two chapters of the biblical book of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 54–55), based on the Coptic manuscript sa 52 and other available manuscripts in the Sahidic dialect. The first part outlines general information about the part of codex sa 52 (M 568) that contains the analysed text. This is followed by a list and brief overview of other manuscripts featuring at least some verses from Isa 54–55. The main part of this article focuses on the presentation of the Coptic text (in the Sahidic dialect) and its translation into English. The differences identified between the Sahidic text and the Greek Septuagint, on which the Coptic translation is based, are illustrated in a tabular form. It includes, for example, additions and omissions in the Coptic translation, lexical changes and semantic differences. The last part of this article aims to clarify more challenging philological issues observed either in the Coptic text itself or in its relation to the Greek text of the LXX.

**KEYWORDS:** Coptic language, Sahidic dialect, Book of Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, sa 52 (M 568), CLM 205, edition of Isa 54–55

This study focuses on the Sahidic edition of the last two chapters of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 54–55). Following the Fourth Servant Song (Isa 52:13–53:12), the prophet delivers a message about the happiness and prosperity of the New Zion (Isa 54:1–17). The author personifies Jerusalem and assures it that it will repopulate once the exiles return. The new Jerusalem should have no fear (Isa 54:4). Like after the flood, God now solemnly assures us that the disaster of captivity will not happen again (Isa 54:9–10). Times of prosperity, peace and security will be accompanied by a spiritual rebirth (Isa 54:15–17).

The last chapter of the Book of Deutero-Isaiah can be seen as its epilogue, concluding the entire *Book of Consolation*. The author once again proclaims that deliverance from the Babylonian captivity and spiritual bondage will become a reality. Israel has a special mission to gather all nations under the leadership of one God (Isa 55:4–5). God's ways and plans, revealed in His word, are irrevocable (Isa 55:10–11). Their special fulfilment will be the joyful return of the exiles (Isa 55:12–13).

The study of the following chapters of Isaiah in the Sahidic dialect is a continuation of previous work.<sup>1</sup> The edition of the Coptic text will be based mainly on the Sahidic manuscript numbered sa 52<sup>2</sup> in Schüssler's compilation (M 568 in the Depuydt compilation),<sup>3</sup> which is to be found under the number CLM 205 in the modern electronic database of the Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature.<sup>4</sup> This work is based on both the photographic edition (referred to as a *facsimile*), provided by the Vatican Library, and the microfilm, provided by the Morgan Library in New York. For several years now, black-and-white photographs of the Library's Coptic collection have been available at: <https://archive.org/details/PhantooouLibrary>.<sup>5</sup> Colour photographs are also available as part of the Digital Edition of the Coptic Old Testament (DECOT) project at <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace>.<sup>6</sup>

While editions of individual Isaiah manuscripts exist, as exemplified by the current DECOT project, a critical edition of the Sahidic text of Isaiah has not been published anywhere to date. Thus far, no one has compared the Sahidic text with the Greek Septuagint, providing the basis for the Coptic translations. The present study fills this gap. The Sahidic text edition can be used for further exegetical studies of the Book of Isaiah. It may also assist in biblical textual criticism by revealing the reception history of the biblical text in the first centuries of Christianity.

The numbering of folios in this study is in line with the *facsimile* numbering applied by the Vatican Library. Since the numbering featured on the Digital Edition of the Coptic Old Testament website does not correspond to the *facsimile* edition, the original Coptic page numbers will also be indicated in this article to avoid ambiguity.

This study combines features of both the diplomatic edition of manuscript sa 52 (M 568) and its critical edition. Apart from the preferred manuscript, sa 52, from the Pierpont Morgan collection, editions of all other currently available Coptic manuscripts in the Sahidic dialect, which include at least some Isa 54–55 verses, will also be considered.

<sup>1</sup> The edition of the text of Proto-Isaiah (Isa 1–39) based on the manuscript sa 52 is available in T. Bąk, *Proto-Isaiah in the Sahidic Dialect of the Coptic Language. Critical Edition on the Coptic Manuscript sa 52 (M 568) and Other Witnesses* (PO 251 [57.3]; Turnhout: Brepols 2020) 343–660. Subsequent chapters of Deutero-Isaiah are compiled in *Isa 40, Isa 41, Isa 42:1–44:5, Isa 44:6–45:25, Isa 46–48, Isa 49–50, Isa 51–52, Isa 53*.

<sup>2</sup> K. Schüssler, *Das sahidische Alte und Neue Testament: sa 49–92* (Biblia Coptica 1/3; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1998) 17–19.

<sup>3</sup> History and description of the manuscript in Bąk, *Proto-Isaiah in the Sahidic Dialect*, 13–28. See also L. Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (CIM, IV Oriental Series 1; Leuven: Peeters 1993) 20–22.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/205> [access: 10.02.2024].

<sup>5</sup> Isa 54:1 begins at: <https://archive.org/details/PhantooouLibrary/m568%20Combined%20%28Book-marked%29/page/n109/mode/2up?view=theater> [access: 10.02.2024].

<sup>6</sup> See the manuscript website: [https://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622008&fbclid=IwAR3TDcECwvoRaXyDc0EgFJU6uZ9dFQ5ynkvee0FXCgEV2hK73AQvD-M\\_XL8](https://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622008&fbclid=IwAR3TDcECwvoRaXyDc0EgFJU6uZ9dFQ5ynkvee0FXCgEV2hK73AQvD-M_XL8) [access: 10.02.2024].

Symbols in the critical apparatus (exclamation mark in superscript: <sup>!</sup>) will suggest reading more similar to the Greek text of the LXX.

Critical edition and philological analysis of the selected part of the sa 52 codex will be carried out according to the order adopted in the study of the earlier chapters of the Book of Isaiah. It will, therefore, include the following elements: (1) a general description of the folios of the sa 52 manuscript containing the text of Isa 54–55, (2) a presentation of the Coptic text based on the sa 52 manuscript taking other available witnesses into account, (3) an English translation, (4) a list of differences between the Greek text of LXX and its Coptic translation, and (5) an analysis of more challenging philological phenomena observed in the Coptic fragment of Isa 54–55.

### 1. General Information about Isa 54–55 in the sa 52 Manuscript

In sa 52, chapter 54 of the Book of Isaiah begins on page 111 (f. 55<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{P11}}$ ), line 2 of the left column. In turn, chapter 55 ends on page 114 (f. 56<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{P15}}$ ), line 22 of the left column. Accordingly, chapters 54–55, which are the focus of this article, occupy almost seven columns of text in manuscript sa 52.

As noted in the study of the previous chapters of Isaiah, manuscript sa 52 was not made with great care in terms of materials used. One folio in particular (f. 56<sup>r</sup> and 56<sup>v</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{P16}}$  and  $\overline{\text{P17}}$ ) shows damage in the bottom right corner. It was not precisely rectangular to start with, which means that the bottom of the outer columns of the text has fewer letters there: the last line of the right column on f. 56<sup>r</sup> has only seven letters. By comparison, one of the middle lines of the same column contains no fewer than 17.

The author of the sa 52 wrote the text in two columns on each page. However, the aesthetic qualities of the work were disregarded. The columns containing Isa 54–55 have either 34 or 35 lines of text. The letters are more or less the same size throughout this passage. However, each line varies in length, particularly on the right-hand side of each column.

Although manuscript sa 52 was not written very neatly, it has been preserved in excellent condition, which is why the text of Isa 54–55 is not difficult to read. No fragment of Deutero-Isaiah under study is illegible. This demonstrates the great significance of manuscript sa 52 examined in this paper.

The author of sa 52 attempted to arrange the text into a logical order. Initial letters to the left of the columns suggest that a new thought begins on a particular line. However, these markings are not always precisely communicated. Initial letters merely hint that a new sentence starts somewhere nearby.

The handwriting in chapters 54 and 55 of the Sahidic manuscript sa 52 undoubtedly indicates a single scribe.

*Nomina sacra* are not always written in the same way. The horizontal line that characterises them is often written quite carelessly, as can be seen, for example, on page 113 (f. 56<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PTE}}$ ), line 24 of the left column in short  $\overline{\text{PIH}}\lambda$ , referring to Israel. The horizontal line should also be extended over the last letter  $\lambda$ .

Noticeably, the author of manuscript sa 52 uses abbreviated notation even in places where other witnesses read full words. A good example is Isa 55:3 on page 113 (f. 56<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PTE}}$ ), line 11 of the left column. Manuscript sa 52 uses the abbreviation  $\overline{\Delta\lambda\Delta}$  to indicate David, while sa 48 and sa 108<sup>L</sup> use the full form  $\overline{\Delta\lambda\Upsilon\epsilon\iota\Delta}$ .<sup>7</sup>

In several places, the letter **N**, which occurs at the end of a line, has been written as a horizontal line in superscript (so-called suspension). This way of writing is found as follows:

- page 111 (f. 55<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIF}}$ ), line 23 of the right column in the word  $\overline{\text{PARA}}(\mathbf{N})$ ;
- page 113 (f. 56<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PTE}}$ ), line 32 of the right column in  $\overline{\text{W}}\lambda(\mathbf{N})\text{TE}$  (the last two letters **TE** are in line 33);
- page 114 (f. 56<sup>v</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIC}}$ ), line 11 of the left column in the noun  $\overline{\text{WH}}(\mathbf{N})$ .

Page 111 (f. 55<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIF}}$ ), line 1 of the right column contains a haplographical mistake. The sa 52 manuscript reads  $\overline{\text{PETNOY}}\mathbf{ZM} \text{ MO}$ , whereas the correct form is  $\overline{\text{PETNOY}}\mathbf{ZM} <\mathbf{M}>\text{MO}$ .

In several places throughout this manuscript, omissions of certain letters are apparent:

- page 111 (f. 55<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIF}}$ ), line 28 of the right column contains the wording  $\mathbf{XI} \overline{\text{TENOY}}$ , which should have been rendered as  $\mathbf{XI} <\mathbf{N}> \overline{\text{TENOY}}$ ;
- page 112 (f. 55<sup>v</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIA}}$ ), line 14 of the left column renders the conjunction  $\overline{\lambda\Upsilon\omega}$  as  $\overline{\lambda\omega}$  (in superscript between the letters  $\lambda$  and  $\omega$ , the character  $\Upsilon$  has been added);
- page 113 (f. 56<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PTE}}$ ) contains the wording  $\overline{\text{TEPEOYX}}\mathbf{I}\overline{\text{W}}$ , which should read  $\overline{\text{ETEPEOYX}}\mathbf{I}\overline{\text{W}}$  to be correct.

The Coptic text is preserved in manuscript sa 52 in very good condition and is relatively easy to read. Nevertheless, evidence of correction can be seen in several places in the two relevant chapters:

- page 114 (f. 56<sup>v</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIC}}$ ), line 17 of the left column in the word  $\overline{\text{MYPCYNH}}$  contains the letter **C**, previously rendered as **I** and subsequently changed to the correct letter **C**;
- page 113 (f. 56<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PTE}}$ ), line 8 of the left column in the verb  $\overline{\text{CMINE}}$  contains the letter **I**, “squeezed” between the letters **M** and **N**;
- page 111 (f. 55<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIF}}$ ), line 26 of the left column in the word  $\overline{\lambda\Upsilon\text{NEO}}\mathbf{NOY}\overline{\text{O}}$  contains the initial letter **Y** added in superscript between the letters  $\lambda$  and **N**;
- page 113 (f. 56<sup>r</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PTE}}$ ), line 13 of the right column contains the initial **E** in the relative form  $\overline{\text{ETEPE}}$ –, given in subscript to the left of the letter **T**.

A certain phonetic carelessness can be observed in the sa 52 manuscript. A case in point is the text on page 112 (f. 55<sup>v</sup>, Copt.  $\overline{\text{PIA}}$ ), where the penultimate and last line of the right column (Isa 55:3) read:  $\overline{\text{ZEN}} \overline{\text{ZNAK}}\mathbf{A}\overline{\text{OON}}$ . The preposition is given in the full

<sup>7</sup> Nomen sacrum  $\overline{\Delta\lambda\Delta}$  (David) is one of the standard abbreviations attested from early Greek palaeography (see, for instance, A. Paap, *Nomina Sacra in the Greek Papyri of the First Five Centuries* [Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava 8; Leiden: Brill 1959] 90, 106).



form (2ЄN), while the article is abbreviated (2N). The correct form is present in manuscript sa 48 and should be rendered as 2N̄ 2ЄNΔΓΑΘΟΝ (“in good things”). The most common ΔΓΑΘΟΝ has been replaced in the manuscript by the rare alternative form ΔΚΛΑΘΟΝ.<sup>8</sup> In the same verse (Isa 55:3), the form ΔΓΑΘΟΝ occurs later (f. 56<sup>v</sup>, Copt. P1E, lines 6 and 7 of the left column) in the correct construction 2N̄ 2ЄNΔΓΑΘΟΝ.

An interchange of similar-sounding letters is also observed in the text of Isa 55:12 (f. 56<sup>v</sup>, Copt. P1C, lines 13 and 14 of the left column), where a phonetically similar ΚΛΑΤΟC appears instead of the correct noun ΚΛΑΔΟC.

The transcription of the Greek κυπάρισσος (“cypress”) in Isa 55:13 is rendered as ΚΗΠΑΡΙCΟC in our manuscript (f. 56<sup>v</sup>, Copt. P1C, lines 15 and 16 of the left column). In comparison, a highly accurate transcription of ΚΥΠΑΡΙCΚΟC is found in manuscript sa 48. An analogous issue also arises with the Greek μυρσίνη (“myrtle”), transcribed in manuscript sa 52 (f. 56<sup>v</sup>, Copt. P1C, line 17 of the left column) as ΜΥΡCΥΝΗ (sa 48: ΜΥΡCΙΝΗ). It is fair to say that the author of the studied manuscript was not overly attached to standard Greek forms and used perhaps more familiar alternative forms.

## 2. List of Manuscripts Containing the Text of Isa 54–55 in the Sahidic Dialect of the Coptic Language

Fragments of chapters 54–55 of the Book of Isaiah are found in several other manuscripts, not always as complete as sa 52. With regard to the names of the manuscripts, precedence will be given to the designations used in Schüssler’s study.<sup>9</sup> References to electronic collections will be provided where possible. Some Isa 54–55 verses can be found in the following manuscripts:

**Sa 41.18:** part of the codex consisting of five folios numbered 157–161. They have been catalogued as **Paris, BN, Copte 129<sup>3</sup> fol. 157–161**. The folios are part of codex sa 41, which contains the text of the Book of Isaiah. The vast majority of it has been destroyed. Fragment sa 41.18, contains the text of **Isa 55:9–60:8**, which is written in two columns of 35 to 37 lines.<sup>10</sup> Each line contains between eight and ten letters.<sup>11</sup> The fragment included

<sup>8</sup> It is likely that ΔΚΛΑΘΟΝ should be regarded as a poorly attested alternative form of the adjective ΔΓΑΘΟΝ (see <https://coptic-dictionary.org/entry.cgi?ta=C8047> [access: 12.03.2024]; cf. H. Förster (ed.), *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten* [Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2002] 2).

<sup>9</sup> K. Schüssler, *Das sahidische Alte und Neue Testament* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz 1995–2012).

<sup>10</sup> The first words of Isa 55:9: ΔΛΛΑ ΝΘΕ are found on an earlier page of this manuscript, referred to in our study as CLM 450.

<sup>11</sup> For more details, see A. Hebbelynck, “Fragments inédits de la version sahidique d’Isaïe. I. Fragments de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris,” *Muséon* 14 (1913) 191; and K. Schüssler, *Das sahidische Alte und Neue*

in sa 41.18 has been edited by Hebbelynck,<sup>12</sup> and it can be inferred from this that the text of **Isa 55:9–13** of interest is reasonably well preserved. The manuscript is estimated to date to the 9th<sup>13</sup> or 10th<sup>14</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> It is also listed in the electronic catalogue under the number **CLM 450**.<sup>16</sup> On the Digital Edition of the Coptic Old Testament (DECOT) website, it was assigned number **sa 2058** (Doc ID 622058),<sup>17</sup> which might be somewhat confusing given the Schüssler's number of sa 41.18. As the sa 41 manuscript contains numerous passages from earlier chapters of Isaiah, it has already been used more than once in our critical editing of sa 52.<sup>18</sup>

Contemporary manuscript research has shown that another manuscript folio, currently held in Cairo, is part of the same codex. This study will refer to it as CLM 450.

**Sa 48:** a papyrus codex kept in the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana in Cologne, Canton of Geneva, identified as Papyrus Bodmer XXIII. It includes the text of **Isa 47:1–51:17** and **Isa 52:4–66:24**. Its fragments have already been used in the study of earlier chapters of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>19</sup>

The manuscript is dated to the 4th century,<sup>20</sup> more specifically to 375–450.<sup>21</sup> Due to its early origins, it is an invaluable aid in the edition of parts of the Book of Deutero-Isaiah and the entire Book of Trito-Isaiah.<sup>22</sup> The manuscript was edited by R. Kasser in 1965.<sup>23</sup> In the electronic database, Papyrus Bodmer XXIII has been catalogued as **CLM 40**<sup>24</sup> and **LDAB 108542**.<sup>25</sup> The DECOT website lists it as **sa 2004** (Doc ID 622004).<sup>26</sup> Our study prefers Schüssler's identification sa 48.

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*Testament: sa 21–48* (Biblia Coptica 1/1; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1996) 81.

<sup>12</sup> Hebbelynck, "Fragments inédits," 197–219 (text Isa 55:9–13, 197–198).

<sup>13</sup> P. Nagel, "Studien zur Textüberlieferung des sahidischen Alten Testaments," *ZÄS* 111 (1984) 148.

<sup>14</sup> W.C. Till, "Papyrussammlung der Nationalbibliothek in Wien. Katalog der koptischen Bibelbruchstücke. Die Pergamente," *ZNW* 39 (1940) 16.

<sup>15</sup> A. Vaschalde, "Ce qui a été publié des versions coptes de la Bible," *RB* 29 (1920) 248.

<sup>16</sup> See <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/450> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>17</sup> See <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622058> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>18</sup> See Bağ, *Proto-Isaiah in the Sabidic Dialect*, 362–363; 41.13: *Isa 40*, 76–77; 41.13: *Isa 41*, 67; sa 41.14, sa 41.15: *Isa 42:1–44:5*, 45–46; sa 41.15, sa 41.16, sa 41.17: *Isa 44:6–45:25*, 535–536; sa 41.17: *Isa 46–48*, 603–604.

<sup>19</sup> See Bağ, *Isa 46–48*, 604–605. There is also a more detailed description of sa 48.

<sup>20</sup> Schüssler, *Sa 21–48*, 106. The same dating is also on the website: <https://bodmerlab.unige.ch/fr/constellations/papyri/barcode/1072205362> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>21</sup> See <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/40> [access: 11.02.2024].

<sup>22</sup> For more information, see K. Schüssler, *Das sabidische Alte und Neue Testament: sa 1–20*, 106; R. Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer XXIII. Esaie XLVII, 1–LXVI, 24* (Cologne – Genève: Bibliotheca Bodmeriana 1965) 7–33.

<sup>23</sup> R. Kasser, *Papyrus Bodmer XXIII*.

<sup>24</sup> See <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/40> [access: 11.02.2024].

<sup>25</sup> See <https://papyri.info/dclp/108542> [access: 11.02.2024] and <https://www.trismegistos.org/text/108542> [access: 11.02.2024].

<sup>26</sup> See <https://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622058> [access: 11.02.2024].

**Sa 108<sup>L</sup>**: this manuscript is a bilingual (Coptic-Arabic) lectionary consisting of 189 folios and containing the readings for the Holy Week. It comes from the White Monastery in Sohag. Currently, it is kept in the Vatican Library. The Coptic text is predominant. The Arabic fragments are merely its translation, not always faithful.<sup>27</sup> The readings consist of texts from both the Old and New Testaments. A fair number of verses come specifically from the Book of Isaiah.<sup>28</sup> Each day of the Holy Week was divided into ten canonical hours, half of which were celebrated during the day, while the other half at night. The text of **Isa 55:1–3.12–13**, written on folios 83<sup>v</sup>–84<sup>r</sup>, was read on Thursday, during the ninth canonical hour of the day.<sup>29</sup> In the electronic database it is listed as **CLM 3288**<sup>30</sup> and in the DECOT database as **sa 16L** (Doc ID: 620016).<sup>31</sup>

Since it is a paper codex, the date of its creation falls into a later time frame, which scholars place between the 12th and 14th centuries.<sup>32</sup> The text of Isa 55:1–3.12–13 was edited by Amélineau<sup>33</sup> and Ciasca, who labelled the manuscript IC.<sup>34</sup> Experience has shown Ciasca's edition to be more accurate.<sup>35</sup> Manuscript sa 108<sup>L</sup> has already been used several times in the preparation of the critical edition of the earlier chapters of Isaiah.<sup>36</sup>

**CLM 450**: in this study refers to one folio of the manuscript included in the codex, identified in Schüssler's *Biblia Coptica* as sa 41. The folio is numbered  $\overline{\text{PK}\Theta}$  and  $\overline{\text{P}\lambda}$  (= 129 i 130). This fragment was never catalogued by Schüssler. It contains the text of **Isa 54:8b–55:8**, and thus the verses immediately preceding the manuscript labelled sa 41.18.<sup>37</sup> CLM 450

<sup>27</sup> A detailed description of the lectionary is provided in Bąk, *Isa 46–48*, 605 (footnote 30).

<sup>28</sup> A detailed list of verses from the Book of Isaiah is provided in Schüssler, *Sa 93–120*, 50–51.

<sup>29</sup> Folio 76<sup>r</sup> identifies this time as:  $\text{ΤΧΠΘ ΜΠΤΟΥ ΜΜΥΣΤΙΓΟΝ}$  (see Schüssler, *Sa 93–120*, 57).

<sup>30</sup> See <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/3288> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>31</sup> See <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622028> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>32</sup> H. Hyvernat (“Étude sur les versions coptes de la Bible. II. – Ce qui nous est parvenu des versions égyptiennes,” *Revue Biblique* 5 [1896] 548–549) argues in favour of the earliest date, falling around the 12th/13th century. G.W. Horner estimates that the lectionary was created “not earlier than the thirteenth [century]” (*The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect, otherwise called Sabidic and Thebaic, with Introduction, Critical Apparatus, and Literal English Translation* [Oxford: Clarendon Press 1911] III, 383); P.J. Balestri moves this date to the 13th or 14th century (*Sacrorum Bibliorum Fragmenta Copto-Sabidica Musei Borgiani. III. Novum Testamentum* [Roma: Typographia Polyglotta S. C. de Propaganda Fide 1904] LXI); A. Ciasca (*Sacrorum Bibliorum fragmenta copto-sabidica Musei Borgiani iussu et sumptibus S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide studio P. Augustini Ciasca ordinis Eremitarum S. Agostini edita* [Roma: Typis S. Congregationis de Propaganda Fide 1885–1889] I, XXVII) opts for the late 14th century; A. Rahlfs speaks of ca. 1400 (*Die alttestamentlichen Lektionen der griechischen Kirche* [MSU der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen 5; Berlin: Weidmann 1915] 163).

<sup>33</sup> É. Amélineau, “Fragments de la version thébaine de l'Écriture (Ancien Testament),” *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* 9 (1887) 126.

<sup>34</sup> Ciasca, *Sacrorum Bibliorum fragmenta*, II, 243.

<sup>35</sup> Ciasca lists the three errors Amélineau made in Isa 55:1.13 (*Sacrorum Bibliorum fragmenta* II, LXV). They are also included in the critical apparatus of this study.

<sup>36</sup> See Bąk, *Proto-Isaiah in the Sabidic Dialect*, 364–365; Bąk, *Isa 40*, 77–78; *Isa 46–48*, 605–606, *Isa 49–50*, 9–10.

<sup>37</sup> Schüssler, *Sa 21–48*, 81.

is currently held in Cairo. Its full reference: **Cairo, IFAO, Inv. No. 188**. The DECOT website lists the folio in question as part of manuscript number **sa 2058** (Doc ID 622058).<sup>38</sup> Photographs and transcription are also available there, and they will be used to create the critical apparatus of our study.<sup>39</sup> The text is in very good condition, presenting no readability problems.

**CLM 3469**: this is one of three Sahidic codices discovered by Polish archaeologists in 2005. The text was found on the hill of Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in western Thebes, which is why it is often referred to as *Qurna Isaiah*.<sup>40</sup> The manuscript is a parchment codex and contains the last part of the Book of Isaiah, or more precisely, chapters **47:14–66:24**. Alin Suciú dates it to the late 7th or early 8th century.<sup>41</sup> It is currently stored in the museum in Cairo under number 13446. In the Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature electronic database, it has been identified as **CLM 3469**.<sup>42</sup> The manuscript is also known as **TM 111691**<sup>43</sup> and **sa 2028** (Doc ID 622028), as listed on the DECOT website.<sup>44</sup> Despite the extensive damage to the manuscript, it is possible to read parts of the text. The verses of Isa 54:1–55:13 are found on pages 39–46. The DECOT website offers an electronic edition of the manuscript, including the chapters of interest, Isa 54–55.<sup>45</sup> *Qurna Isaiah* is available there under the name **sa 2028**. To avoid confusion with the manuscript nomenclature, based on Schüssler's *Biblia Coptica*, adopted in this article, this codex will be referred to as CLM 3469. The manuscript has already been used for editions of earlier chapters of Deutero-Isaiah.<sup>46</sup>

To illustrate the contents of particular manuscripts better, the occurrence of the verses from Isa 54–55 is presented in the table where:

- an “x” means the occurrence of the whole verse;
- an “(x)” means the occurrence of only a fragment of a given verse;
- a blank space in the table means the given verse is absent in the manuscript.

<sup>38</sup> See <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622058> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>39</sup> The folios of interest are available at <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace?docID=622058&pageID=1290> and <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace?docID=622058&pageID=1300> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>40</sup> For more about the discovery itself, see T. Górecki, “Sheikh Abd el-Gurna,” *Seventy Years of Polish Archaeology in Egypt* (ed. E. Laskowska-Kusztal) (Warsaw: PCMA 2007) 186–187; T. Górecki – E. Wipszycka, “Scoperta di tre codici in un eremo a Sheikh el-Gurna (TT 1151–1152): il contesto archeologico,” *Adamantius* 24 (2018) 118–132.

<sup>41</sup> Suciú, “The Sahidic Tripartite Isaiah,” 383. The DECOT website specifies the dating as between 650 and 750 (see <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-catalog> [access: 14.02.2024]).

<sup>42</sup> See <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/3469> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>43</sup> See <https://www.trismegistos.org/text/111691> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>44</sup> See <https://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622028> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>45</sup> The beginning of Isa 54:1 is available at <http://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace?docID=622028&pageID=360> [access: 14.02.2024].

<sup>46</sup> See Bąk, *Isa 46–48*, 606; *Isa 49–50*, 13.

The contents of the manuscripts are as follows:

### Isa 54

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Sa 41.18													
Sa 48	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sa 108 <sup>1</sup>													
CLM 450								(x)	x	x	x	x	x
CLM 3469	(x)	(x)	(x)	x	(x)	x	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	x	x

	14	15	16	17
Sa 41.18				
Sa 48	x	x	x	x
Sa 108 <sup>1</sup>				
CLM 450	x	x	x	x
CLM 3469	(x)	x	(x)	(x)

### Isa 55

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Sa 41.18									(x)	x	x	x	x
Sa 48	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sa 108 <sup>1</sup>	x	x	x									x	x
CLM 450	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	(x)				
CLM 3469	(x)	(x)	(x)	x	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)	(x)

## 3. The Sahidic Text of Isa 54–55

As in the case of the previous chapters, the following punctuation marks have been introduced in the edition of the Coptic text:

- < > pointed brackets to indicate that the text has been completed so that it can be properly understood,
- { } braces to indicate the scribe's redundant letters (frequently being the effect of dit-tography),
- > sign to indicate the lack of the given form in the manuscript whose number is given beside it,
- ! exclamation mark in superscript to suggest a more correct reading,
- (N) to show the places in which the letter **N**, occurring at the end of the line, was sig-nalised by a stroke (**N** supralinear),
- \ / sign to indicate the letter added subsequently by the scribe above the line,
- / \ sign to indicate the letter added subsequently by the scribe below the line.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See Bąk, *Isa 46–48*, 609.

The text of Isa 54–55 in the Sahidic dialect of the Coptic language reads as follows:

### Chapter 54

- v.1 ΕΥΦΡΑΝΕ ΤΑΘΡΗΝ ΕΤΕΜΕΣΜΙϸΕ· ΩΨ ΕΒΟΛ Ν̄ΤΕΛΨΚΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ ΤΕΤΕΜΕϸΤ  
ΝΑΑΚΕ· ΧΕ ΝΑΨΕ ΝΨΗΡΕ Ν̄ΤΑΘΡΗΝ ΕΖΟΥΕ ΤΕΤΕΟΥΝΤϸ ΠΖΑΪ ΜΜΑΥ· ΑΠΧΟΕΪϸ  
ΓΑΡ ΧΟΟϸ ΧΕ v.1
- v.2 ΟΥΩΨΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΜΠΜΑ ΝΤΟΥϸΚΥΝΗ Μ̄Ν ΤΑ ΝΟΥΑΥΛΗ· ΤΑΧΡΟΥ ΜΠ̄Ρ† ϸΟ· ΟΥ<Ε>  
ΝΟΥΝΟΥΖ Ν̄ΤΕΤΑΧΡΟ ΝΝΟΥΝΑΪΩ· v.2
- v.3 ΕΤΙ ΠΟΥΨΟΥ Ε̄ΒΟΛ ΕΟΥΝΑΜ· ΑΥΩ ΕΖΒΟΥΡ· ΑΥΩ ΠΟΥϸΠΕΡΜΑ ΝΑΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΕΙ  
Ν̄Ν{Ε}ΖΕΘΝΟϸ· ΑΥΩ ΤΕΝΑΟΥΩΖ Ζ̄Ν {Ν}ΜΠΟΛΙϸ ΕΤΟ ΝΧΑΪΕ· v.3
- v.4 ΜΠ̄ΡΡ ΖΟΤΕ ΧΕ ΑΧΪ ΨΪΠΕ· ΑΥΩ ΜΠ̄ΡΟΥΩΛϸ ΧΕ Α\Υ/ΝΕΘΝΟΥΘΕ· ΧΕ ΤΕΝΑΡ̄  
ΠΩΨΩ ΜΠΨΪΠΕ ΨΑ ΕΝΕΖ· ΑΥΩ Ν̄ΝΕΕΡ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ ΜΠΝΟΘΝΕΘ ΝΤΟΥΜ̄ΝΤΧΗΡΑ· v.4
- v.5 ΧΕ ΠΧΟΕΪϸ ΠΕΤΤΑΜΙΟ Μ̄ΜΟ· ΠΧΟΕΪϸ ΠΕ ΠΕϸΡΑΝ· ΑΥΩ ΠΕΤΝΟΥΖΜ̄ <Μ>ΜΟ·  
ΝϸΤΟϸ ΠΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΜΠ̄ΠΗΛ· ϸΕϸΜΟΥ ΕΡΟϸ ΖΪΧ̄Μ ΠΚΑΖ ΤΗΡϸ· v.5
- v.6 ΝΤΑΠΧΟΕΪϸ ΜΟΥΤΕ ΕΡΟ ΑΝ Ν̄ΘΕ ΝΟΥϸΖΪΜΕ ΑΥΝΟΧϸ ΕΒΟΛ· ΑΥΩ Ν̄ΖΗΤ ΨΗΜ·  
ΟΥΔΕ Ν̄ΘΕ ΝΟΥϸΖΪΜΕ ΑΝ Ε̄ΑΥΜΕϸΤΩϸ ΧΪΝ ΤΕϸΜ̄ΝΤΚΟΥΪ ΠΕΧΕ ΠΟΥΝΟΥΤΕ· v.6
- v.7 ΑΪΚΑΑΤΕ Ν̄ϸΩΪ ΝΟΥΚΟΥΪ ΝΟΥΟΕΪΨ· ΑΥΩ †ΝΑΝΑ ΝΕ Ζ̄Ν ΟΥΝΟΘ Ν̄ΝΑ· v.7
- v.8 ΑΪΚΩΤΕ ΜΠΑΖΟ Ε̄ΒΟΛ ΜΜΟ Ζ̄Ν ΟΥΚΟΥΪ Ν̄ϸΩΝΤ· ΑΥΩ ΑΪΝΑ ΝΕ <Ζ>Ν ΟΥΝΑ ΨΑ  
ΕΝΕΖ· ΠΕΧΕ ΠΧΟΕΪϸ ΠΕΤΝΟΥΖΜ̄ Μ̄ΜΟ· v.8
- v.9 ΧΪΝ ΠΜΟΥϸ ΖΪ ΝΩΖΕ ΠΑΪ ΠΕ ΠΑΡΑ(Ν)· ΚΑΤΑ ΘΕ Ν̄ΤΑΪΩΡΚ ΝΑϸ Ζ̄Μ ΠΕΥΟΕΪΨ  
ΕΤ̄ΜΜΑΥ ΕΤ̄Μ̄ϸΩΝ̄Τ ΕΠΚΑΖ Ε̄ΖΡΑΪ ΕΧΩ ΧΙ<Ν> ΤΕΝΟΥ· ΟΥΔΕ ΕΠΕΕΝΕ ΝΟΥ-  
ΤΟΥϸ ΕΒΟΛ Ζ̄Ν ΟΥΑΠΪΛΗ· v.9

- v.1 ΕΤΕΜΕΣΜΙϸΕ: ΕΤΕΜΕΣΜΙΨΕ sa 48, ΕΤ[ΜΕΣΜΙ]ΨΕ CLM 3469 | Ν̄ΤΕΛΨΚΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ: Ν̄ΤΕΛΨΚΑΚ  
sa 48 | ΤΕΤΕΜΕϸΤ: ΤΕΤΕΣΜΕϸΤ sa 48 | ΤΕΤΕΟΥΝΤϸ ΠΖΑΪ: ΤΕΤΕῩΝΤΑϸ ΦΑΪ sa 48
- v.2 ΟΥΩΨΕ: ΟΥΩΨϸ sa 48, CLM 3469 | ΝΤΟΥϸΚΥΝΗ: Ν̄ΤΟΥϸΚΗΝΗ sa 48, CLM 3469 | ΤΑ ΝΟΥ-  
ΑΥΛΗ: †ΠΑΝΟΥΑΥΛΗ sa 48, CLM 3469 | ΟΥ<Ε> Ν̄ΟΥΝΟΥΖ: ΟΥΕ Ν̄ΟΥΝΟΥΖ sa 48, [ΟΥ]ΝΟΥ[ΝΟΥΖ]  
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- v. 13 ΑΥΩ ΕΠΜΑ Ν̄ΤΕΣΤΟ̄ΙΒ̄Η· ΟῩΝ̄ ΟΥΚΗΤΑΡῙΣΟϢ ΝΑΡΩΤ· ΑΥΩ ΟΥΜΥΡ̄ΣΥΝΗ· ΕΠΜΑ  
ΝΟΥΕΝΟῩΝ̄Γ· ΑΥΩ ΠΧΟΕ̄ΙϢ ΝΑΩΩΠΕ ΕΥΡΑΝ· ΑΥΩ ΕΥΜΑΕΙΝ Ν̄ΩΑ ΕΝΕΖ· ΑΥΩ  
Ν̄ϢΝΑΩϞΚ ΑΝ· v.13

#### 4. English Translation of Isa 54–55

The English translation of Isa 54–55 from the Sahidic dialect of the Coptic language is as follows:<sup>48</sup>

##### Chapter 54

- v. 1 Rejoice, O barren one *who bears*;<sup>49</sup> *cry out*,<sup>50</sup> and shout, you who are not in labour! Because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her that has a husband, for the Lord has spoken.<sup>51</sup>
- v. 2 Enlarge the site of your tent and of your curtains;<sup>52</sup> make *them*<sup>53</sup> firm; do not hold back; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes,
- v. 3 because you must spread *them*<sup>54</sup> out to the right and to the left, and your offspring will inherit the nations and will inhabit the cities<sup>55</sup> that *are*<sup>56</sup> desolate.
- v. 4 Do not fear because you were put to shame, neither feel disgraced because you were reproached, because you will forget your ancient shame and the reproach of your widowhood you will not remember;<sup>57</sup>

- v. 12 ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΝΗΥ: ΠΕΤ̄Ν̄ΗΥ sa 41.18, ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΝΑΕΙ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΤΕΤ̄Ν̄ΝΗΥ ΓΑΡ ΕΒΟΛ: Ε̄ΙϢ ΖΗ̄ΤΕ ΓΑΡ ΤΕΤ̄-  
Ν̄ΝΑΕ̄Ι Ε̄ΒΟΛ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΤΗΥΤ̄Ν̄: ΤΗΟΥΤ̄Ν sa 48 | Ν̄Ν̄ΤΟΥΥ: Ν̄ΤΟΥΥ sa 41.18, sa 48, sa 108<sup>L</sup>, CLM 3469  
| ΒΑΒ̄Σ: 'ϞΟΒ̄Ϣ sa 48, CLM 3469, ΒΟΒ̄Σ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΝΑΣΤΑΑΤΕ: ΝΑΤᾹΑΤΕ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | Ν̄ΝΕΥΚΛΑΤΟϢ:  
Ν̄ΝΕΥΚΛΑΔΟϢ sa 41.18, sa 48
- v. 13 ΕΠΜΑ: ΠΜΑ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | Ν̄ΤΕΣΤΟ̄ΙΒ̄Η: Ν̄ΤΕΣΤΗΒΗ sa 41.18 | ΟΥΚΗΤΑΡῙΣΟϢ: ΟΥΚΥΠΑΡῙΣΟϢ sa 41.18,  
sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΟΥΚΥΠΑΡῙΣΟϢ: ΟΥΚΥΠΑΡῙΣΟϢ sa 48 | ΝΑΡΩΤ: (> Amélineau) (Ciasca = sa 52) sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΟΥΜΥΡ̄ΣΥΝΗ: 'ΟΥ-  
ΜΥΡ̄ΣΙΝΗ sa 41.18, sa 48, (ΟΥΜΟΡ̄ΣΥΝΗ Amélineau) (ΟΥΜΟΥΡ̄ΣΥΝΗ Ciasca) sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΝΟΥΕΝΟῩΝ̄Γ:  
ΝΟΥΕΝΟῩΝ̄Κ sa 48, ΝΟΥΕ̄Ν̄Γ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΠΧΟΕ̄ΙϢ: Π̄ΟϢ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | ΕΥΜΑΕΙΝ: ΟΥΜΑΕ̄ΙΝ sa 108<sup>L</sup> | Ν̄ΩΑ  
ΕΝΕΖ: ΩΑ ΕΝΕΖ sa 41.18, sa 48 | Ν̄ϢΝΑΩϞΚ: Ν̄ϢΝΑΩ̄ΣΝ sa 41.18, sa 48, [ΝϢ]ΝΑΩ̄ΣΝ CLM 3469 | ΑΥΩ  
Ν̄ϢΝΑΩϞΚ ΑΝ: > sa 108<sup>L</sup>

<sup>48</sup> The reference for the English translation of Isa 54–55 is the following translation of the Septuagint: A. Pietersma – B.G. Wright (eds.), *A New English Translation of the Septuagint. And the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 2007).

<sup>49</sup> NETS: *who does not bear* → T 7.

<sup>50</sup> NETS: *break forth* → T 3.

<sup>51</sup> See the commentary.

<sup>52</sup> See the commentary.

<sup>53</sup> NETS: *it* → T 7.

<sup>54</sup> Om. in NETS → T 7.

<sup>55</sup> Lit. *in* the cities → T 1.

<sup>56</sup> NETS: that *have become* → T 7.

<sup>57</sup> Tr. → T 6.

- v. 5 because the Lord is the one who makes you, the Lord<sup>58</sup> is his name, and the one who *delivers*<sup>59</sup> you is God<sup>60</sup> of Israel; he is *blessed*<sup>61</sup> in<sup>62</sup> all the earth.
- v. 6 The Lord has not called you as a *rejected*<sup>63</sup> and faint-hearted woman, nor as a woman hated from *her*<sup>64</sup> youth, your God has said.
- v. 7 For a brief moment I forsook you,<sup>65</sup> but with<sup>66</sup> great mercy, I will have mercy on you.
- v. 8 With a little wrath I turned my face away from you,<sup>67</sup> but with everlasting mercy, I have had mercy on you, the Lord who delivered you has said.
- v. 9 From the water at the time of Noah, this is my *name*<sup>68</sup>: Just as I swore to him at that time that I would no more be angry at the earth because of you,<sup>69</sup> nor as a threat<sup>70</sup> would I remove *your*<sup>71</sup> mountains,<sup>72</sup>
- v. 10 nor would *your*<sup>73</sup> hills be shifted, so neither shall the mercy that comes from me<sup>74</sup> fail, nor shall the covenant of your peace be removed, for the Lord said *you are safe*.<sup>75</sup>
- v. 11 O humbled and unsteady one, you have not been comforted; see, *I will prepare*<sup>76</sup> charcoal as your stone and lapis lazuli as your foundations.
- v. 12 And I will make<sup>77</sup> your battlements of jasper and your gates of crystal stones and your enclosure of precious stones.
- v. 13 And I will make<sup>78</sup> all your sons taught by God and<sup>79</sup> your children to be<sup>80</sup> in great peace.<sup>81</sup>
- v. 14 And in righteousness you shall be built; keep away from injustice, and you shall not be afraid, and trembling shall not come near you.
- v. 15 See, guests shall approach you through me and flee to you for refuge.

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58 Om. *Sabaoth* → T 2.

59 NETS: who *delivered* → T 7.

60 NETS: is *the holy* God → T 2.

61 NETS: he *shall be called thus* → T 3, T 7.

62 Lit. *upon* → T 4.

63 NETS: *forsaken* → T 3.

64 Om. in NETS → T 1.

65 Tr. → T 6.

66 Copt. lit. *in* → T 4.

67 Tr. → T 6.

68 NETS: *oath* with commentary: “lacking in Gk” → T 1.

69 See the commentary.

70 Om. *to you* → T 2.

71 NETS: *the* → T 5.

72 Tr. → T 6. See also the commentary.

73 NETS: *the* (LXX: οἱ βουνοὶ σου = Copt.).

74 Om. *to you* → T 2.

75 NETS: *he would be merciful to you* → T 3. See also the commentary.

76 NETS: *I am preparing for you* → T 2, T 7.

77 Lit. I will *put* (LXX: θήσω = Copt.).

78 NETS: *I will make* with commentary: “lacking in Gk” (= Copt.).

79 Lit. *and* om. in sa 52 → T 2.

80 Lit. *to be* om. in LXX.

81 Tr. → T 6.

- v. 16 See, I *will* create you,<sup>82</sup> not as a smith who blows *upon*<sup>83</sup> *his*<sup>84</sup> coals and produces<sup>85</sup> a vessel for work.<sup>86</sup>  
But I have created you not for destruction, to ruin
- v. 17 every *hand-made*<sup>87</sup> vessel. I will not make it prosper<sup>88</sup> against you – and every voice<sup>89</sup> shall rise against you in judgment. You will defeat all of them, and those who are held by you shall be in *you*.<sup>90</sup> There is a heritage for those who do service to the Lord, and you shall be righteous,<sup>91</sup> says the Lord.

## Chapter 55

- v. 1 You who thirst, go to water, and as many of you as have no money, go, buy, and *eat*,<sup>92</sup> drink wine and fat, without money and without price.
- v. 2 Why *will*<sup>93</sup> you set a price with money, and your labour *is not* for *what satisfies*<sup>94</sup>? Hear me, and you shall eat good things, and your soul shall *live*<sup>95</sup> in good things.
- v. 3 Pay attention with your ears and follow my ways; listen to me, and<sup>96</sup> your soul will live in good things. *And*<sup>97</sup> I will make *a covenant with you for ever*,<sup>98</sup> the sacred things of Dauid that are sure.
- v. 4 See, I have given him as a testimony among the nations<sup>99</sup> *and*<sup>100</sup> a ruler *who commands*<sup>101</sup> for the nations.
- v. 5 Nations that *do*<sup>102</sup> not know you shall call upon you, and peoples that do not understand you shall flee to you for refuge, for the sake of your God, the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified you.
- v. 6 Seek God, and when you find him, call upon him,<sup>103</sup> and whenever<sup>104</sup> he should draw near you,
- v. 7 let the impious forsake his ways, and the lawless man his plans, and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy *on him*,<sup>105</sup> because he will abundantly forgive your sins.

82 NETS: *I create you* → T 7.

83 In NETS om. *upon* → T 7.

84 NETS: *the* → T 5.

85 Lit. *brings out* (Gr. ἐκφέρων = Copt. ⲈⲘⲈⲒⲚⲈ ⲈⲖⲐⲗ).

86 Lit. *his vessel for his work* → T 5.

87 NETS: *perishable* → T 3.

88 In Coptic *prosper* in passive form → T 7.

89 Om. *that* → T 2.

90 NETS: *in sorrow* → T 3.

91 Om. *to me* → T 2.

92 Om. in NETS → T 1.

93 NETS: *do* → T 7.

94 NETS: *and your labor for that which does not satisfy* → T 7.

95 NETS: *revel* → T 3. See also the commentary.

96 Lit. *and* om. in Sa → T 2.

97 Om. in NETS (LXX: καὶ = sa 52).

98 NETS: *with you an everlasting covenant* → T 7.

99 Lit. *of the nations* → T 4.

100 Om. in NETS → T 6.

101 NETS: *commander* → T 7.

102 NETS: *did* → T 7.

103 Lit. om. *him* in LXX → T 1.

104 Lit. *on the instant* → T 3.

105 Om. in NETS → T 1.

- v. 8 For my plans are not like your plans, nor are *my* ways like *your*<sup>106</sup> ways.<sup>107</sup>
- v. 9 But as heaven is far from the earth, so is my way far from your *way*<sup>108</sup> and your notions from my thought.
- v. 10 For as *snow* or *rain*<sup>109</sup> comes down from heaven and will not return until has soaked the earth and brought forth and blossomed and given seed to the sower and bread for food,<sup>110</sup>
- v. 11 so shall *the*<sup>111</sup> word be *that*<sup>112</sup> goes out from my mouth; it shall not return until *every word*<sup>113</sup> I have *spoken*<sup>114</sup> is fulfilled, and I will prosper *my*<sup>115</sup> ways and my commandments.
- v. 12 For you shall go out with joy and be *carried*<sup>116</sup> with happiness; for the mountains and the hills shall leap forth<sup>117</sup> as they welcome you with happiness, and all the trees of the field shall clap with their branches.
- v. 13 And instead of the brier shall come up a cypress, and instead of the nettle shall come up a myrtle,<sup>118</sup> and the Lord<sup>119</sup> shall be for a name and for an everlasting sign and shall not *delay*.<sup>120</sup>

## 5. Tables of Language Differences

The differences between the text of the Septuagint and its Coptic translation will be presented in the following order: additions (Table 1), omissions (Table 2) found in the Coptic text, changes in vocabulary (Table 3), changes in prepositions (Table 4) and articles (Table 5),<sup>121</sup> changes in word order (Table 6)<sup>122</sup> and semantic changes (Table 7).<sup>123</sup> The last table shows the Greek borrowings appearing in the Coptic text of Isa 41 (Table 8).<sup>124</sup>

<sup>106</sup> NETS: nor are *your* ways like *my* ways → T 6.

<sup>107</sup> Om. *says the Lord* → T 2.

<sup>108</sup> NETS: *ways* → T 7.

<sup>109</sup> NETS: *rain* or *snow* → T 6.

<sup>110</sup> Lit. to eat it [i.e. bread] → T 7.

<sup>111</sup> NETS: *my* → T 5.

<sup>112</sup> NETS: *whatever* (LXX: ὅ ἐάν).

<sup>113</sup> NETS: *whatever* → T 3. See also the commentary.

<sup>114</sup> NETS: *willed* → T 3.

<sup>115</sup> NETS: *your* → T 7.

<sup>116</sup> NETS: *taught*. See the commentary.

<sup>117</sup> See the commentary.

<sup>118</sup> Tr. → T 6.

<sup>119</sup> LXX lit. *to the Lord* → T 7.

<sup>120</sup> NETS: *fail* → T 3.

<sup>121</sup> Omitting or adding an article does not necessarily result from the translator's intention to interfere in the content. The semantic rules frequently (especially in Coptic) decide about the omission of an article.

<sup>122</sup> The differences in word order can often depend on the syntactic rules according to which, e.g. the direct object usually appears immediately after the verb (see Isa 41:18, 19; cf. B. Layton, *A Coptic Grammar. With Chrestomathy and Glossary. Sabidic Dialect. Second Edition, Revised and Expanded. With an Index of Citations* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2004] § 182).

<sup>123</sup> Here we have included the grammatical and semantic changes (e.g. number, tense, person, gender, etc.).

<sup>124</sup> For remarks concerning the tables see Bąk, *Isa 41*, 76.

Table 1. Additions in the Coptic text

Verse	Septuagint text	Coptic text
54:3	πόλεις [...] κατοικεῖς: you will inhabit the cities	ⲪⲚ̅ ⲛ̅ⲚⲓⲠⲟⲗⲓϥ: lit. <i>in</i> the cities (> Ziegler)
54:6	ἐκ νεότητος: from youth	Ⲫ̅ⲒⲚ̅ ⲧⲈϢⲚ̅Ⲛ̅ⲦⲘⲚⲟⲩ: from <i>her</i> youth (> Ziegler)
54:9	τοῦτό μοι ἐστίν: this is mine	Ⲡⲁⲓ̅ ⲠⲈ ⲠⲀⲠⲁ(Ⲛ): this is <i>my name</i> (Ziegler: + <i>ονομα</i> Co)
55:1	πίετε: drink!	ⲡⲓ.ⲚⲦⲈⲦⲚⲟⲩⲱⲠ: eat! (Ziegler: ⲡⲓ. ⲡⲁⲓⲉⲧⲈ Ⲡⲁ)
55:6	ἐπικαλέσασθε: call upon!	ⲈⲠ̅Ⲡ̅ⲒⲕⲁⲗⲈⲓ̅ Ⲡ̅Ⲡⲟⲩ: call upon <i>him!</i> (Ziegler: + <i>αυτον</i> Co)
55:7	ἐλεηθήσεται: he will have mercy	ϢⲚⲁⲚⲁ Ⲛⲁⲩ: he will have mercy <i>on him</i> (> Ziegler)

Table 2. Omissions in the Coptic text

54:5	κύριος σαβαωθ: the Lord <i>Sabaoth</i>	ⲠⲪⲞⲈⲓϥ: the Lord (> Ziegler)
54:5	ἅγιος θεός: the <i>holy</i> God	ⲠⲚⲟⲩⲱⲧⲈ: God (Ziegler: ἅγιος scripsi = M <sup>125</sup> )
54:9	ἐν ἀπειλῇ σου: lit. <i>in your</i> threat	Ⲫ̅Ⲛ̅ ⲟⲩⲁⲡ̅ⲓⲗⲏⲏ: lit. <i>in a</i> threat (> Ziegler)
54:10	τὸ παρ' ἐμοῦ σοι εἶλεος: the mercy that comes from <i>me to you</i>	ⲠⲁⲕⲈⲚⲁ: also <i>my</i> mercy (> Ziegler)
54:11	ἐτοιμάζω σοι: I am preparing <i>for you</i>	Ⲡ̅ⲚⲁⲕⲈⲧⲈ: I will prepare (Ziegler: om. σοι without any reference to Coptic)
54:17	πάσα φωνή ἢ ἀναστήσεται: every voice <i>that</i> shall rise	ϢⲘⲏ ⲚⲒⲠ ⲚⲀⲦⲱⲟⲩⲚ: every voice shall rise (Ziegler: > ἢ Ⲡⲁ)
54:17	ὤμεις ἐσεσθέ μοι δίκαιοι: you shall be righteous <i>to me</i>	ⲚⲦⲱⲧ̅Ⲛ̅ ⲧⲈⲦ̅Ⲛ̅ⲚⲁⲱⲱⲠⲈ Ⲛⲁⲓ̅ⲕⲁⲓⲟⲩ: you shall be righteous (Ziegler: om. μοι Co)
55:3	καὶ <sup>2</sup>	lit. om. <i>in</i> Ⲡⲁ (> Ziegler)
55:8	λέγει κύριος: says the Lord	Om. <i>in</i> Ⲡⲁ 54 (Ziegler: om. λέγει κύριος Ⲡⲁ)

Table 3. Changes in vocabulary

54:1	ῥήξον: break forth	ⲱⲱ ⲈⲐⲞⲗ: cry out (> Ziegler)
54:5	κληθήσεται: he shall be <i>called</i>	ϢⲈϢⲘⲟⲩ ⲈⲠⲟⲩ: he is <i>blessed</i> ; ϢⲈⲠⲟⲩⲱⲧⲈ ⲈⲠⲟⲩ <i>in</i> Ⲡⲁ 48 and CLM 3469 = LXX (> Ziegler)
54:6	γυναικα καταλειμμένη: forsaken woman	ⲟⲩϢⲒⲓⲠⲈ ⲁⲓⲚⲟⲩϢϢ ⲈⲐⲞⲗ: <i>rejected</i> woman (> Ziegler)
54:10	ὄλεός σοι: he is merciful to you	ⲧⲈⲟⲩⲟⲩϢ: you (fem.) are safe (> Ziegler)
54:17	πᾶν σκεῦος φθαρτόν: every <i>perishable</i> vessel	ϢⲕⲈϢϢ ⲚⲒⲠ Ⲡ̅ⲠⲟⲩⲱⲚ̅ Ⲛ̅ⲐⲓϢ: every <i>hand-made</i> vessel (> Ziegler)
54:17	ἔσονται ἐν λύπῃ: they shall be <i>in sorrow</i>	ⲚⲁⲱⲱⲠⲈ ⲚⲒⲏⲧⲈ: [they] shall be <i>in you</i> (fem.) (> Ziegler) (Ralfs: ἔσονται ἐν αὐτῇ: [they] shall be <i>in her</i> = Ⲛ̅ⲒⲏⲧⲈ <i>in</i> Ⲡⲁ 48 and CLM 450)
55:2	ἐντρύφῃσαι: [your soul] shall revel	ϢⲁⲗⲁⲚⲱ: [your soul shall] live (> Ziegler)
55:6	ἡνίκα: whenever	Ⲛ̅ⲦⲈϢⲚⲟⲩ: on the instant (> Ziegler)
55:11	ὅσα: whatever	ϢⲁϢⲈ Ⲛ̅ⲒⲠ: every word (> Ziegler)
55:11	ἠθέλησα: I have <i>willed</i>	ⲈⲚⲦⲁⲓ̅Ϣⲟⲟⲩ: that I have <i>spoken</i> (Ziegler: ἐλάλησα)
55:13	οὐκ ἐκλέψει: he shall not <i>fail</i>	Ⲛ̅ϢⲚⲁⲱⲱϢϢ ⲁⲚ: he shall not <i>delay</i> ; Ⲛ̅ϢⲚⲁⲱⲱϢⲚ <i>in</i> Ⲡⲁ 41.18 and Ⲡⲁ 48 = LXX (> Ziegler)

125 M = Masoretic Text.

Table 4. Changes in prepositions

54:5	πάσῃ τῇ γῆ: in all the earth	ΖΪΣΜ ΠΚΑΖ ΤΗΡΦ: lit. <i>upon</i> all the earth (> Ziegler)
54:7	μετὰ ἐλέους μεγάλου: with great mercy	ΖΝ ΟΥΝΟΘ ΝΝΑ: lit. <i>in</i> great mercy (Ziegler: <i>en</i> ἐλεει μεγάλω without any reference to Coptic)
55:4	ἐν ἔθνεσιν: among the nations	ΝΝΖΕΘΝΟC: of the nations (Ziegler: om. <i>en</i> without any reference to Coptic)

Table 5. Changes in articles

54:10	τὰ ὄρη: the mountains	54:9 ΝΟΥΤΟΥ: <i>your</i> mountains (> Ziegler)
54:16	ἄνθρακας: coals (in. Acc.)	ΝΕΦΧΒΒΕC: <i>his</i> coals (> Ziegler)
54:16	σκεῦος εἰς ἔργον: a vessel (in Acc.) for work	ΜΠΕΦΖΝΑΛΥ ΕΠΕΦΖΩΒ: <i>his</i> vessel for <i>his</i> work (> Ziegler)
55:11	τὸ ῥῆμά μου: my word	ΠΩΛΧΕ: <i>the</i> word; sa 48: ΜΠΑΩΛΧΕ = LXX (Ziegler: > Co)

Table 6. Changes in word order

54:4	ὄνειδος τῆς χηρείας σου <sup>1</sup> / οὐ μὴ μνησθήσῃ <sup>2</sup> : the reproach of your widowhood <sup>1</sup> / you will not remember <sup>2</sup>	ΝΝΕΕΡ ΠΜΕΕΥΕ <sup>2</sup> / ΜΠΝΟΘΝΕC ΝΤΟΥΜΝΤΧΗΡΑ <sup>1</sup> (> Ziegler)
54:7	χρόνον μικρὸν <sup>1</sup> / κατέλιπόν σε <sup>2</sup> : for a brief moment <sup>1</sup> / I forsook you <sup>2</sup>	ΛΙΚΑΔΤΕ ΝCΩΙ <sup>2</sup> / ΝΟΥΚΟΥΪ ΝΟΥΟΕΙΩ <sup>1</sup> (> Ziegler)
54:8	ἐν θυμῷ μικρῶ <sup>1</sup> / ἀπέστρεψα τὸ πρόσωπόν μου <sup>2</sup> / ἀπὸ σου <sup>3</sup> : with a little wrath <sup>1</sup> / I turned my face <sup>2</sup> / away from you <sup>3</sup>	ΛΙΚΩΤΕ ΜΠΑΖΟ <sup>2</sup> / ΕΒΟΛ ΜΜΟ <sup>3</sup> / ΖΝ ΟΥΚΟΥΪ ΝCΩΝΤ <sup>1</sup> (> Ziegler)
54:9–10	(v. 9) ἔτι μὴδὲ <sup>1</sup> / ἐν ἀπειλῇ σου <sup>2</sup> / (v. 10) τὰ ὄρη <sup>3</sup> / μεταστήσεσθαί <sup>4</sup> : nor <sup>1</sup> / as a threat to you <sup>2</sup> / (v. 10) would I remove <sup>4</sup> / the mountains <sup>3</sup>	(v. 9) ΟΥΔΕ <sup>1</sup> / ΕΠΕΕΝΕ <sup>4</sup> / ΝΟΥΤΟΥ <sup>3</sup> / ΕΒΟΛ <sup>4</sup> / ΖΝ ΟΥΑΠΪΛΗ <sup>2</sup> (> Ziegler)
54:13	ἐν πολλῇ εἰρήνῃ <sup>1</sup> / τὰ τέκνα σου <sup>2</sup> : your children <sup>2</sup> / in great peace <sup>1</sup>	ΝΟΥΩΗΡΕ <sup>2</sup> / ΖΝ ΟΥΝΟΘ ΝΕΙΡΗΝΗ <sup>1</sup> (> Ziegler)
55:4	ἄρχοντα <sup>1</sup> / καί <sup>2</sup> : a ruler <sup>1</sup> / and <sup>2</sup> ...	ΑΥΩ <sup>2</sup> / ΝΑΡΧΩΝ <sup>1</sup> : and <sup>2</sup> / a ruler <sup>1</sup> (Ziegler: pr. <i>kai</i> without any reference to Coptic)
55:8	οὐδὲ ὡσπερ αἱ ὁδοὶ ὑμῶν αἱ ὁδοὶ μου: nor are <i>your</i> ways like <i>my</i> ways	ΝΕΡΕΝΑΖΪΟΥΟΕ Ο ΔΝ ΝΘΕ ΝΝΕΤΝΖΪΟΥΟΕ: nor are <i>my</i> ways like <i>your</i> ways (observed by Ziegler but without any reference to Coptic)
55:10	ἕτερος ἢ χιών: rain or snow	ΟΥΧΪΩΝ· Η ΟΥΖΩΟΥ: snow or rain (Ziegler: ἕτερος et χιών tr. Sa)
55:13	ἀντὶ δὲ τῆς κονύζης <sup>1</sup> / ἀναβήσεται μυρσίνη <sup>2</sup> : instead of the nettle <sup>1</sup> / shall come up a myrtle <sup>2</sup>	ΟΥΜΥΡCΥΝΗ <sup>2</sup> / ΕΠΜΑ ΝΟΥΕΝΟΥΝ <sup>1</sup> (> Ziegler)

Table 7. Semantic changes

54:1	ἡ οὐ τίκτουσα: who does not bear	ΕΤΕΜΕCΜΙCΕ: who bears (> Ziegler)
54:2	πῆξον: make [it] firm!	ΤΑΧΡΟΥ: make <i>them</i> firm (> Ziegler)
54:3	ἐκπέτασον: spread out!	ΠΟΦΩΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ: spread <i>them</i> out (> Ziegler)
54:3	ἠρημωμένας: that have become desolate	ΕΤΟ ΝΧΛΪΕ: that <i>are</i> desolate (> Ziegler)
54:5	ὁ ῥυσάμενός σε: the one who delivered	ΠΕΤΝΟΥΖΜ: the one who delivers (> Ziegler)

54:5	κληθήσεται: he <i>shall</i> be called	CECMOY EP04: he <i>is</i> blessed (> Ziegler)
54:11	ἐγὼ ἐτοιμάζω: I <i>am</i> preparing	ANOK ἦΝΑCΒTE: I <i>will</i> prepare (Ziegler: ετοιμασω without any reference to Coptic)
54:16	ἐγὼ κτίζω σε: I create you	ANOK ἦΝΑCONTE: I <i>will</i> create you (> Ziegler)
54:16	φυσῶν ἀνθρακας: who blows the coals	ΕΦΝΙΒΕ ΕΝΕΦΧΒΒΕC: who blows <i>upon</i> <sup>126</sup> his coals (> Ziegler)
54:17	οὐκ εὐδοῶσω: I will not make it prosper	ΝἦΝΑΤΡΕΥCΟΟΥΤἢ AN: I will not make it prosper (but <i>prosper</i> in passive form; Ziegler: ευδοωθησεται Co)
55:2	ἵνα τί τιμᾶσθε: why do you set a price?	ΕΤΒΕ ΟΥ ΤΕΤἸΝΝΑΩΠ: why <i>will</i> you set a price? sa 48 and CLM 450: ΤΕΤἸΝΩΠ = LXX (> Ziegler)
55:2	τὸν μόχθον ὑμῶν οὐκ εἰς πλησμονήν: your labour <i>for that which does not satisfy</i>	ΠΕΤἸΖΙCΕ ΟΩΟΠ AN ΕΥCΙ: your labour <i>is not what satisfies</i> (Ziegler: ο μοχθος Sa)
55:3	αἰώνιον: an everlasting	ΩΔ ΕΝΕ2: for ever; sa 48 and sa 108 <sup>t</sup> : ΝΩΔ ΕΝΕ2 (= LXX) (> Ziegler)
55:4	ἄρχοντα καὶ προστάσσοντα: a ruler and <i>commander</i> (in Acc.)	ΝΑΡΧΩΝ ΕΦΟΥΕ2 CΑ2ΝΕ: a ruler <i>who commands</i> (> Ziegler)
55:5	ἔθνη ἃ οὐκ ᾔδεισάν σε: nations that <i>did</i> not know you	ἸΖΕΘΝΟC ΕΤΕ ΝCΕCΟΟΥΝ ἸΜΟΚ AN: nations that <i>do</i> not know you (Ziegler: οιδασι(ν) without any reference to Coptic)
55:9	ἀπὸ τῶν ὁδῶν ὑμῶν: from your <i>ways</i>	ΟΥΗΥ ΕΒΟΛ ἸΤΕἸΝΖΙΗ: far from your <i>way</i> (Ziegler: της οδου Co)
55:10	εἰς βρώσιν: for food	ΕΟΥΟΜ4: to eat it [i.e. bread] (> Ziegler)
55:11	τάς ὁδούς σου: <i>your</i> ways	ἸΝΝΑΖΙΟΥC: <i>my</i> ways (Ziegler: μου Co)
55:13	ἔσται κυρίῳ <sup>127</sup> : it shall be to the Lord	ΠΧΟΕΙC ΝΑΩΩΠΕ: the Lord shall be (> Ziegler)

Table 8. Greek words in the Coptic text

55:2(2x).3	ἀγαθός	ΑΓΑΘΟΝ, ΑΚΑΘΟΝ
55:9	ἀλλά	ΑΛΛΑ
54:11	ἀνθραξ	ΑΝΘΡΑΞ
55:7	ἄνομος	ΑΝΟΜΟC
54:9	ἀπειλή	ΑΠΙΛΗ
55:4	ἄρχων	ΑΡΧΩΝ
55:7	ἀσεβής	ΑCΕΒΗC
54:2	αὐλή	ΑΥΛΗ
54:10; 55:8, 10, 12(2x)	γάρ	ΓΑΡ
55:3	Δαυὶδ	ΔΑΔ
54:16	δέ	ΔΕ
54:10; 55:3	διωθήκη	ΔΙΩΘΗΚΗ
54:17	δίκαιος	ΔΙΚΑΙΟC
54:14	δικαιοσύνη	ΔΙΚΑΙΟCΥΝΗ

<sup>126</sup> The meaning of ΝΙΦΕ Ε- as “blow upon” (see W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* [Oxford: Clarendon Press 1939] [reprint: Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock 2005] 239a).

<sup>127</sup> This is the reading in the Ziegler edition. Rahlfs: ἔσται κύριος (“the Lord shall be”).

54:3; 55:4(2x), 5	ἔθνος	ΖΕΘΝΟΣ
54:10, 13	εἰρήνη	ΕΙΡΗΝΗ
55:5, 6	ἐπικαλέω	ΕΠΙΚΑΛΕΙ
54:3	ἔτι	ΕΤΙ
54:1	εὐφραίνω	ΕΥΦΡΑΝΕ
55:10	ἦ	Η
54:12	ἴασπις	ἸΑΣΠΙΣ
54:5; 55:5	Ἰσραηλ	ΠΙΗΛ
54:9	κατά	ΚΑΤΑ
55:12	κλάδος	ΚΛΑΤΟΣ
54:3	κληρονομέω	ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΕΙ
54:17	κληρονομία	ΚΛΗΡΟΝΟΜΙΑ
54:12	κρύσταλλος	ΧΡΗΣΤΑΛΛΟΣ
55:13	κυπάρισσος	ΚΗΠΑΡΙΣΟΣ
55:5	λαός	ΛΑΟΣ
55:13	μυρσίνη	ΜΥΡΣΥΝΗ
54:9	Νώε	ΝΩΣΕ
54:6, 9, 10	οὐδέ	ΟΥΔΕ
54:3	πόλις	ΠΟΛΙΣ
54:15	προσήλυτος	ΠΡΟΣΥΛΗΤΟΣ <sup>sic!</sup>
54:12	πύλη	ΠΥΛΗ
54:11	σάπιφος	ΣΑΠΠΗΡΟΣ
54:17	σκεῦος	ΣΚΕΥΣ
54:2	σκηνή	ΣΚΥΝΗ
54:3	σπέρμα	ΣΠΕΡΜΑ
55:13	στοιβή	ΣΤΟΙΒΗ
54:4	χήρα	ΧΗΡΑ
55:10	χιών	ΧΙΩΝ
55:2, 3	ψυχή	ΨΥΧΗ

## 6. Analysis of Selected Philological Issues Encountered in Isa 54–55

The last part of this paper analyses the more difficult philological questions found in Isa 54–55 concerning two areas. The first results from differences between the Sahidic manuscripts, which have been indicated in the critical apparatus of the Coptic text. The second relates to how the Greek text of the Septuagint is read and translated into the Coptic language. The philological issues requiring commentary are found in the following verses:



**Isa 54:1**

The ending of the Coptic phrase: **ΑΠΧΟΕΙC ΓΑΡ ΧΟΟC ΧΕ** could be interpreted as an introduction to the quotation: “for the Lord said:”. The following verses would then be a direct quotation of what God says.

**Isa 54:2**

It appears that **ΠΑΝΟΥΑΥΛΗ** is a better form. It is found in sa 48 and CLM 3469. The possessive prefix **ΠΑ-** would then refer to the preceding noun **ΠΜΑ** (“the site”), which is masculine. According to Walter Till, the possessive prefix, as opposed to the possessive article, should not be written together with the noun that follows it.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, the correct spelling is **ΠΑ ΝΟΥΑΥΛΗ** (“this [= the site] of your curtains”).

**Isa 54:9**

The Coptic expression **ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΑΡΑΝ** (“this is my name”) does not fit well into the sentence’s context. The noun “name” is not found in the LXX, which reads *τουτό μοι ἐστίν* (“this is my”). NETS adds the word: “oath” (“this is my oath”), which foreshadows the words of God’s oath spoken to Noah. The Coptic **ΠΑΡΑΝ** may have been taken from Isa 42:8, which contains the same expression: **ΠΑΙ ΠΕ ΠΑΡΑΝ**.<sup>129</sup>

The Coptic translation **ΝΤΑΙΩΡΚ ΝΑϢ [...] ΕΤΜΩΝΤ ΕΠΚΑΖ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΕΧΩ ΧΙ<N> ΤΕΝΟΥ** corresponds very well with the Greek *ᾠμοσα αὐτῷ [...] τῆ γῆ μὴ θυμωθήσεσθαι ἐπὶ σοι* and should literally be translated into English: “I swore to him [...] *no more to be angry with* the earth because of you.” NETS replaces the infinitive with the 1st person singular (“I swore to him [...] *that I would no more be angry at* the earth because of you”), which conveys the point of the sentence but is not a literal translation.

Similarly, another expression: **ΟΥΔΕ ΕΠΕΕΝΕ ΝΟΥΤΟΥ ΕΒΟΛ ΖἸ ΟΥΑΠΙΛΗ** reflects the Greek text very well and should be translated using the infinitive: “nor *to remove* with a threat your mountains.” NETS uses the finite verb: “nor as a threat to you *would I remove* the mountains” is not a literal translation of the Greek *μηδὲ ἐν ἀπειλῇ σου τὰ ὄρη μεταστήσεσθαι*.

A difficulty in understanding the Greek text is the incorrect division of verses 9 and 10. Verse 10 should begin a little further on, with the expression *οὐδὲ οἱ βουνοὶ σου*. The division of Coptic verses introduced by the editors of the Book of Isaiah is better.<sup>130</sup> Our English translation of the text is also based on the Coptic division.

<sup>128</sup> See W.C. Till, “La séparation des mots en copte,” *BIFAO* 60 (1960) 156.

<sup>129</sup> This was also suggested in Ziegler’s critical apparatus (J. Ziegler (ed.), *Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum. Auctoritate Societatis Litterarum Göttingensis editum*. XIV. *Isaias* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1939] 325).

<sup>130</sup> Our edition of the Coptic text is based on Kasser’s division (*Papyrus Bodmer XXIII*, 92), with which Suci’s electronic edition also conforms (see [https://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622008&fbclid=IwAR3TDeECwvRaXyDc0EgFJU6uZ9dFQ5ynkvee0FXCgEV2hK73AQvD-M\\_-XL8](https://coptot.manuscriptroom.com/manuscript-workspace/?docID=622008&fbclid=IwAR3TDeECwvRaXyDc0EgFJU6uZ9dFQ5ynkvee0FXCgEV2hK73AQvD-M_-XL8) [access: 29.02.2024]).

**Isa 54:10**

The final part of the verse in the Greek version εἶπεν γὰρ κύριος ἰλεώς σοι can be read in two ways, as the NETS authors note. The first alternative emerges when we first read εἶπεν γὰρ κύριος (“for the Lord said”) and then ἰλεώς σοι (“he would be merciful to you”). The second alternative concerns a slightly different division of the text: first εἶπεν γὰρ (“he said”), and then κύριος ἰλεώς σοι (“the Lord is merciful to you”). The Coptic translation is more explicit. The particle ⲬⲈ indicates that the first part should be read as “for the Lord said.” The last word ⲦⲈⲐⲐⲐⲬ has been slightly modified. Although the verb ⲐⲘⲬⲁⲓ (its *qualitativus stativus* is ⲐⲘⲐⲬ) may correspond to the Greek ἰλεως,<sup>131</sup> the Coptic version has a different subject. It is not the Lord (Greek κύριος), but the 2nd person singular of the the feminine “you” (Copt. ⲦⲈ-). In the English translation, the basic meaning of the verb ⲐⲘⲬⲁⲓ (“be whole, safe”<sup>132</sup>) was adopted, and the final expression ⲦⲈⲐⲐⲐⲬ was rendered as “you are safe.”

**Isa 55:2**

In Greek, there are two similar verbs with different meanings. One of these is the verb ἐντρυφάω (“to revel”) in our verse, to which the Coptic verb ⲐⲘⲎⲐⲘ corresponds.<sup>133</sup> The second is τρέφειν (“to make alive”, “to be alive”), translated into Coptic as ⲘⲁⲗⲎⲠⲱ.<sup>134</sup> The occurrence of ⲘⲁⲗⲎⲠⲱ in the Sahidic translations may indicate the translator’s interpretation of the verb ἐντρυφάω as τρέφειν.

**Isa 55:11**

The Coptic noun ⲠⲁⲬⲈ (“word”) can also be used in the sense of “affair.”<sup>135</sup> It could correspond with the Greek *relative adjective* ὅσα, translated as a noun “whatever.”<sup>136</sup> However, since the Greek verb ἠθέλησα (“I have willed”) has been replaced by the Coptic ⲈⲎⲦⲁⲓⲐⲐⲐⲘⲐⲘ (“what I have spoken”), we have rendered its basic meaning of “word” in our translation of the word ⲠⲁⲬⲈ. The phrase ⲠⲁⲎⲦⲁⲓⲐⲐⲐⲘⲐⲘ ⲎⲐⲐⲎ ⲈⲎⲦⲁⲓⲐⲐⲐⲘⲐⲘ Ⲭⲱⲕ ⲈⲐⲐⲎ has been rendered as “until *every word* I have *spoken* is fulfilled.”

**Isa 55:12**

Most manuscripts read: ἐν χαρᾷ διδαχθήσεσθε (“you shall be taught with happiness”). The Coptic translation ⲘⲈⲎⲁⲎ ⲦⲎⲘⲦⲎ ⲒⲎ ⲐⲘⲠⲁⲠⲈ contains the prenominal form Ⲏ̄-, derived from the verb ⲈⲎⲎⲈ (“bring”, “bear”<sup>137</sup>). Therefore, it can be read as “you shall

<sup>131</sup> See Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 511b.

<sup>132</sup> See Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 511b.

<sup>133</sup> See Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 485b.

<sup>134</sup> See Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 347b.

<sup>135</sup> See Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 613b.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. J. Lust – E. Eynikel – K. Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft 2003) 448a.

<sup>137</sup> Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 78b.

be carried with happiness.” Ziegler’s critical apparatus indicates that some Greek manuscripts contain the verb διαχθήσεσθε (“you shall be carried”) in this place, which means “to carry over” or “to bring through.”<sup>138</sup> It is from this verb διάγω that the Coptic translation derives.

The phrase Ⲭⲓ ⲃⲁⲐⲐ in the verse has been translated as “leap forth” and corresponds to the Greek verb ἐξάλλομαι. According to Crum, the noun ⲃⲁⲐⲐ originated under the influence of the Fayyumic dialect.<sup>139</sup> A typically Sahidic form ⲘⲐⲐⲐ occurs in manuscript sa 48 and CLM 3469.

The edition of the last two chapters of the Book of Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 54–55) in the Sahidic dialect shows a number of differences between the Septuagint text and its translation among Egyptian Christians. These differences do not significantly affect the meaning of the text. However, they are a fascinating testimony to the reception of the biblical message by Coptic-speaking Christians. We hope that the presentation of the available editions of the Sahidic text, with particular attention to the sa 52 manuscript, its comparison with the Septuagint manuscripts, and the analysis of the more difficult fragments can assist further philological and theological studies of the Book of Deutero-Isaiah.

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<sup>138</sup> Lust – Eynikel – Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 136b–137a.

<sup>139</sup> Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 627b. The Fayyumic influence in the text is easily explained by the fact that the codex comes from Hamula in the Faiyum Oasis.

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# “Breaking a Dog’s Neck” as a Metaphor for Oppressing the Weak. An Exegetical-Historical Analysis of the Expression עֵרַף כְּלָב (Isa 66:3)

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper analyses Isa 66:3 and presents a new interpretation of the expression עֵרַף כְּלָב “breaks a dog’s neck.” There are various proposals to explain this enigmatic expression. One points, for example, to a possible ritual in which dogs were to be sacrificed by breaking their necks. This ritual was supposed to have been practised in the ancient Levant, including the Israelites/Judahites. This explanation is called into question in this article. It is pointed out that the phrase can be understood as a metaphor for people who impinge on the dignity of others. The exegesis of biblical texts, the examples cited from ancient Near Eastern literature, and the analysis of archaeological material indicate that this expression may have a different meaning from that hitherto accepted.

**KEYWORDS:** Trito-Isaiah, dog, servant, metaphor, ritual

The concluding chapter of the Book of Isaiah begins with the speech by YHWH (Isa 66:1–4). Part of this speech condemns the people conducting worship (vv. 3–4). The biblical author uses the enigmatic expression עֵרַף כְּלָב, “breaks a dog’s neck.” It is found only once in the Hebrew Bible. It is often emphasised that this is the only literary evidence of the ritual practice of sacrificing dogs from the Levant.<sup>1</sup> According to some scholars, Isa 66:3 could also be a reminiscence of earlier Hittite ritual practices.<sup>2</sup> Some non-Yahwistic religious practices are also indicated.<sup>3</sup> These scholarly suggestions are sometimes accepted indiscriminately.<sup>4</sup> Finally, an argument has been made from this biblical verse

1 H. Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium B.C.E. Levantine Dog Burials as an Extension of Human Mortuary Behavior,” *BASOR* 379 (2018) 28.

2 J.M. Sasson, “Isaiah LXVI 3–4a,” *VT* 26/2 (1976) 202–207.

3 D.J.A. Clines, *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*. VI. פ–ט (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2011) 415. The literature contains opinions that the biblical author refers to “anti-Yahwistic” cults, whose rituals are mentioned in Isa 65:3b–7; 66:3–4; 66:15–17; U.F. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah. Its Composition and Final Form* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press 2012) 496. Unfortunately, as is the case with the cited scholar, the provenance of these rituals is not indicated.

4 B.J. Collins, “The Puppy in Hittite Ritual,” *JCS* 42/2 (1990) 224.

that the Jews continued idolatrous practices, including sacrificing dogs, during the Second Temple period.<sup>5</sup>

This article posits that the phrase *כלב ערף* does not necessarily refer to dogs sacrificed in honour of a deity but may be a poetic term for people who act wickedly towards others. It has already been pointed out in the literature that this phrase may be an idiomatic expression, the meaning of which is not yet known.<sup>6</sup> This article, therefore, puts forward a possible explanation of this expression. One of the premises that make this new interpretation possible is that *כלב*, “dog,” may be equivalent to *עבד*, “servant.” The article begins with a presentation of the *status quaestionis* of the biblical passage examined, followed by a presentation of its interpretations. The exegetical analysis comes next, highlighting the grammatical problems of Isa 66:3. An analysis of the texts using the roots *נכה* and *ערף* has been performed. This may bring one closer to an answer as to whether the suggested interpretation is correct. Perhaps “breaking a dog’s neck” is not a term for performing a mysterious ritual in which a canine is sacrificed but refers to people for whom the lives of those worse off are worthless.<sup>7</sup> The article provides examples from Near Eastern literature in which the term “dog” is equivalent to “servant.” The last part of this article also seeks potential archaeological traces of a worship practice of breaking dogs’ necks in honour of some ancient deity.

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- 5 M. Edrey, “Dog Cult in Persian Period Judea,” *A Jew’s Best Friend? The Image of the Dog through Jewish History* (eds. P. Ackerman-Lieberman – R. Zalashik) (Brighton – Portland – Toronto: Sussex Academic Press 2013) 21–22. At the same time, he points out that this understanding of Isa 66:3 has already been known, cf. M. Edrey, “The Dog Burials at Achaemenid Ashkelon Revisited,” *TA* 35/2 (2008) 270. Not all scholars are willing to consider such an explanation plausible, B. Hrobon, *Ethical Dimension of Cult in the Book of Isaiah* (BZAW 418; Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2010) 215. This belief may have been reinforced by the terminological link between Isa 66:3 and Isa 65:1–7, in which the biblical author refers to forbidden worship practices, P.A. Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction in Trito-Isaiah. The Structure, Growth and Authorship of Isaiah 56–66* (VTSup 62; Leiden: Brill 1995) 131–132. However, it is difficult to determine if these terminological connections are coincidental. Noting the rarity of the term *קָוִיר*, one can assume that the connection is intentional. On the other hand, however, only some of the expressions are repeated in both texts. Therefore, it is difficult to make a conclusive statement about the close links between the texts mentioned.
- 6 E.U. Dim, *The Eschatological Implications of Isa 65 and 66 as the Conclusions of the Book of Isaiah* (Bern: Lang 2005) 133.
- 7 The suggestion that *כלב* could mean “servant” was made by O. Margalith. He indicated that it would be appropriate to speak of a homonym in this case, O. Margalith, “Keleb: Homonym or Metaphor?,” *VT* 3/4 (1983) 494. A review of archaeological and ancient literary data on the dog and its Near Eastern and biblical symbolism is presented in G.D. Miller, “Attitudes toward Dogs in Ancient Israel: A Reassessment,” *JSOT* 32/4 (2008) 487–500; J. Lemański, “Negatywny obraz psa w Biblii,” *CTO* 1 (2011) 51–96; A. Basson, “Dog Imagery in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East,” *JS* 15/1 (2006) 92–106; J. Schwartz, “Dogs in Jewish Society in the Second Temple Period and in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud,” *JJS* 55/2 (2004) 246–277; I. Breier, “Man’s Best Friend: The Comradeship between Man and Dog in the Lands of the Bible,” *JANESCU* 34 (2020) 1–21; S. Menache, “Dogs: God’s Worst Enemies?,” *Society & Animals* 5/1 (1997) 23–44; M.D. Nanos, “Paul’s Reversal of Jews Calling Gentiles ‘Dogs’ (Philippians 3:2): 1600 Years of an Ideological Tale Wagging an Exegetical Dog?,” *BibInt* 17 (2009) 448–482; I. Breier, “‘Who Is This Dog?’: The Negative Images of Canines in the Lands of Bible,” *ANES* 54 (2017) 47–62.



## 1. *Status quaestionis*

Modern translations of the biblical text remain consistent in their rendering of the expression in question עָרַף כֶּלֶב. An overview of selected modern translations is presented below, followed by the conclusions of the analysis.

The review begins with selected English translations, starting with the King James Version: “he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck” (KJV); “he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck” (ESV); “The one who sacrifices a lamb is like one who breaks a dog’s neck” (NASB); “He that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he broke a dog’s neck” (JPS Tanakh 1917); “breaking a dog’s neck” (NAB); “whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck” (NRSV). Interestingly, some modern English translations presented pair the phrase עָרַף כֶּלֶב with the preceding זָבַח הַשֶּׁה. The New American Bible translators did not link the two expressions but showed one among several other activities condemned by YHWH. The phrases עָרַף כֶּלֶב and זָבַח הַשֶּׁה are also linked in some other translations, e.g. German: “wer ein Schaf opfert, gleicht dem, der einem Hund das Genick bricht” (Lutherbibel 2017); “Sie schlachten für mich Schafe – und zugleich opfern sie Hunde” (Gute Nachricht Bibel); “man opfert Schafe - und bricht einem Hund das Genick” (Einheitsübersetzung); Italian: “uno immola una pecora e poi strozza un cane” (CEI 2008); “sgozzano una pecora, ma strozzano anche un cane” (TILC); “uno immola una pecora e poi strozza un cane” (CEI 74); Spanish: “el que sacrifica oveja, como se degolló un perro” (JBS); as well as French: “Celui qui sacrifie un agneau est comme celui qui romprait la nuque à un chien” (LSG). Two tendencies are thus evident: translators pair the expressions זָבַח הַשֶּׁה and עָרַף כֶּלֶב or employ a comparison.

Commentators point to the predicament posed by the enigmatic and ambiguous grammatical construction used in the verse in question. There are two possible interpretations regarding the pairing of successive expressions.

A – orthodox worship and syncretism – Isa 66:3 is understood as a discussion with the priestly establishment,<sup>8</sup> which had hitherto fulfilled its duties as part of worship practices. At some point, the priests’ actions raised concerns about abandoning legitimate worship in favour of alien practices<sup>9</sup> by doing the unacceptable. Perhaps the biblical author is

<sup>8</sup> Hanson even suggests this discussion took place between the different priestly divisions, P.D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40–66* (IBC; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1995) 250. The problematic part of this opinion is that some of the sacrifices mentioned were not prohibited by law. It is also difficult to determine which groups of priests might be involved.

<sup>9</sup> J. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56–66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible 19; New York: Doubleday 2003) 297; J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (World Biblical Commentary 25; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2005) 931; Dim, *The Eschatological*, 128; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 491; C. Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66. A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia, PA: Westminster 1969) 411; G.V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66* (NAC 15B; Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman 2009) 1054; J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah. An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity 1993) 887. Westermann refers to a quotation from one of Justin’s works, which mentions a proclamation by the Persian king Darius to the Carthaginians to stop sacrificing humans and eating the flesh of dogs, Westermann, *Isaiah*, 414. This juxtaposition does not yet suggest that breaking a dog’s neck was a special ritual practice observed by the Carthaginians.

likening orthodox worship to false worship, which was part of the beliefs of other peoples living in the ancient Levant.<sup>10</sup>

B – orthodox worship and social justice – the priests' behaviour is ambiguous, and one suspects them of being capable of morally evil acts in addition to conducting worship practices. These include putting a person to death or breaking a dog's neck.<sup>11</sup> Criticism of this social group can also lead to downplaying the validity of engaging in worship practices.<sup>12</sup> This interpretation is more veiled, for the biblical author is not necessarily seeking to reject worship practices but rather to encourage them while maintaining social justice and an adequate moral life.<sup>13</sup> It is not so much a matter of reducing the position of the temple and worship but rather a reminder of the superiority of YHWH over the worship promoted by the priests.<sup>14</sup>

The new interpretation put forward in this article fits into the second group of proposals for interpreting the passage in question. Isa 66:3 mentions priests (or socially superior individuals) who perform ritual practices and behave morally wickedly, as evidenced by the metaphorical utterances in the second of each pair of expressions ("kills a man/breaks a dog's neck").<sup>15</sup> The proposal highlights the partial lack of worshipful context for some of the expressions in v. 3ab. In exegetical studies, the prevailing view is that the whole verse has a sacrificial context.<sup>16</sup>

The difference between the possible ways of interpreting this passage is thus apparent. While the first interpretation points to the possible incorporation of elements of worship alien to the Israelites, the second proposition refers not only to ritual but also to social issues, including social justice. Some of the expressions in Isa 66:3 can be read as metaphors for actions aimed at the underprivileged (עָרַף כֶּלֶב, מַכֵּה אִישׁ). This interpretation is made possible, for instance, by reference to the tradition of reading successive pairs

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Furthermore, if the prophet condemned the sacrifice of dogs, why would he refer to the practice promoted by the Carthaginians? If YHWH's adversaries were Jerusalem priests or Persians, such a remark is unnecessary.

10 J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah. Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998) 668.

11 Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 297; Westermann, *Isaiah*, 412; Watts, *Isaiah*, 931.

12 Dim, *The Eschatological*, 129.

13 Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 158; Hanson, *Isaiah 248*; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 668–669.

14 P.V. Niskanen, *Isaiah 56–66* (Berit Olam. Studies in Hebrew Narrative and Poetry; Collegeville, PA: Liturgical Press 2014) 93–94; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 486.

15 J.M. Sasson ruled out the metaphorical use of כֶּלֶב, focusing on the use of the Hebrew word "dog" in the context of sacred prostitution, Sasson, "Isaiah," 201.

16 Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 297; Westermann, *Isaiah*, 412–413; Dim, *The Eschatological*, 129. There are also contrary positions, such as that of A.E. Gardner, who believes that Isa 66:1–4 is actually based on a contrast between the poor and oppressed and people who are much better off or those marked by arrogance and pride, A.E. Gardner, "Isaiah 66:1–4: Condemnation of Temple and Sacrifice or Contrast Between the Arrogant and the Humble?," *RB* 113/4 (2006) 506–528. However, the author did not use extrabiblical arguments, either textual or archaeological, to justify her claim.

of participial expressions together with the comparative participle כ. The ancient texts (1QIsa<sup>a17</sup>; LXX<sup>18</sup>; Vg<sup>19</sup>; TgJ<sup>20</sup>) are witnesses to this tradition:

1QIsa<sup>a</sup>:

שוחט שור כמכה איש וזבח השא עורפ כלב מעלה מנחה מד חוזיר מזכיר לבונה מברך און גמ המה בחרו  
בדרכיהמה ובשקוציהמה נפשמה חפצה

LXX:

ὁ δὲ ἄνομος ὁ θύων μοι μόσχον ὡς ὁ ἀποκτένων κύναι, ὁ δὲ ἀναφέρων σεμιδαλιον ὡς αἶμα ὕειον, ὁ διδοὺς λίβανον εἰς μνημόστυνον ὡς βλάσφημος· καὶ οὗτοι ἐξελέξαντο τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ βδελύγματα αὐτῶν, ἃ ἢ ψυχῆ αὐτῶν ἠθέλησεν

TgJ:

נכיס תורא כקטיל גבר דבח דבא אימר כנקיה כלב מסקי קורבן דם תזירא קורבן מתנתהון מתנת און אף אינון אתרעיא  
באורסתהון ובשיקוציהון נפשהון אתרעיא

Vg:

Qui immolat bovem **quasi qui** interficiat virum, qui mactat pecus **quasi qui** excerebret canem, qui offert oblationem **quasi qui** sanguinem suillum offerat, qui recordatur turis **quasi qui** benedicat idolo, haec omnia elegerunt in viis suis, et in abominationibus suis anima eorum delectata est

Some scholars, however, suggest replacing the comparative participle with a conjunction ו (*waw*)<sup>21</sup> or treating it as a group of synonymous expressions.<sup>22</sup> These scholars point out that comparing an element of official worship to one whose practice is forbidden would constitute an attack on orthodox sacrificial worship itself<sup>23</sup> or mean confusing it with elements of alien worship.<sup>24</sup> This position’s problem is that it maintains a biblical interpretation as official for all Jews of the Second Temple period. The artificially manufactured vision of orthodox sacrificial worship stipulates that whatever does not fit within its framework is unquestionably forbidden. Scholars pointing to syncretism in the activities of the priests also point out that similar practices are rejected by biblical authors in other inspired texts (e.g. Isa 65:3–5).<sup>25</sup> The problem with this argument is that the prohibition of sacrificing dogs does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, and similar worship practices in the ancient Near East are difficult to find. The exegetes in favour of the MT reading, while

17 *The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa<sup>a</sup>). A New Edition* (eds. D. Parry – E. Qimron) (STDJ 32; Leiden: Brill 1999) 106–107; *Scrolls from Qumran Cave 1. The Great Isaiah Scroll. The Order of the Community. The Pesher of Habakkuk* (eds. J.C. Trever – F.M. Cross) (Jerusalem: The Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and The Shrine of the Book 1972) 121.

18 *Septuaginta*, <https://www.die-bibel.de/en/bible/LXX/ISA.66> [access: 9.08.2024].

19 *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, <https://www.die-bibel.de/en/bible/VUL/ISA.66> [access: 9.08.2024].

20 Niskanen, *Isaiah*, 94; B.D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum. Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 11; Wilmington, DE: Glazier 1987) 126.

21 Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 156.

22 Niskanen, *Isaiah*, 95.

23 Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 156.

24 Niskanen, *Isaiah*, 95.

25 Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 156.

rejecting the readings of 1QIsa<sup>a</sup> and the LXX, which allow the reading of Isa 66:3 with the comparative participle כ, stress that this is an addition to the Hebrew text. At the same time, they acknowledge that the best possible interpretation is to point to accusing priests of syncretism.<sup>26</sup> This study, however, argues for the tradition of combining pairs of participles using the conjunction כ. This is motivated by the ancient tradition of reading Isa 66:3 and the analysis of the expressions מכח־איש and ערף כלב, which are not necessarily used in the context of worship.

## 2. Exegetical Analysis of Isa 66:3

### 2.1. Synoptic Table

Author's translation	TM(BHS)
He who kills a bull [is like one who] kills a man (a)	שוחט השור מכה־איש
He who offers a sheep [is like one who] breaks a dog's neck (b)	זוכה השֶׁה ערף כֶּלֶב
Sacrificing pig's blood, burning incense, blessing idols (c)	מעלה מנחה דם־חזיר מזביר לבנה לבבד אֵון
They have chosen their paths, and their souls delight in their abominations (d)	גם־המה בחרו בדרך־יהם ובשקוציהם נפשם תפצה

### 2.2. Isa 66:1–4 as a Textual Unit

There is no consensus among scholars on the division of Isa 66 into smaller units. A division into five sections, which are separate poems, is often proposed.<sup>27</sup> The subdivision by genre is different.<sup>28</sup> The academic literature on the division of Isa 66 also includes the view that this chapter is a single unit.<sup>29</sup> The most straightforward division isolates the two

<sup>26</sup> Dim, *The Eschatological*, 133–134.

<sup>27</sup> The division into five parts is not uniform. One such division was proposed by Webster: vv. 1–4, 5–11, 12–17, 18–22, 23–24, E.C. Webster, "A Rhetorical Study of Isaiah 66," *JSOT* 34 (1986) 93. A different division into five parts was suggested by Gärtner: vv. 1–4, 5–14, 15–17, 18–21, 22–23, while pointing to v. 24 as a later addition, J. Gärtner, "The Kabod of JHWH. A Key Isaianic Theme from the Assyrian Empire to the Eschaton," *The History of Isaiah. The Formation of the Book and Its Presentation of the Past* (eds. J. Stromberg – J. Todd Hibbard) (FAT 150; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2021) 433–436. Westermann put forward yet another: vv. 1–4, 5, 6–16, 17, 18, 24, Westermann, *Isaiah*, 411–429. Berges also divides Isa 66 into five parts but disagrees that v. 5 is the beginning of the second part, pointing to the continuity of thought in vv. 5–6 with what is said in vv. 1–4, Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 485. This exegete follows the text's theme and the correspondence of (only some) terms and pays little attention to its grammar. He does not enter into a polemic with the frequently used criterion in the division of the biblical text, which is the imperative שִׁמְעוּ (v. 5). This criterion is used not only in the prophetic texts but always opens a new section (e.g. 2 Sam 20:16; Job 21:2; 34:2; 37:2; Ps. 49:1; Prov 4:1).

<sup>28</sup> Webster, "A Rhetorical," 93.

<sup>29</sup> Webster, "A Rhetorical," 93.

main parts of Isa 66: vv. 1–4 and vv. 5–24<sup>30</sup> or vv. 1–16 and vv. 17–24.<sup>31</sup> Goldingay separates the section vv. 1–6 from Isa 66:1–17. He also indicates an internal division of v. 3 (vv. 3a–3b–4), linking it through the subject matter (YHWH’s declaration to wicked-doers) with v. 4.<sup>32</sup> This treatment is perhaps structurally the closest to what is presented in this study. Exegetes also propose dividing Isa 66 into three units (vv. 1–6; 7–14; 15–24).<sup>33</sup> Some scholars favour separating vv. 1–4 as one section.<sup>34</sup> However, they do not always treat it as a thematically compact unit.<sup>35</sup>

This article proposes isolating Isa 66:1–4 as a separate section.<sup>36</sup> The introductory phrase of the oracle: “Thus says the Lord” (כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה – v. 1) opens this short section. The previous section ends similarly: “Says the Lord” (אָמַר יְהוָה – Isa 65:25). The device used by the biblical author allows for a delimitation, thus separating Isa 65 and 66.<sup>37</sup> The biblical author addresses social issues in Isa 65, combining them with elements of creation theology, to repeat them in a similar fashion in Isa 66:1–4. The difference between Isa 66:1–4 and the preceding text is also apparent. Isa 65 presents the idyllic vision of happiness on earth that will come about through the blessing of YHWH. The situation is different in Isa 66:1–4, with its ominous emphasis directed against the wicked, who offer sacrifices but persecute the defenceless and the worse off.<sup>38</sup>

The Isa 66:1–4 section culminates in v. 4, which thematically ties in with v. 3d through YHWH’s announcement of the coming of an ominous time for all whose behaviour – regarding worship and social interaction – is scandalous. The verses are also linked grammatically, for the formula “They have chosen [...], I also will choose [...]” (בָּרַחֲמֵי – בָּרַחֲמֵי) indicates cause-and-effect relationships. The deviant group is also condemned in v. 17, but no element connects it with v. 3. The wicked people are also mentioned in v. 24, although this is already a foreshadowing of their disastrous defeat rather than a representation of the forms of worship they practised. In v. 5, another prophetic speech by Isaiah begins: “Hear the word of the Lord” (שָׁמְעוּ דְבַר יְהוָה). While Isa 66:1–4 speaks about the poor in the third person

30 M.A. Sweeney, “Prophetic Exegesis in Isaiah 65–66,” *Writing and Reading the Scroll of Isaiah. Studies of an Interpretive Tradition* (eds. C.C. Broyles – C.A. Evans) (VTSup 70; Brill: Leiden 1997) 462. The same author, in another paper, provides a similar proposal for a division: vv. 1–5, 6–24, cf. Sweeney, *Isaiah 40–66* (FOTL 19; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2016) 357–365.

31 Webster, “A Rhetorical,” 93–94.

32 J. Goldingay, *Isaiah 56–66: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (ICC; London: Bloomsbury Academic 2014) 478.

33 Webster, “A Rhetorical,” 94–103; Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 153.

34 Smith, *Isaiah*, 1056; Motyer, *Isaiah*, 887.

35 Westermann, *Isaiah*, 412; Dim, *The Eschatological*, 117–118.

36 Cf. Sweeney, “Prophetic Exegesis,” 462. This textual unit (vv. 1–4) has also been divided into smaller sections in the history of exegesis due to the likely textual tradition from which they are supposed to have originated. Accordingly, Trito-Isaiah was indicated as the source of vv. 1–2 and the Hellenistic textual tradition for vv. 3–4 (Smith, *Rhetoric and Redaction*, 153). Pointing to such a late redaction is justified by a negative reference to alien worship practices, although these had already been initiated in the past.

37 G.A.F. Knight, *The New Israel. A Commentary of the Book of Isaiah 56–66* (ITC 5; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1985) 103.

38 Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 371.

singular (הַיְיָ – v. 2), YHWH directly addresses a group of oppressed people in the following verses (e.g. אֲדַבְּרֶיכֶם – v. 5).<sup>39</sup>

The expression עַרְףֵי כָלֵב is found in Isa 66:1–4. It is important to point out two issues raised in it: the omnipresence and omnipotence of YHWH. God is depicted as perfect and present everywhere (v. 1a), for whom no temple is required since the world is His dwelling (v. 1b), and creation is the temple.<sup>40</sup> God performs the act of creation, and to Him as Creator, all things belong (v. 2a). In spite of his omnipotence and power, God does not support the strong but turns first and foremost to the flawed, poor and disadvantaged (v. 2b). In the following sentences, he enumerates all those who while undertaking ritual practices, forget the disadvantaged, acting to their detriment. They piously offer sacrifices while despising other people (v. 3ab). Their worship practice is impeccable: they bring food offerings and burn incense (v. 3c), but they do so for show and take great pride in it. They have chosen their path in life (v. 3d), which is not according to God's will (v. 4c). Therefore, God will repay them accordingly (v. 4a), for they have not heard His voice in the poor and oppressed (v. 4b). Interestingly, those who conduct the practices mentioned may be part of the chosen people. The biblical author enumerates rituals not forbidden by Jewish law,<sup>41</sup> hence the easy conclusion that he may be referring to the social situation among the Israelites.<sup>42</sup> It is difficult to identify unequivocally the group to whom the prophet's criticism may have applied. Perhaps these were the priests whom Isaiah warns of the severe punishment laid down by YHWH.<sup>43</sup> This would align with the identification of the oppressed as people who have been excluded from temple worship. This alienation is not only religious but also social and economic.<sup>44</sup> The division outlined also fits with Isaiah's concept of enemies. Whereas in Deutero-Isaiah, the enemy was the Babylonian empire, the next part of the book bears witness to the friction and unrest within the chosen people.<sup>45</sup> Given the connections between Isa 65–66 and Isa 1 (especially vv. 10–17), it can be presumed that the people of tainted reputation are the members of the chosen people.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps the warnings are directed at

39 Oswalt points out that the wicked are not indicated as the addressees at any point in YHWH's speech, and hence, there can be no question of a change in the recipient of God's message, Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 665. However, there is no doubt that in Isa 66:1–4, the poor and oppressed man was not considered the addressee of YHWH's speech, so it is possible to point to some changes in the biblical text and use them during delimitation.

40 Gärtner, "The Kabod," 433. This problem is viewed differently by A.E. Gardner, "Isaiah 66:1–4," 509–512.

41 Gardner, "Isaiah 66:1–4," 518.

42 Hrobon, *Ethical*, 213.

43 J. Blenkinsopp, "The Servant and the Servants in Isaiah and the Formation of the Book," *Essays on the Book of Isaiah* (FAT 128; Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen 2019) 23.

44 J. Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book. Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (FAT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2006) 69–70.

45 W. Ma, *Until the Spirit Comes. The Spirit of God in the Book of Isaiah* (JSOTSuppl 271; Sheffield: Sheffield Academy Press 1999) 142–144; A. Zawadzki, "Sprawiedliwy ginie, a nikt się tym nie przejmuję (Iz 57,10) – obraz judejskiej elity winiektywach Trito-Izajasza (Iz 56–57). Kryzys przywództwa w prowincji Jehud w połowie V wieku przed Chr.," *BibAn* 13/2 (2023) 251–295.

46 Sweeney's intertextual analyses, among others, have made such an observation possible, Sweeney "Prophetic Exegesis," 464–465. However, the author admits elsewhere in his article that the words of instruction

those who undertook the task of rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, hinted by the reference to building activities in YHWH’s speech (66:1–2a).<sup>47</sup> The reference to the community responsible for renovating the temple tabernacle could indicate the difficulties faced by the poorer people, to whom the economic hardship of the building activity in Jerusalem may have been transferred. Scholars have, moreover, presented arguments for the redaction of this part of the prophetic book in the Second Temple period.<sup>48</sup> Sasson suggests otherwise, stating that someone outside Israel observed these practices.<sup>49</sup> However, the biblical author appears to emphasise the tension between fulfilling worship duties and immoral behaviour.<sup>50</sup> However, this still does not explain why scholars point to the potential mention of sacrificing dogs in Isa 66:3.

### 2.3. Analysis of Isa 66:3

The term כלב is translated as “dog.”<sup>51</sup> In biblical texts, the term is often used as an insult<sup>52</sup> or to emphasise someone’s faithfulness, which is why it is also interpreted as “servant.”<sup>53</sup> This solution may be an argument for a change in the understanding of Isa 66:3. The term may thus have become part of a metaphorical expression for an action harmful to someone of a lower standing. In this case, someone who “breaks the necks of dogs” does not cause physical harm to an animal but performs some act that definitively harms weaker and disadvantaged people.

If, then, the biblical author were to use the term כלב in a metaphorical sense, what might his purpose be? He could be mentioning instances of abuse in the cultic and public sphere at the same time. It seems that by talking about those who “break the necks of dogs,” he is not referring to any ritual that he may have witnessed or that was gaining popularity among the Judahites. The problem is more likely to concern public life and the relationship

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would have been addressed to an unknown audience, Sweeney “Prophetic Exegesis,” 473. His commentary on the Book of Isaiah expresses similar doubts when he draws attention to the corresponding expressions, Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 381–384.

47 It is difficult to find a reference to other temples in this biblical text; hence, scholars usually assume that Isaiah is discussing the Jerusalem Temple staff, cf. *Isaiah*, 295; Dim, *The Eschatological*, 127–128. The question remains as to which exact moment of the Second Temple period is meant. This question goes well beyond the scope of this article, and the reader can find more suggestions in Watts, *Isaiah*, 928; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 452.

48 Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 378–379; Sweeney, “Prophetic Exegesis,” 472–473.

49 Sasson, “Isaiah,” 199–207.

50 Hrobon, *Ethical*, 214.

51 G.J. Botterweck, “כלב,” *TDOT* VII, 147; D.W. Thomas, “Kelebh ‘dog’: Its Origin and Some Usages of It in the Old Testament,” *VT* 10/4 (1960) 410–427. J.M. Hutton describes an interesting interpretation concerning the expression כלב שֶׁאֵר, “dog’s head” (2 Sam 3:8), which supposedly does not refer to a dog at all but metaphorically refers to the shape of a human skull similar to that of an animal. However, compelling evidence for such a claim is lacking, cf. J.M. Hutton, “Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog’: Self-Abasement and Invective in the Amarna Letters, the Lachish Letters, and 2 Sm 3:8,” *ZA* 15/16 (2003) 3.

52 Gardner, “Isaiah 66:1–4,” 522–523. The Greek term κύων, “dog,” has a similar usage in the LXX, for example, in Ps. 22:22; LSJ, 1015.

53 M.J. Fretz – R.I. Panitz, “Caleb,” *ABD*, 1214–1215; Hutton, “Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog,” 3; Winton Thomas, “Kelebh ‘dog,’” 414–415.

between a servant and a master. Indeed, it appears that the biblical author is metaphorically referring to the difficult relationship between a ruler or a high-born person and a servant or a person of lower station. The term כלב could thus correspond to איש found in the first pair of phrases in v. 3ab. This link can be illustrated as follows:

שוחט השור –  $\alpha\alpha$   
 מכה־איש –  $\alpha\beta$   
 זובה השא –  $\beta\alpha$   
 ערף כלב –  $\beta\beta$

In this system, there are two constituents composed of two parts,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ . Grammatically, they do not correspond fully. While the first part ( $\alpha$ ) of the two constituents (a and b) consists of a participial root (שחט, זבה) and masculine nouns (שה, שור), a clear difference is seen in the second part. In the second part  $\beta$ , the biblical author uses נכה participle Hifil in the construct state with the noun איש. This expression corresponds to v. 2b: נכה־רוח, which can be rendered literally as “bruised in spirit.” Here, the scholar of the Hebrew text also deals with metaphorical language, for the expression can be understood as “repentant in the spirit [of God?].”<sup>54</sup> A terminological correspondence between v. 2b and v. 3a is thus apparent. On the one hand, the biblical author refers to a man who obeys God’s will and the precepts of the law, describing him as “poor” (עני)<sup>55</sup> and “bruised/repentant in the spirit [of God]” (v. 2b).<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, there are those who, in spite of the sacrifices offered, persecute and oppress the “bruised/repentant in the spirit [of God]” and, in addition, do not earn this noble designation, and the biblical author refers to them as מכה־איש.

The appearance of two terms to describe an inferior or oppressed social group in Isa 66:2 supports the metaphorical use of כלב. The play on words is apparent, making it possible to emphasise a fundamental problem in the community of believers: when offering a sacrifice, one must remember that one must also act towards others according to God’s will (Prov 28:9).

The proposed use of the term כלב as a synonym for the word “servant” is also supported by the fact that a servile formula, similar to that used, for example, in ancient epistolography, is also found in the Bible. Hazael, the future king of Aram, addressed Elisha during their meeting by referring to himself as a “servant” (עבד) a “dog” (כלב) (2 Kings 8:13). A similar formula also appears in 1 Chron 17:19 (עבדך וכלבך), although this has become the subject of wider debate. However, there are many indications that this formula could be rendered

54 Blenkinsopp translates the phrase similarly, juxtaposing it with שפיל־רוח, “humble in spirit” (Isa 57:15), *Isaiah*, 296. Other solutions to this problem are also proposed, such as the literal translation “broken and needing repairing,” Knight, *The New Israel*, 104.

55 The term עני appears earlier in Isa. The biblical author refers to it as two groups of people: those who suffer war or exile (10:30; 14:32; 49:13; 51:21; 54:11) and those who live in poverty (3:14, 15; 10:2; 32:7; 41:17; 58:7).

56 The terminological correspondence does not constitute a grammatical correspondence between these expressions. While in the expression נכה־רוח, the term רוח is given in the subjective genitive, the expression מכה־איש uses איש rendered in the objective genitive.



as “your dog/servant.”<sup>57</sup> These passages require a separate study, although the similar use of the term כלב in Isa 66 and 2 Kings is already apparent.

#### 2.4. The Root נכה in the Hebrew Bible

An argument for a new reading of the expression ערף כלב is the biblical author’s use of the ambiguous root נכה. Many modern translations include a phrase indicating a strike resulting in death. This is not necessarily an overinterpretation but how successive generations of translators have dealt with this ambiguous term. Reading the expression מכה־איש no longer as “killing a man” but as “striking a man” not only changes the meaning of this phrase but also makes it possible to suppose that the biblical author links it to the phrase ערף כלב studied here. It is worth mentioning that scholars have repeatedly questioned the validity of translating נכה as “to kill.”<sup>58</sup> Some, however, suggest that in Isa 66:3אβ, the phrase should be read as causing the death of a man since it is also found in Ex 21:12, a text relevant to the application of the law.<sup>59</sup> The translation of the expression מכה־איש, therefore, appears to require more attention. It is interesting to note, for example, that this formula does not appear in the LXX Isa 66:3.<sup>60</sup> However, there should be no doubt that by employing the term נכה, the biblical author attempts, in many cases, to indicate an unambiguous act of aggression.<sup>61</sup> In several texts, it is difficult to determine if this term refers to a use of force that always results in the loss of life of another person or some group of persons. The assumption that such a strike always results in death may have led some scholars to believe there was a ritual whereby dogs were killed by having their necks broken. Thus, it is important to note the different meaning of the term נכה than that which has hitherto prevailed in the translations of Isa 66:3. The term נכה is found in the Hebrew Bible five hundred times; hence, the limitation of the study of the semantic field of this root should be understandable. There are several contexts for its use. These include the aforementioned strike, which does not necessarily end in the death of the person receiving it. This group of texts includes the narrative of Moses’ early activity in Egypt when he noticed two Hebrews fighting (Ex 2:13). The biblical author does not suppose anyone in this situation lost his life. Earlier, however, having seen a Hebrew tormented by an Egyptian soldier, Moses is not unmoved and kills the Egyptian, then hides him to avoid punishment for the murder.

<sup>57</sup> Margalith, “Keleb,” 493.

<sup>58</sup> Knight, *The New Israel*, 105.

<sup>59</sup> Hrobon, *Ethical*, 215.

<sup>60</sup> D.A. Baer points out an ethical difficulty: sacrifices offered to YHWH mean nothing when they do not align with the sacrificer’s moral attitude. If this is the case, such a sacrifice can be compared to some of the most repulsive acts for ancient Jews, such as contact with pig’s blood or with a dog’s corpse, cf. Baer, *When We All Go Home. Translation and Theology in LXX Isaiah 56–66* (JSOTSup 318; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 2001) 71. However, he does not explain why the translator of the biblical text into Greek omitted the expression מכה־איש. In the Aquila translation, the Hebrew root נכה is rendered as τῆσαι, “to strike,” *An Index to Aquila. Greek-Hebrew, Hebrew-Greek, Latin-Hebrew with the Syriac and Armenian Evidence* (eds. J. Reider – N. Turner) (VTSup 12; Leiden: Brill 1966) 241. In view of this, it is thus difficult to justify why the LXX translator omitted this phrase.

<sup>61</sup> Clines, “נכה,” *DCHV*, 684–691; Koehler – Baumgartner – Stamm, “נכה,” 655–656.

This is how the story is usually read, although an unconscious man can also be hidden in the sand. However, the matter is later clarified by one of the arguing men, drawing attention to the transgression Moses committed when he “killed” (הרג) an Egyptian soldier (Ex 2:14). This short passage alone contains two ways of reading the term נכה. Moreover, it is difficult to devise any specific criteria that would be a stable determinant of how the term should be read, so the context in which it occurs is essential.

An interesting example of the use of נכה is a legal case which concerns a situation where the wife of one of the men in a fight seizes his adversary by the genitals. This aggressive action by the woman does not lead to the man’s death but causes serious damage to his health (Deut 25:11–12). The root נכה of the verb in the conjugation Hifil is used twice in the Book of Isaiah. It first appears in the Third Servant Song, who has not yet died as a result of the wounds sustained from the numerous blows, although the emerging image of the suffering man is gruesome. The second time this term appears is in a warning concerning the proper exercise of the penitential practice of fasting. In order to exercise it properly, care must be taken to ensure that it is not practised at the same time as doing moral evil (Isa 58:4).

It is also worth considering the function of the participle Hifil מכה. This linguistic construction occurs sixteen times in the Hebrew Bible, and, as with the verb, its translation is not unambiguous. Perhaps the only certainty about the term נכה in this form is that it always refers to a violent move, but ultimately, this move does not lead to the death of the person against whom it is made. In the Hebrew Bible, מכה occurs in the aforementioned narrative of Moses’ early activity in Egypt before the revelation of YHWH to him. The biblical author relays information about the dramatic situation witnessed by the future chief of the people when he saw an Egyptian soldier mistreating one of his fellow Hebrews (Ex 2:11–15). This scene sums up the plight of the Hebrews in Egypt, where they suffer humiliation. The use of the term נכה would emphatically stress their miserable position. Thus, it can be suggested that the biblical author is emphasising not only the violence suffered by the Hebrews who remained in Egyptian slavery but also their extremely difficult sociological situation – they are humiliated by the stronger.<sup>62</sup> The term נכה is used to illustrate social relations, which abound in aggression that does not lead to the loss of life after all.

Also ambiguous is the use of the term מכה in the participle Hifil in the list of laws concerning the organisation of a network of cities where people who have accidentally led to someone’s death can seek asylum (Num 36:11, 15, 30; Josh 20:3, 9). In these biblical passages, the root רצה in the participle *Qal* “murderer” is additionally used. The use of this phrase may indicate that נכה did not explicitly refer to such violent action that resulted in someone’s death. The term appears in the description of the plague of changing the water of the Nile into blood (Ex 7:17). The striking with the staff (בַּמִּטָּה מַכֶּה) is intended to have the effect of bringing the plague upon Egypt and turning the Nile into a rushing torrent

62 Cf. Lemański, *Księga Wyjścia. Wstęp-Przekład z oryginału-komentarz* (NKB 2; Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła 2009) 126.

of blood. The mere striking with the staff does not yet constitute this change. Moreover, only in a few of the biblical verses in which the term מכה appears can one be certain that this striking leads to the inevitable death of the one to whom it is inflicted (Ex 21:12; 2 Sam 14:7; 2 Kings 6:22).

## 2.5. The Root ערף in the Hebrew Bible

The root ערף in verb form in the sense of “to break, to break the neck” appears in the Hebrew Bible six times.<sup>63</sup> The biblical authors use the term when giving guidelines for the redemption of the firstborn ass (Ex 13:13; 34:20). Another legal disposition is how to avenge a slain person when it is uncertain who committed the crime. A heifer is to be sacrificed, and its neck is to be broken (Deut 21:4, 6). The verb is also used in Hos 10:2 when the prophet predicts the future actions of YHWH. Hosea mentions the altars on which idolatrous sacrifices were offered, due to which they will be broken (Hos 10:2). Perhaps the biblical author has in mind the destruction of the horns attached to the altars.

In the case of the guidelines for the redemption of the donkey found in Ex 13:13 and 34:20, there is no mention of blood, which may even raise some doubts when it comes to animal sacrifice. Presumably, breaking the neck of an animal considered unclean, such as the donkey was for the Israelites, was intended to result in a situation where blood remains in the animal’s body; hence, it cannot be consumed.<sup>64</sup> However, later Greek translations suggest that the animal dies as a result of bloodletting.<sup>65</sup> Despite the lack of a clear answer, the context in which the term ערף is used remains cultic.

Another legal case that allows for “breaking the neck” is a situation where a murder has been discovered, but it is not known who committed it (Deut 21:1–9). In this case, “the elders of the city which is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer [...] and shall break the heifer’s neck there in the valley” (v. 3–4). Again, there is no bleeding from the body of the killed animal. The absence of animal blood is supposed to mean that the inhabitants of the city which was nearest to the human corpse found are not responsible for the man’s death. No instructions are given for when a heifer is not available, which shows that the author of the provision did not take such an inconvenience into account. One can, therefore, hardly look for a substitute such as a dog here.

Another text in which the biblical author uses ערף in the sense of “to break the neck” is Hos 10:2. In this case, the altar (מזבה) can hardly have a neck, hence the translation does not include this word. The target of YHWH’s attack would become the altars the Israelites had erected for other gods. The chosen people, by failing to show gratitude to YHWH and

63 Clines, “ערף,” *DCH VI*, 565; W. Gesenius, “ערף,” *Hebraisches und Aramaisches Handwörterbuch Über das Alte Testament* (Berlin: Springer 1962) 621.

64 Lemański, *Księga Wjścia*, 311.

65 J.W. Wevers, *LXX. Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus* (SCS 30; Atlanta, GA: Scholar Press 1990) 201; D.M. Gurtner, *Exodus. A Commentary on the Greek Text of Codex Vaticanus* (SCS; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2013) 327.

continually misappropriating His love by worshipping gods, provoked God's wrath. In the future, this was to lead to the destruction of the objects of worship.

The cited examples of the use of the term עָרַף make it impossible to sustain the claim of a ritual during which dogs were sacrificed, which was supposedly practised by the ancient Israelites. If this was the case, it would be necessary to indicate the possible significance of such a ritual for Israelite religiousness, the manner in which this ritual was performed, and the theological sense of this hypothetical practice. Defenders of the claim about the possible sacrifice of dogs by breaking their necks base their argument on the meaning of the root עָרַף, forgetting other possible explanations of the passage Isa 66:3. The term עָרַף does not only appear in biblical texts of a cultic nature. This expression in Isa 66:3b was already difficult to translate for the Greek authors, who used the term ἀποκτείνω "to kill" or "to condemn to death."<sup>66</sup> The Greek verb also takes on a metaphorical meaning in some New Testament texts. Thus, in Eph. 2:16, it already signifies the destruction of a certain inner reality in man, and in Rom 7:11, it refers to death in a spiritual and moral sense. This example makes it clear that a given verb can have different meanings. This also applies to the Hebrew term עָרַף.

### 3. Analysis of Archaeological Material and Near Eastern Literary Sources

#### 3.1. Archaeological Material Concerning the Burial of Dogs and Possible Sacrifices of the Animal

The debate over when humans first tamed the dog and domesticated the animal has a long history. Researchers argue not only about the time when humans supposedly did this but also about the place where the dog might have first become a member of a family and found its place next to the hearth.<sup>67</sup> The history of the relationship between man and dog is similar in different places and times.<sup>68</sup> A review of archaeological data on graves containing the remains of individual canines or groups of them may make it easier to answer the question of whether Isa 66:3 indeed refers to some ritual practice known in the ancient Near East.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> H.G. Liddell – R. Scott, "ἀποκτείνω," *LSJ* X, 205.

<sup>67</sup> Miller, "Attitudes toward Dogs," 489; M. Nikzad – I. Rezaie – M. Khalili, "Dog Burials in Ancient Iran," *IrAnt* 55 (2020) 49–50. The stretch of this process over time is very well illustrated by a map showing zooarchaeological evidence of human-dog interactions over several millennia BC, M. Price – J. Meier – B. Arbuckle, "Canine Economies of the Ancient Near East and Eastern Mediterranean," *JEA* 46/2 (2021) 82.

<sup>68</sup> Nikzad – Rezaie – Khalili, "Dog Burials in Ancient Iran," 50.

<sup>69</sup> The discussion among archaeologists also revealed serious difficulties in collating archaeological data and textual evidence, C. Çakırlar *et al.*, "Persian Period Dog Burials in the Levant: New Evidence from Tell El-Burak (Lebanon) and a Reconsideration of the Phenomenon," *Archaeozoology of the Near East X. Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium on the Archaeozoology of South-Western Asia and Adjacent Areas* (eds. B. De Cupere – V. Linsele – S. Hamilton-Dyer) (ANESSup 44, Leuven: Peeters 2013) 260. Dog burials do not necessarily indicate that these mammals were venerated by humans. An example of such a phenomenon is the mummification of dogs in ancient Egypt, with a simultaneous lack of worship of this animal, C. Kitagawa,

Some researchers point to possible cultic functions of dog graves. These animals were usually laid in graves after their natural death.<sup>70</sup> Dog burials can be classified into several groups: graves in which only dogs were buried; graves in which other animals were also buried;<sup>71</sup> or graves in which a dog was buried alongside a human.<sup>72</sup> It is presumed that the person next to whom the dog(s) were buried was their owner. This issue is still debatable, as researchers are unsure why people were placed in one grave together with dogs.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps this was a display of pragmatism by the ancients; since the dog was the owner’s property during their lifetime, it remained so even after their death. Dogs may also have had a defensive function in the afterlife. This may be indicated by the fact that the animal is an attribute of chthonic deities. Perhaps the ancients, by burying dogs together with humans, emphasised their affection for these animals. An unequivocal answer seems impossible. Archaeologists face a similar problem with interpretation when they discover animal bones in a cultic context, i.e. within a temple complex.<sup>74</sup>

The discovery of dog graves within a temple complex (e.g. the Isin temple) may suggest the use of these animals in temple worship. Studies showed that these dogs had fractured fore or hind limbs. However, it is not certain whether this was the direct cause of death or whether these fractures had some ritual function. It is possible that these limbs were only

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“Tomb of the Dogs in Gebel Asyut Al-Gharbi (Middle Egypt, Late to Ptolemaic/Roman Period): Preliminary Result on the Canid Remains,” *Archaeozoology of the Near East X. Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium on the Archaeozoology of South-Western Asia and Adjacent Areas* (eds. B. De Cupere – V. Linseele – S. Hamilton-Dyer) (ANESup 44, Leuven: Peeters 2013) 343. Dog worship was, however, recorded in the late New Kingdom period, Botterweck, “*כֶּלֶב*,” *TDOT* VII, 148; Basson, “Dog Imagery,” 98.

70 Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium,” 24–25. An interesting find is the Isin cemetery, where 33 dog skeletons were found, with a significant number identified as skeletons of very young dogs, S. Nett, “The Dogs of the Healing Goddess Gula in the Archaeological and Textual Record of Ancient Mesopotamia,” *Fierce Lions, Angry Mice and Fat-tailed Sheep. Animal Encounters in the Ancient Near East* (eds. L. Recht – C. Tsouparopoulou) (Cambridge: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research 2021) 57–58.

71 An interesting finding is the discovery of a bone from the rib of a goat or sheep, which bears an inscription written in Greek: *παρὰ κυνὸς ὀστοῦ*[-], “bone from a dog.” This is only part of the inscription, so one can only assume that it may have been part of an ancient incantation, H.M. Cotton *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae. A Multi-Lingual Corpus of the Inscriptions from Alexander to Muhammad*. IV. *Iudaea/Idumaea* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2018) [part 2. 3325–3978] 1192.

72 Nikzad – Rezaie – Khalili, “Dog Burials,” 52; Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium,” 20–21. Dog bones were also found in Jewish ossuaries. An example is the turn-of-the-era ossuary of Simon, who described himself as the builder of the temple. However, it is uncertain whether this refers to the Jerusalem Temple or another. Bones of a man, a woman, and a dog were found in the ossuary, cf. H.M. Cotton *et al.* (eds.), *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae. A Multi-Lingual Corpus of the Inscriptions from Alexander to Muhammad*. I. *Jerusalem* (Berlin: De Gruyter 2010) [part 1. 1–704] 98.

73 Nikzad – Rezaie – Khalili, “Dog Burials,” 56. A list of reasons why dogs were buried with humans is cited by Edrey, “Dog Cult,” 12.

74 Three possible answers are given: the bones are the remains of a sacrifice made to the gods; the bones are the remnants of the meals of people who resided in the temples or in their immediate vicinity; the bones are the remnants of a ritual during which a deity and a human consumed a meal, Z. Wygnańska, “Equid and Dog Burials in the Ritual Landscapes of Bronze Age Syria and Mesopotamia,” *Aram* 29/1 (2017) 142.

broken after death.<sup>75</sup> The only site where, among other remains, graves of dogs with broken necks have also been discovered is Tel Haror (Israel). Perhaps the biblical author was referring to some Canaanite burial ritual.<sup>76</sup> The graves were discovered on the site of a temple founded during the Middle Bronze Age (2000–1500 BC). The cult context is, therefore, clear, but it has later undergone some modifications.<sup>77</sup> Decapitated dog remains from a later period were discovered at Tell el-Hesi (Israel). The find is dated to the late Persian or early Hellenistic period.<sup>78</sup> The excavation report does not in any way suggest that the dogs buried at this site were to be placed in graves as part of a cultic ritual.<sup>79</sup>

Dog burials from the Persian and Hellenistic periods in the Levant are attested at a number of sites.<sup>80</sup> Of greatest interest to researchers are perhaps the remnants of mass burial of dogs which were discovered in Ashkelon in 1985. Researchers argue about the reasons why such a large group of dogs was buried at this site. Some point to possible cultic connotations. The dogs were supposedly buried at this site by the Phoenicians, and the burial may have been ritualistic.<sup>81</sup> The dogs may also have simply been buried after their natural death.<sup>82</sup> It is also pointed out that this mass burial of dogs may have been the result of a plague affecting these animals and the graves discovered are not ritualistic.<sup>83</sup> The absence of a ritual context may also be indicated by the fact that so far no remains of an ancient temple have been discovered near the site.<sup>84</sup> However, some researchers are of a different opinion, pointing to the functioning of a temple of Asclepius<sup>85</sup> or Aphrodite Urania<sup>86</sup> in the vicinity,

75 C.E. Watanabe, "Association of the Dog with Healing Power in Mesopotamia," *At the Dawn of History. Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of J.N. Postgate* (eds. Y. Heffron – A. Stone – M. Worthington) (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2017) I, 693.

76 Wygnańska, "Equid and Dog," 154.

77 Edrey, "Dog Cult," 16; "The Dog Burials," 275.

78 Edrey, "Dog Cult," 17; "The Dog Burials," 275.

79 W.J. Bennet Jr. – J.A. Blakely, *Tell el-Hesi. The Persian Period (Stratum V)* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1989) 64–65. Perhaps the decapitated dogs whose graves were discovered at Tell el-Hesi can be linked to Greek tradition. Among the many sacrificial offerings, Achilles also offers headless dogs, and the whole ritual takes place after the death of Patroclus (*Iliad* Y 173–174). The significance and functions of the Greek ritual Kynomartyrion are discussed in M. Sergis, "Dog Sacrifice in Ancient and Modern Greece: From the Sacrifice Ritual to Dog Torture (kynomartyrion)," *Folklore* 45 (2010) 61–88.

80 These include sites such as Khalde, Tel Dor, Tel el-Hesi, Tel Hayar Eyid, Tel Ashdod, Shoham, Tel Qasile, Ashkelon, Miller, "Attitudes toward Dogs," 491; Nikzad – Rezaie – Khalili, "Dog Burial," 51; Çakırlar *et al.*, "Persian Period," 256–258; Dixon, "Late 1st-Millennium," 22–24; Edrey, "Dog Cult," 17; "The Dog Burials," 276.

81 Miller, "Attitudes toward Dogs," 492; A.S. Fink, "Why Did 'yrt' Play the Dog," *AuOr* 21 (2003) 51–52; Nikzad – Rezaie – Khalili, "Dog Burials," 51–52; Edrey, "The Dog Burials," 268.

82 Nikzad – Rezaie – Khalili, "Dog Burials," 51–52.

83 Nikzad – Rezaie – Khalili, "Dog Burials," 52.

84 Miller, "Attitudes toward Dogs," 493; Dixon, "Late 1st-Millennium," 26; A.M. Smith, "The Ashkelon Dog Cemetery Conundrum," *JS* 24/1 (2015) 93–94.

85 A. Attia, "Disease and Healing in the Book of Tobit and in Mesopotamian Medicine," *Mesopotamian Medicine and Magic. Studies in Honor of Markham J. Geller* (eds. S.V. Panayotov – L. Vacin) (AMD 14; Leiden: Brill 2018) 60–61.

86 Edrey, "The Dog Burials," 273. There is a similar debate surrounding the discovery of dog skeletons within the temple complex in Isin. Some scholars are not convinced that these dogs were to be sacrificed to the goddess Gula, S. Nett, "The Dogs," 58.

although these are only speculations. No sacrificial offerings were found in these graves, and the dogs were placed in them without maintaining a specific orientation with respect to geographic directions.<sup>87</sup> This burial has also been linked to the sale of dogs by Phoenicians living in Ashkelon at the time.<sup>88</sup>

Some of the better-preserved dog graves from the Persian period were discovered at Tell el-Burak (now Lebanon, south of Beirut<sup>89</sup>). At the archaeological site there, researchers also came across Bronze Age wall paintings depicting a hunting scene involving a mastiff-type dog. However, no clear link can be made between these paintings and the remains of dogs from the Persian era.<sup>90</sup>

It is now difficult to find a ritual prescription for a cultic sacrifice of a dog (or dogs) which had to have its neck broken (e.g. in order to gain divine favour). It is also not certain that the dog remains found – even if they do have visible damage – were used in ritual practices. Very few remains from dog graves in the Levant have been thoroughly investigated using laboratory methods.<sup>91</sup> The general characterisation that can be drawn based on the currently available data makes it impossible to say conclusively whether the burial of dogs in the Levant in the 1st millennium BC was cultic.<sup>92</sup> A different view, however, is held by M. Edrey.<sup>93</sup> Based on the data he has collected, he suggests that the traditions of ritual burial of dogs or their use in worship in the Southern Levant have a long history.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, the data cited by Edrey does not come close to explaining that the ritual burial of dogs was practised in Judah. The biblical authors say nothing on the subject. Similarly, an analysis of extrabiblical sources does not yield a positive result.

### 3.2. The Term “Dog” as Equivalent to “Servant” in Extrabiblical Texts

Ancient texts written in the Near East employed a certain rhetorical device; to emphasise man’s submissive and loyal attitude towards a deity, a distinctive notation was used: “dog of [name of the deity].” This notation retains similarity, not only in structure but also in meaning, to another expression, namely “servant/slave of [name of the deity].”<sup>95</sup> The use of the *klb* element in names was already known in early Akkadian texts,<sup>96</sup> as well as in later Phoenician and Punic traditions.<sup>97</sup> There are many known Phoenician and Punic inscriptions that use the term *klb*, but none of them suggest that someone either sacrificed a dog or

87 Edrey, “Dog Cult,” 17–18.

88 Smith, “The Ashkelon Dog Cemetery Conundrum,” 99–105.

89 A brief description of the archaeological sites at Tel Megadim and Khaldeh, not far from Beirut, is provided by Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium,” 31. The discovered tombs do not show any cultic features.

90 Çakırlar *et al.*, “Persian Period,” 244–245.

91 Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium,” 27–28.

92 Cf. Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium,” 32.

93 Edrey, “Dog Cult,” 19.

94 Edrey, “The Dog Burials,” 276.

95 Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium,” 34; J.B. Burns, “Devotee or Deviate. The ‘Dog’ (keleb) in Ancient Israel as a Symbol of Male Passivity and Perversion,” *JRS* 2 (2000) 4; Margalith, “Keleb,” 492.

96 H. Dirbas, *Animal Names in Semitic Name-Giving* (AOAT 464; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag 2019) 77.

97 Dirbas, *Animal Names*, 135.

buried a dog with a broken neck.<sup>98</sup> In Punic and Ugaritic, the term also refers to a member of the temple staff.<sup>99</sup>

The Amarna letters contain interesting phrases addressed by kings to superior rulers:

See, I am the slave of the king and a dog of his house, and I am protecting all Amurru for the king my lord. (EA 60:6–9)<sup>100</sup>

[Thu]s Abdu-Aširta [your] slave [and] the mud of your feet, the do[g o]f the house of the king my lord... (EA 61:2–4)<sup>101</sup>

The author of these phrases is Abdi-Aširta, King of Amurru, who, in his correspondence, assured the Egyptian ruler of his great loyalty.<sup>102</sup> He addressed the more influential ruler in humbling words, wanting to secure his support. It is, of course, difficult to ascertain whether the biblical author made use of the literature of the Amarna period, but it is possible that he may have been aware of the existence of this humbling formula. Given that the dog was known for its submissiveness towards humans, this may have prompted the biblical author to use this motif also in Isa 66:3 and to replace the term “slave” with “dog.”

Similar unceremonious expressions, in which the sender equates himself with a dog, appear in the Lachish letters. However, the derogatory nature of using the term “dog” has a very specific purpose, which is to indicate loyal devotion to the ruler:<sup>103</sup>

To my lord; your servant, a (mere) dog, he (?) will bring forth... (L 21:1–4)<sup>104</sup>

Who is your servant, a (mere) dog, that my lord has remembered his [ser]vant? (L 2:3–5)<sup>105</sup>

Who is your servant, a (mere) dog, that you have [s]ent [t]hes[e] let[ters] to your servant? (L 5:3–6)<sup>106</sup>

The appearance of this formula in the Lachish texts demonstrates that this way of referring to a ruler or someone of higher rank was popular in the ancient Near East. The Lachish ostraca and the Amarna texts are nearly a thousand years apart, and the relationship of loyalty and submissiveness is still reflected in written form.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Dixon, “Late 1st-Millennium,” 35.

<sup>99</sup> Breier, “Who Is This Dog?,” 52.

<sup>100</sup> Hutton, “Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog,” 5; I. Breier, “Representations of the Dog in Seventh-Century BCE Assyrian Letters,” *JNSL* 39/2 (2013) 23–24.

<sup>101</sup> Hutton, “Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog,” 5.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Hutton, “Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog,” 6; Burns, “Devotee or Deviate,” 7; Breier, “Who Is This Dog?,” 53; Margalith, “Keleb,” 492.

<sup>103</sup> N.S.S. Jacobs, “What about the Dog? Tobit’s Mysterious Canine Revisited,” *Canonicity, Setting, Wisdom in the Deuterocanonicals. Papers of the Jubilee Meeting of the International Conference on the Deuterocanonicals Books* (eds. G.G. Xeravits – J. Zsengellér) (Berlin: De Gruyter 2014) 221; Margalith, “Keleb,” 492.

<sup>104</sup> Hutton, “Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog,” 9.

<sup>105</sup> A. Lemaire, *Inscriptions hébraïques. I. Les ostraca. Introduction, traduction, commentaire* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf 1977) 97; Hutton, “Abdi-Aširta, the Slave, the Dog,” 10; Breier, “Representations of the Dog,” 24; J.M. Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature 2003) 125.

<sup>106</sup> Lemaire, *Inscriptions Hébraïques*, 117–118; Lindenberger, *Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew Letters*, 129.



Similar expressions, suggesting the royal official’s full devotion to the reigning ruler, can be found in correspondence from the Neo-Assyrian period. In one letter, a Babylonian official, addresses his words to the then King Esarhaddon, and writes:

[From] the very beginning I have been a dog who loves [the house of] his [lord]. (ABL 717:9–10; SAA XVIII, no. 182:150)<sup>107</sup>

Another of the Babylonian officials, Bēl-ibni, addresses the following words full of devotion to King Ashurbanipal:

Just as the dog loves [his master, when (the master) says]: ‘Do not come near the palace...’ (ABL 281:29–30)<sup>108</sup>

King Esarhaddon is also the addressee of another letter in which a priest known as Nabû-šumu-iddina addresses him with full humility:

I am a dog, but the king, my lord, has remembered me. (K 1050; ABL 67:6)<sup>109</sup>

Not only officials wrote letters to rulers to testify to their loyalty and submission to the royal majesty. There is also a well-known letter whose sender is a man of dubious reputation. In his letter, he admits to the acts he is accused of, but, noting his obedience to the authority of the ruler, he adjures the ruler to spare him the punishment:

I have committed a serious crime against the house of my lords. I (deserved) to be killed and not to be kept alive. You the king, my lord, had mercy on his dog. ... May the king h[ave] mercy on his dog. I am a servant who loves his lords. (ABL 620:1–3, r. 4–6; SAA XVI, no. 36:34)<sup>110</sup>

These texts also contain a combination of the terms “dog” and “servant”:

From these words and these blessings which the king, my lord, sent and with which he blessed his dog, his servant, and the old man of his house... (ABL 9:11–14; SAA X, 218:172)<sup>111</sup>

Sometimes, the term “dog” is also used by the sender of the texts to perform an act of complete self-abasement before the king:

107 Breier, “Representations of the Dog,” 21.

108 Breier, “Representations of the Dog,” 21.

109 S.W. Cole – P. Machinist, *Letters from Priests to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal* (SAA XIII; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press 1998) 83; I. Breier, “Representations of the Dog,” 22.

110 Breier, “Representations of the Dog,” 22.

111 Breier, “Representations of the Dog,” 23.

I am a dog, but the king, my master, treats me justly before the gods. (ND 2380 + ND 2396; CTN 5 t21c)<sup>112</sup>

The above text demonstrates that the term “dog” was used in a variety of contexts. Authors of ancient texts used it to replace the term “servant” or combined the two words.

The referenced texts confirm that the formula of using the term “dog” in the sense of humbling oneself before the ruler and emphasising one’s loyalty was popular in the ancient Near East. It can, therefore, be assumed that this formula was also known to the author of the biblical text. By using the term כלב, he probably did not intend to indicate the animal and its use in some cultic ritual. Rather, he might have leaned towards the metaphorical meaning of the term כלב and thus referred to the familiar formulas that functioned in correspondence between royal officials or vassal kings and the reigning monarchs of the time.

## Conclusions

The data presented above make it possible to draw a concrete conclusion. In favour of the proposed change in the understanding of the expression ערף כלב is the lack of mention of the dog sacrifice ritual in the biblical texts (e.g. in Isa 1). It can also be argued that the expression in question relates to social issues on the grounds that dog sacrifices were not prohibited in Jewish law. The curse was directed at a certain portion of the chosen people who displayed wickedness. The reprehensible behaviour consisted of practising worship while simultaneously targeting the defenceless. An analysis of the terms נכה and ערף has made it apparent that Isa 66:1–4 raises social issues alongside cultic issues.

If dogs were used in cultic practices, they may, of course, have lost their lives in them, but it is difficult to establish now whether the direct cause of death was the breaking of the canines’ necks. Archaeological evidence is insufficient, and no clear conclusions can be drawn from much of it. Archaeologists often admit that their interpretations of animal (including dog) bones found are sometimes questionable. They also often give many possible solutions to a given discovery. The absence of a clear answer should be considered in favour of a new interpretation of the expression ערף כלב.

For a better understanding of the expression ערף כלב, it is helpful to cite extrabiblical texts in which the term “dog” takes on the meaning of “servant.” The evidence collected shows that this literary device was popular even before the text of the Book of Isaiah was redacted. The correspondence of the inferiors with the Assyrian rulers and the Lachish ostraca are the texts that were produced temporally closest to the redaction of the biblical Book of Isaiah. The thesis that in Isa 66:3, the term כלב takes on a meaning that is different from the commonly accepted one is also strengthened by an analysis of vv. 2b–3a. The biblical author’s play on words is clearly visible here. Using the language of metaphor, he describes

<sup>112</sup> M. Lukko, *The Correspondence of Tiglath-Pileser III and Sargon II. From Calah/Nimrud* (SAA 19; Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 2012) 198.

the social situation he witnesses. He sees injustice in the behaviour of some people towards others. He distinguishes between those who make a sacrifice and persecute others and those who are persecuted by them. In view of the above, it is possible that the term כִּלְב has acquired a metaphorical meaning here and may be equivalent to the term עֶבֶד.

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## Genesis 5:24 in Karaite Exegesis: *Sefer maamar Mordekhai*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article deals with a little-known commentary on the Pentateuch (more precisely, a supercommentary on Aaron ben Joseph's *Sefer ha-mivhar*) titled *Sefer maamar Mordekhai* (*Book of Mordecai's Speech*). Its author is the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite Mordecai ben Nisan of Kukizov (died around the year 1709), one of the founders of the Karaite community in Kukizów near Lwów, the ancestral seat of the Polish king John III Sobieski. This commentary was based on an earlier commentary on *Sefer ha-shemen ha-tov* by Aaron ben Judah, also a Polish-Lithuanian Karaite. Mordecai ben Nisan quotes the text of *Sefer ha-shemen ha-tov* and adds his own commentary to it. Its importance as an authoritative textbook of Karaite exegesis is evidenced by the fact that it was formally approved for use by leading Karaite scholars of the Polish-Lithuanian communities (between the years 1706 and 1709). Undoubtedly, this commentary should be recognised as the greatest creative achievement of the theological and exegetical thought of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites, produced during the period of the peak intellectual flourishing of this community (which took place in the 17th-18th centuries). In this article, I present an English edition of the text of this commentary on Genesis 5:24. The edition is based on manuscript C104, *Maamar Mordekhai* (manuscript in the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg, 1753). The manuscript contains a commentary on the books of Genesis and Exodus, i.e. up to the parasha *Elle pekude* (Exodus 38:21–40:38). Another part, containing commentaries on the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, was recorded in manuscript C102. The copyist of both volumes was Mordecai ben Samuel of Halicz. He completed the transcription of the text of the commentary (a total of about 1,000 pages) in the month of *Ziv*, i.e. *Iyyar*, of the year 1754, see C102, folio 242 verso (the first volume, manuscript C104, was completed in 1753, see C104, folio 3 recto). In the article, I also mention several minor exegetical works of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites related to *Sefer maamar Mordekhai*.

**KEYWORDS:** Exegesis of Genesis 5:24, Karaite exegesis, Enoch, Enochic literature, Polish-Lithuanian Karaites

*Sefer maamar Mordekhai* (*Book of Mordecai's Speech*) by Mordecai ben Nisan of Kukizov (died around the year 1709) is a supercommentary to *Sefer ha-mivhar*. Mordecai ben Nisan, who belonged to a group of Karaites from Troki settled by John III Sobieski in Kukizov (Pol. Kukizów, also known as Krasny Ostrów) near Lviv (Pol. Lwów) in the late 17th century. He became famous primarily for his treatise *Dod Mordekhai* (*Beloved of Mordecai*), written in 1698 at the request of the Leiden Protestant professor Jacob Trigland (1652–1705) and devoted to the origins and history of the Karaites and the differences between them and the Rabbanites. The treatise first appeared in print in 1714, with a Latin

translation by Johann Christoph Wolf.<sup>1</sup> He also authored a treatise on a similar topic, titled *Sefer levush malkhut* (*The Book of the Royal Attire*), written for the Protestant King of Sweden, Charles XII, who visited Łuck in 1702 during the Third Northern War. Protestants took a keen interest in Karaite Judaism during this period because of the parallels between the Karaite-Rabbanite schism and the Protestant-Catholic schism. In addition, he authored several other works, including *Sefer kelalim yafim* (*The Book of Beautiful Principles*; a manual of Hebrew grammar). Mordecai ben Nisan went missing during a trip to Crimea with his son Nisan (the place and date of their death are unknown, it is believed that they died in 1709).<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that Mordecai ben Nisan is referred to in Karaite literature as the “Karaite Ramban,” apparently in connection with the commentary *Sefer maamar Mordekhai*.

The commentary on the Torah, *Sefer maamar Mordekhai*, was written in Kukizov in 1706 (it was completed on the 14th of *Ziv*, i.e. *Iyyar* 14, see manuscript C102 folio 242 verso). It was finally approved for use by the Karaite scholars of the Crown of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1709.<sup>3</sup> Earlier, Mordecai ben Nisan had revised the Hebrew text of *Sefer ha-mivhar* (the manuscripts were known to have contained errors that were later repeated in other manuscripts). The main motivation for writing the new commentary was the need to expand the explanations in order to make them comprehensive and fully understandable (without the help of a mentor), but also to bring the explanations up to date with the current state of knowledge. The commentary prepared by Mordecai ben Nisan has undoubtedly fulfilled these expectations. *Maamar Mordekhai* is unquestionably a complete and insightful exegetical work (in manuscripts C104 [Genesis–Exodus] and C102 [Leviticus–Deuteronomy]), the commentary was recorded on a total of 504 numbered folios, or more than 1,000 pages). In addition to Mordecai ben Nisan’s own commentary, it includes a lost commentary on *Sefer ha-mivhar* by Aaron ben

1 *Notitia Karaeorum ex Mardochei, Karaei recentioris, tractatu haurienda, quem ex ms. cum versione latina notis et praefatione de Karaeorum rebus scriptisque edidit Johannes Christophorus Wolfius, Hebr. et oriental. lingg. prof. publ. Accedit in calce Jacobi Triglandii Dissertatio de Karaeis cum Indicibus variis recusa.* (Hamburg et Leipzig: Impensis Christiani Liebezeit 1714). The title *Dod Mordekhai* refers to Est 2:15. The term דד “beloved,” as the author explains in the “Introduction,” refers to Jacob Trigland, whom he considers “beloved” and “friend,” but also to each of the two Karaite scholars, his relatives, who assisted him in writing the treatise. These were David ben Shalom of Lutsk and Joseph ben Samuel of Halich (he refers to them as דודים, Heb. דוד “beloved,” “uncle”). See pp. 4–5.

2 Cf. A.B. Gottlober, *Bikkoreth letoldoth hakkarim oder Kritische Untersuchungen über die Geschichte der Karäer* (Vilno: Funn et Rozenkrancz 1865) 200–201; J. Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature. II. Karaitica* (Philadelphia, PA: Hebrew Press of the Jewish Publication Society of America 1935) 588, 738–739. See also the account given by Joseph Solomon ben Moses Lutski in manuscript D80 of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, folio 15 verso.

3 See manuscript C104, folios 3 recto and 6 recto; cf. Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 739, 1256–1257. Among the Karaite scholars who expressed their personal approval of the *Maamar Mordekhai* commentary between 1706 and 1709 were Abraham ben Aaron of Nowe Miasto, Moses ben Samuel of Szaty (Wilkomierz region), Mordecai ben Isaac Łukszyński of Świętojeziory (Troki region), Joseph ben Isaac of Świętojeziory, Solomon ben Aaron of Poswól, Joseph ben Isaac of Szaty (Wilkomierz region), Joseph ben Samuel of Łuck (originally of Derażne). See manuscript C104, folios 6 recto–10 verso.



Judah of Troki (Mordecai ben Nisan's uncle). Little is known about this author.<sup>4</sup> He was the teacher of Solomon ben Aaron of Poswol.<sup>5</sup> He died at the end of the 17th century (see manuscript C104, folio 11 verso). The commentary is titled *Sefer ha-shemen ha-tov* (*Book of Good Oil*; a title given to it by Mordecai ben Nisan). The manuscript of this commentary, which Mordecai ben Nisan received from his disciple Solomon ben Aaron of Poswol, was in poor condition and covered only the text from Genesis to Numbers.<sup>6</sup> Mordecai ben Nisan completed the commentary for the missing portion and added his explanations and critical comments to the entire text. When he quotes Aaron ben Judah's explanations in his commentary, he prefixes them with the abbreviation (אמר הרב בעל השמן) "אהב"ה "Said Rav, the author of *ha-Shemen*" and ends with the phrase עד כאן "To this point" (cf. manuscript C104, folio 14 verso; optionally עד כאן לשונו "To this point, his words"). Notably, Mordecai ben Nisan's own commentary also includes explanations of *Sefer ha-shemen* (see, e.g. folio 52 recto, 40–42), which means that *Sefer maamar Mordekhai* is in part also a supercommentary on *Sefer ha-shemen*. Similarly, as in other commentaries on *Sefer ha-mivhar*, the abbreviation ר"ל (רצונו לומר, rendered in the English translation as "it means") usually appears immediately before the explanations themselves (including quotations of explanations by other authors). However, the quoted text of the *Sefer ha-mivhar* itself is preceded by the abbreviation מ"ש (מה שאמר, "what he said"). The same abbreviation also appears before quotations of the biblical text (in which case it is translated as מה שכתוב "as it is written").

The text of *Sefer maamar Mordekhai* was not published in print, although in the years 1820–1822, the project of printing it was initiated, in one volume with the text of *Sefer ha-mivhar* and *Sefer keter Torah*. The initiator and executor of the project was the well-known Karaite scholar David ben Mordecai Mardkovich (Pol. Mardkowicz; later known as "Kukizov" or "of Kukizov"), then living in Kukizov, located about 20 kilometres away from

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- 4 He is probably to be identified as Rav Aaron son of Judah, who is mentioned in the "Resolutions of the congress of the Lithuanian Karaites" of 1665 (NLR Evr II a 146, folios 48–50; NLR Evr II a 221, folios 101–102). See Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 825 (doc. 9, 46); P. Muchowski – M. Tomal, *Resolutions and Community Documents of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites from 1553 to 1830: A Critical Edition* (Paris: Editions Suger Press 2017) 75 (v. 47). As for his literary output, it is only known that he wrote a *zemer* for the occasion of circumcision, which begins with the words אל חי ומגדל ערו (attested in a manuscript from a private collection) and *zemer* on Shabbat, which begins with the words אשרר שיר לאל נורא ואיום, see J. Bezekovich – I.-B. Firkovich, *Tehillot Israel. Tosafot li-tfillot ha-karaim* (Berdyczew 1909) 76; S. Poznański, "Zweiter Nachtrag zur 'Karäischer Literatur der letzten dreissig Jahre,'" *Zeitschrift für hebräische Bibliographie* 14/5 (1910) 153; Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 1287, footnote 742, 1433.
- 5 I.e. Solomon Yedidyah ben Aaron (born c. 1665 and died 1745), best known for his treatise on Karaite Judaism titled *Sefer appiryon asa lo*. See manuscript C104, folio 11 verso. For his biography and works, see for example Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 740–741; S. Kubicki, *Edycja krytyczna traktatu Szelomo ben Aharona z Pozwola „Lechem Seorim”* (Diss. Adam Mickiewicz University; Poznań 2020) 59–66.
- 6 That is, exactly from parasha *Beresbit* [Genesis 1:1–6:8] to parasha *Hukkat* [*Zot hukkat*, Numbers 19:1–22:1] and partly from parashot *Balak* [*Vayyare Balak*, Numbers 22:2–25:9] and *Pinhas* [Numbers 25:10–30:1]. See manuscript C104, folio 11 verso.

Lviv (he moved to Gözleve in Crimea shortly after that, also in 1822).<sup>7</sup> The work was to be printed by Rabbanite printers from Lviv. Accordingly, David ben Mordecai solicited funds from Karaite communities in Crimea and Odesa, especially from Simḥah ben Solomon Babovitch (d. 1855), a wealthy Karaite merchant from Eupatoria (Gözleve), who in the following years became a leader of Karaite religious and social life in Crimea, and with whom the Polish Karaites from Volhynia (Joseph Solomon ben Moses Lutski and Abraham Firkovich, who resided in Crimea) were already collaborating.<sup>8</sup> These efforts are attested to in three surviving letters from Abraham Firkovich's second collection, which he sent to Crimea (see Evr II a 1816, Evr II a 1822, Evr II a 1823). We learn from them that a printed copy should cost no less than 2.5 silver rubles and two or three kopecks if printed on good paper in an edition of at least 500 copies (Evr II a 1822, folio 1 verso, 37–40).<sup>9</sup> The funds, however, apparently could not be raised, and the project was ultimately not completed. Its material trace, however, is the surviving proof print of the first card, which shows the intended graphic form of the edition (the letters Evr II a 1822 and 1823 were written on the back of the printed card). The idea of printing was revived in the 1830s when a Karaite printing press was established in Gözleve (1833), however ultimately the *Maamar Mordekhai* commentary was not included in the 1834–1835 printed edition of *Sefer ha-mivḥar*, for which Abraham Firkovich was responsible. Despite the disappointment of some members of the Karaite community, it was finally decided that it would be replaced with the commentary *Tirat kesef* by Joseph Solomon Lutski.<sup>10</sup>

7 Biographies of David ben Mordecai report that he was the great-grandson in the male line of Mordecai ben Nisan, author of *Maamar Mordekhai*. This information comes from David Maggid, author of the “Preface” (ראשית דבר) in the *Sefer ṣemah David* published by Nisan ben David Kukizov (son of David ben Mordecai of Kukizov) in 1897. On page XIII he wrote about the father of David ben Mordecai: “The son of the son of Rav Ribbi Mordecai, also named Mordecai ben Nisan (II), who was also a scholar of the Kukizov congregation [...]” (Heb.). This information seems doubtful, however, since the son of Mordecai ben Nisan, the author of *Maamar Mordekhai*, who bore the name Nisan, died on his way to Crimea as a bachelor, see NLR manuscript EVR I, 759, folio 4 verso, 2–4. For a discussion of this topic, see also Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 1350–1351. Thus, the information repeated in contemporary publications that David was a descendant of Mordecai ben Nisan, author of *Maamar Mordekhai*, is uncertain. See, for example, B.D. Walfish, “Karaite Press and Printing,” *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources* (ed. M. Polliack) (Leiden – Boston: Brill 2003) 928; M. Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia: An Ethnoreligious Minority among the Ashkenazim, the Turks, and the Slavs 1772–1945* (Leiden: Brill 2009) 123, note 180; V. Klimova – A. Yariv, “Outstanding Karaite scholars from Kukizov,” *Jewish History Quarterly* 273/4 (2020) 889; J. Algamil, “Preface” (ראשית דבר), David ben Mordecai Kukizov, *Sefer Ṣemah David* (ed. Joseph ben Ovadya Algamil) (Ashdod: Tiferet Yosef le-ḥeqer ha-yahadut ha-qarait 2004) I, 25. Nevertheless, it is theoretically possible that he was a descendant of Mordecai ben Nisan I after the daughter of his other son Abraham ben Mordecai (buried in Kukizov, d. 1747).

8 For Simḥah ben Solomon Babovitch, see Ph.E. Miller, *Karaite Separatism in Nineteenth-Century Russia. Joseph Solomon Lutski's Epistle of Israel's Deliverance* (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press 1993) 18–67. On the situation in Eupatoria during this period, see D. Shapira, *Avraham Firkovich in Istanbul (1830–1832). Paving the Way for Turkic Nationalism* (Ankara: KaraM 2003) 12–13.

9 Cf. also Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia*, 182.

10 Cf. A. Firkovich, *Avne zikkaron li-vne Israel be-eres Krim* (Vilna 1872) 4. Abraham Firkovich reports that it was he who printed *Sefer ha-mivḥar* with the commentary *Tirat kesef* by Joseph Solomon Lutski in 1834–1835. According to his statement, the Karaite printing press in Gözleve signed a contract to print *Sefer ha-mivḥar* with the commentary *Maamar Mordekhai*. However, under the influence of Joseph Solomon Lutski, a change

The text of the commentary on Genesis 5:24 in *Sefer maamar Mordekhai* focuses on issues related to the meaning of the word “took,” the nature of the soul, the body of the pious, and the chronology of the letter of Elijah (2 Chronicles 21:12).

## 1. Edition of the Commentary on Genesis 5:24

(Based on the C104 manuscript, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, folios 52 recto–53 recto).

Hebrew text:

folio 52 recto

37 (ומ"ש כי יקחני סלה) 11 אהב"ה 12 ר"ל כי ענין לקיחתו אותו 13 38 הוא השארות נפשו והדבקה בשכל הפועל המשלים אותה והמוציאה מן הכח אל הפועל וזהו אמרו כי 39 יקחני סלה עכ"ל .. אמנם אני כבר פירשתי בפרק נעשה אדם וכן בעזרתו ית' נפרש בשלימות בסדר 40 ויחי בפסוק אל תחד כבודי . כי דעת הרב ז"ל במהות נפש האדם שהיא שכל בפועל קודם בואה לגוף . 41 על כן נראה לי שרצון הרב ז"ל שהעור האלהי יהיה עמו בכל ענייניו הגופיים והרוחניים להצליחו 42 בקיום המצות לנחול שני העולמים . וענין כי לקח אותו אלהים שקבל נפשו לפני השכינה ולא היתה 43 נשמתו נזופה ממעונה כי לא היתה מטומאה בעבירות .. (ומ"ש ואל תתמה שמלת לקיחה כוללת

folio 52 verso

1 הגויה והנשמה) ר"ל בלקיחתו של אליהו .. (ומ"ש היא הנשמה היא השרש בחיים ובמות) אהב"ה ר"ל כי 2 בהיותה בגוף האדם הגוף חי מסבתה . ובסורה מהגוף הגוף מת והיא נשארת חיה . עכ"ל .. 3 (ומ"ש כי גוית החסידים כדמות הנשמה) אהב"ה ר"ל שאחרי שהגוף הולך אחרי הוראת ותאות הנשמה 4 ואינו הולך אחר תאות יצרו הרע בכך גם הוא מתדמה לנפש ונמשך אחריה כמו שהיה באליהו א 5 אבל אם נטמאה היא מסתבכת בגוף ואינה יכולה להפרד ממנו לגמרי ולשוב למעונה . ובכך 6 תהיה נפשו נמשכת אחר גופו לארץ ולא לשמים . וכשהיתה הנפש טהורה כנוכר בראשונה 7 עד שימשך הגוף אחריה ע"כ אמר לקיחה על הגוף ועל הנפש .. (ומ"ש וכתוב ויאסף אל עמיו) 8 ר"ל שכתוב לשון רבים . כי הגוף ילך בין הגופות הקדושות ונפש תלך בין הנשמות הקדושות .. 9 (ומ"ש והמתבונן באליהו סוסי אש ורכבי אש יבין דבר) אהב"ה ר"ל כי רמז כי לקחו האלהים והתאחד 10 עם המלאכים ונהיה רוחני והגוף כלה באש היסודי שתחת גלגל הירח ושב אל יסודותיו .. (ומ"ש 11 ואדרתו עדות לגויתו) אהב"ה ר"ל שנפלה אדרתו כדי שיקבלנה אלישע להכות המים . עד כאן 12 לשובו .. ואענה גם אני חלקי שנראה לי אמרו ואדרתו עדות לגויתו . רצה בזה שאחר שאדרתו 13 שבה אל הארץ למקום שהיתה שם . כן גם יסודות גויתו נפרדו והלכו כל אחד למקומו .. (ומ"ש 14 ואל יטעך מאמר ויבוא אליו מכתב מאליהו) בפירוש זה המאמר אוסיף גם משלי אצל דברי החכם 15 בעל השמן הקצרים ואומר . כי ידוע שמאמר ויבוא אליו מכתב מאליהו היה אחר שעלה אליהו 16 למרום . והעד על זה כי בימי יהושפט כבר לא היה אליהו נמצא . כי יהושפט בלכתו עם יהורם 17 בן אחאב למלחמה על מואב לא שאלו מאליהו אלא מאלישע

was made and his *Tirat Kesef* commentary was printed instead of *Maamar Mordekhai*. Cf. also S. Poznański, “Karäische Drucke und Druckereien,” *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie* 21/4–6 (1918) 78–79.

11 A writing mark with the function of a quotation mark.

12 Abbreviation in meaning: “Said the Rav, the author of [Good] Oil”.

13 The first letter of a word on the next line, written to align the text, a line filler. Similarly on folio 52 verso, l. 4.

כדכתוב במלכים (ב ג) ועליית 18 אליהו למרום כתובה בסדר הקודם . וביאת המכתב היתה בימי יהורם בן יהושפט כי אליו בא 19 המכתב ההוא . וכן מה שאמר הרב (ויהורם בן אחאב ויהושפט שאלו לאלישע וגו' עד שאמר 20 והקשה שבכלם כי לא נפרד ממנו עד עלותו) כל זה המאמר אינו למלט את המעיין מלטעות 21 אלא אדרבא עוזרים להוליד הספק . ודעתו במה שאמר (ושם כתוב אשר יצק מים על ידי אלישע) 22 ר"ל בלכת יהושפט עם יהורם בן אחאב לשאול מאלישע כתוב פה אלישע אשר יצק מים על ידי 23 אליהו שאמר יצק בלשון עבר ר"ל שכבר יצק בזמן שעבר בעת שהיה עם אליהו רבו ועכשיו אינו 24 יוצק כי כבר רבו נלקח ממנו . ואלו היה עדין בזמן ההוא עם רבו היה הכתוב אומר אשר יוצק 25 מים או אשר יצוק מים . וזהו שאמר הרב ז"ל ולא אמר עתיד . ורצון הרב באמרו (והקשה שבכלם 26 כי לא נפרד ממנו עד עלותו) ר"ל שבכל הימים ששמש אלישע לרבו לא נפרד ממנו שיהיה זה 27 נמצא במקום אחד וזה במקום זולתו . והעד על זה מה שכתוב במלכים ב' ב' ויאמר אליהו אל 28 אלישע שב נא פה כי ה' שלחני עד בית אל ויאמר אלישע חי ה' וחי נפשך אם אעזובך . וכן אמר 29 פעם שני ושלישי ולא אבה להפרד . מזה נגלה כי מיום שדבק אלישע לשרת לאליהו לא נפרד מאצל 30 רבו . מכל זה נולד ספק בכתובים שנוכרח לומר אם שהכתובים באו ע"ד מוקדם ומאוחר . ר"ל 31 שאחר שבא המכתב ליהורם בן יהושפט מאליהו עלה למרום אע"פ שנכתבה עלייתו בזמן מלכות 32 יהושפט . או שנאמר שאליהו לא עלה למרום רק היה פורח בעולם ממקום למקום ולא היה 33 מתפרסם לבני אדם רק שלח מכתב ליהורם בן יהושפט שלא להראות עמו פנים בפנים . והנה 34 הראשון בטל . מפני שאם היה עדיין אליהו נמצא בזמן ששאלו יהושפט ויהורם בן אחאב לאלישע 35 אחר שהרב והתלמיד לעולם לא נפרדו כדלעיל . למה לא שאלו מן אליהו ושאלו מאלישע .. 36 והשני כמו כן אי אפשר להעלות על לב כי יש לזה טענה גדולה . והוא שבזמן שלא רצה אליהו 37 להראות להמון בהסתרתו בנחל כרית לא הוצרך לסוסי אש ולרכבי אש אבל עכשיו סוסי אש 38 ורכבי אש הפרידוהו מתלמידו ועלה למרום ותלמידו היה מביט בעלותו עד שיכול לראותו .. 39 אם כן אי אפשר לומר שהיתה העלייה כדי להפרידו לבד מתלמידו ומעיני ההמון אלא להפרידו 40 לגמרי מעולם היסודות .. ואחר שנתבלטו מקומות הספיקות צריך ליישב המקראות באופן 41 שלא תפול סתירה בהם . והרז"ל אמר ואל יטעך מאמר ויבוא אליו מכתב מאליהו ר"ל שאני 42 אומר שסוסי אש ורכבי אש באו להפריד לאליהו מעולם היסודות . אם כן אפשר ליפול בלבך 43 ספק ותאמר אחר שלא היה אליהו נמצא בעולם היסודות מנלאן בא לשלוח מכתב ליהורם בן

#### folio 53 recto

1 יהושפט . ע"כ אומר הרב ז"ל אל יטעך זה הספק . ולא חשש הרז"ל להתיר זה הספק מפני בחירת הקצור 2 כמנהגו בכל ספרו לסמוך על המבין . ע"כ החכם בעל השמן נ"ע חשש למלאת החסרון ואמר כי 3 דעת הרז"ל ששגירת המכתב מאליהו ליהורם היה באופן זה כי ברוח הקדש נראה אליהו לאחד מן 4 הנביאים וצוה לו שיכתוב בשמו המכתב ליהורם ויוכילהו אליו ויאמר לו שזה המכתב שלח אליו 5 אליהו מן השמים וכל זה כדי לאיים את יהורם המרשיע ולהכניע לבו שישוב מהמעשה הרע 6 שעשה . ואמר בעל השמן כי בסדר עולם אמרו כי כבר היה לאליהו שבע שנים אחר שנגנז ואז 7 בא המכתב להיורם . עכ"ל .. ואענה גם אני חלקי ואומר שאולי דעת הרז"ל באמרו ואל יטעך 8 מאמר ויבוא אליו מכתב מאליהו כי הוא מקרא חסר . והיה צריך לומר ויבוא אליו מכתב מאלישע 9 תלמידו של אליהו . ויש כזה רבים מקראות חסרות כמו ולחם אמר לו . שהרצון אמר לתת לו . 10 וכן חמור לחם . חמור נושא לחם ודומיהם .. ומ"ש הוא כמו יהי מאורות . ר"ל שאמר לשון יחיד 11 לרבים .. ומ"ש ומיעוט שניו אולי תרענו מן קלקול דורו שלא יקלקלוהו . זה הענין דומה למה שכתוב 12 יקר בעיני ה' המותה לחסידיו . כמו שנדבר בזה הענין אי"ה בס' שמיני בפ"פ וימותו לפני ה' . ששם 13 הזכיר הרז"ל פסוק יקר בעיני ה'

.. ומ"ש ואריכת הימים יש לפרש בדרך נס . אהב"ה דעת הרז"ל כי זה<sup>14</sup> 14 נס גדול באנשים ההם שחיו ימים רבים כמו שנמצא במין האדם לפעמים שיהיה גדול בכמותו 15 מאשר בני אדם . ולפעמים הויה זה הענין מסבה מה כגון מצד היותו באקלים הנקרא משה 16 היום שהלילה והיום שוים בו לעולם . או מצד מזונותיו כשירגיל את עצמו למזונות המיוחדים 17 להעמיד הלחות השרשי . או במה שיתנהג באכילה ושתייה ומשגל כפי הסדר הכרחי וספוק ה 18 המחיה לבד ולא לתאווה בהמית או בהשמרו מן הקור והחום וזולתם . או על דרך המופת כפי מה 19 שהתנהגה במעשה בראשית עכ"ל .

Translation:  
folio 52 recto

37 As it is written: *For He will take me. Sela.* [Ps 49:16]<sup>15</sup> Rav [Aaron ben Judah], the author of *ha-Shemen*, said: "It means that the case of his being taken<sup>38</sup> is that his soul remains and clings to the intellect *in actu*, which completes it and leads it from potentiality to action. And it was said of this: *For 39 He will take me. Sela.*" To this point, his words. In fact, I have already explained it in the chapter "Let us make man"<sup>16</sup>. And similarly, with His help, blessed be He, it was explained fully in parasha 40 "And he lived," in the verse *Let not my glorious (soul) be united* [Genesis 49:6]<sup>17</sup>. For the opinion of Rav [Aaron ben Joseph, author of *Sefer ha-mivhar*], of blessed memory, concerns the essence of man's soul, which is an intellect *in actu* before it enters the body.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it seems to me that the intention of the Rav, of blessed memory, was that God's support would be with him in all bodily and spiritual matters, to ensure his success<sup>42</sup> in fulfilling the commandments, and that he would have an inheritance in both worlds. And the matter of *for God took him* (refers to this), that He took his soul before the *Shekhinah*, and that his soul was not<sup>43</sup> reprov'd (and banished) from its abode,<sup>18</sup> because it was not defiled by transgression. And what he said: "Don't be surprised that the word 'taking' includes

folio 52 verso

1 both body and soul [para. 512]," it means in the case of taking Elijah. And what he said: "For the soul is the core in life and in death [para. 512]" – Rav, the author of *ha-Shemen*, said, "It means that 2 when it is in a person's body, the body is alive through its cause, and when it departs from the body, the body dies and it remains alive." To this point, his words. 3 And regarding what he said: "As for the body of the pious, which is in the likeness of the soul [para. 513]," Rav, the author of *ha-Shemen*, said: "It means that when the body subsequently acts according to the instruction and desire of the soul, 4 and does not act according to the desire of the evil inclination, it also resembles the soul and follows it, as was the case with Elijah. 5 But if it defiles itself, it becomes entangled with the body and cannot completely separate itself from it and return to its abode. 6 Therefore, its soul will follow

14 In the left margin, the words שמן הטוב are written.

15 The brackets [] include words added in translation.

16 See manuscript C104, folio 39 recto.

17 See manuscript C104, folios 114 recto – 117 recto.

18 See *Adderet Eliyahu, Asara ikkarim*, ch. *Ha-ikkar ha-shemini*; *seder Tuma ve-tohora*, ch. *Ve-nashuv*.

its body to the earth, not to heaven. Since the soul, as mentioned, was pure in the beginning,<sup>7</sup> while the body still follows it – that’s why he said “taking” in reference to the body and in reference to the soul. And what he said: “As it is written: *And he was taken to his ancestors*<sup>19</sup> [para. 513],”<sup>8</sup> it means that it is written in the plural because the body goes to the holy bodies, and the soul to the holy souls.”<sup>9</sup> And regarding what he said: “And whoever looks at Elijah, the horses of fire, and the chariot of fire, will understand [para. 514],” Rav, the author of *ha-Shemen*, said, “It means: *for God took him* is an allusion to the fact that God took him and he united<sup>10</sup> with the angels and became a spiritual being. And the body was destroyed by the element of fire, which is under the sphere of the moon, and it returned to its elements.” And regarding what he said: <sup>11</sup> “And his cloak is a testimony to his body [para. 515],” Rav, the author of *ha-Shemen*, said: “This means that his cloak fell so that Elisha could take it and strike the water with it.”<sup>20</sup> To this point, <sup>12</sup> what he said. And I will also give my opinion as it seems to me. When he said: “And his cloak is the testimony to his body,” his intention was that when his cloak <sup>13</sup> returned to the earth, to the place where he was, the elements of his body separated, and each went to its proper place. And what he said: <sup>14</sup> “And do not be deceived by the statement: *A letter came to him from Elijah* [para. 516],” in commenting on this statement, I will also add my brief considerations to the words of Rav, <sup>15</sup> the author of *ha-Shemen*, who states: “It is known that the statement *A letter came to him from Elijah* [2 Chronicles 21:12] was after the ascension of Elijah <sup>16</sup> on high, and this is proved by the fact that in the days of Jehoshaphat there was no more Elijah. For Jehoshaphat and Jehoram <sup>17</sup> the son of Ahab, who went to war against Moab, did not ask Elijah, but Elisha, as is recorded in the Book of Kings (2 Kings 3, [11]). And the ascension of <sup>18</sup> Elijah is recorded in the previous chapter<sup>21</sup>. The letter came in the days of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, for the letter <sup>19</sup> came to him. And likewise, what the Rav said regarding “Jehoram the son of Ahab and Jehoshaphat asked Elisha” etc., up to the words <sup>20</sup> “And the hardest thing is that he was not separated from him until he ascended [para. 517–518]” – this whole statement is not to protect the one who sees it from being mistaken, <sup>21</sup> but on the contrary, it is meant to help raise doubts. And as for his opinion about what he said: “And it is written, *who poured water on the hands of Elisha*<sup>22</sup> [para. 517],” <sup>22</sup> it means, when Jehoshaphat went with Jehoram the son of Ahab to inquire of Elisha, it is written here: Elisha, *who poured water on the hands* <sup>23</sup> *of Elijah* [2 Kings 3:11], which was said in reference to the past – he poured, and this means that he already poured in the past tense, at the time when he was with Elijah, his teacher (Rav), and now he does not pour <sup>24</sup> because his teacher has already been taken from him. And if he was still with his teacher at that time, the Scripture would say: “He pours <sup>25</sup> water,” or “he will pour water.” And that is what the Rav [Aaron ben Joseph] of blessed memory said. And he didn’t say that it refers to a future time. And as for Rav’s intention, when he said: “And the hardest thing

19 Literally, “and was gathered to his peoples.”

20 Cf. David Kimhi’s (Radak) commentary on 2 Kings 2:11.

21 I.e., in chapter 2 of 2 Kings.

22 It was mistakenly written “Elisha” instead of “Elijah.”

is 26 that he was not separated from him until he ascended [para. 518]” – this means that all the days that Elisha served his teacher, he was not separated from him, so that one was 27 in one place and the other was not. And this is proven by what is recorded in the Book of Kings (2 Kings, 2, [2]): “Elijah said to 28 Elisha: ‘Stay here, for the Lord has sent me as far as Bet El. And Elisha answered, ‘As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’” And so, he said a second and a third time. He would not part. From this it appears that from the day Elisha entered the ministry with Elijah, he did not part with 30 his teacher. All this raises a doubt about what is written. So that we are forced to pronounce whether what is written refers to an earlier or a later event? That is, 31 whether it was only after the letter came to Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat from Elijah that he ascended on high. Even though his ascension was recorded during the reign of 32 Jehoshaphat. Or shall we say that Elijah did not ascend on high, but went from place to place, not letting himself be 33 recognised by the people. And he sent only a letter to Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, not to show himself to him face to face. 34 However, the first (possibility) is untenable, for if Elijah was still (on earth) at the time when Jehoshaphat and Jehoram son of Ahab asked Elisha 35 – while the teacher and the disciple never separated, as discussed above – why did they not ask Elijah, but asked Elisha? 36 Similarly, the second possibility cannot be accepted because there is a serious objection to it. The point is that at the time when Elijah did not want to show himself 37 to the mob, when he was hiding by the brook Kerit, there was no need for horses of fire or chariots of fire. Now, however, horses of fire 38 and chariots of fire separated him from his disciple. He ascended on high, and his disciple watched him ascending as long as he could see him. 39 If so, it cannot be said that the ascent was only to separate him from his disciple and the eyes of the mob. Rather, it was to separate him completely 40 from the world of the elements. And if the doubts about these places are removed, then the biblical passages must be clarified 41 so that there is no contradiction in them. The Rav of blessed memory said: “And do not be deceived by the statement: *A letter came to him from Elijah* [para. 516]” – this means, 42 I contend, that horses of fire and chariots of fire came to Elijah to separate him from the world of the elements. If this is so, a doubt may arise in your heart, 43 and you will say: “Since Elijah was no longer in the world of the elements, where did the letter to Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat come from?”

folio 53 recto

1 Therefore, the Rav of blessed memory says: “And do not be deceived by this doubt.”<sup>23</sup> Rav, of blessed memory, was not afraid to resolve this doubt – (but did not address it) due to a penchant for abbreviation, 2 according to his custom, throughout the book, relying on the intelligence of the reader. Therefore, Rav, the author of *ha-Shemen*, may he rest in the Garden of Eden, was anxious to fill in the gap, and said that 3 the opinion of Rav, of blessed memory, regarding the sending of the letter from Elijah to Yehoram was thus (stated), because through the Holy Spirit Elijah appears to be one of the 4 prophets. And

23 The quote contains the word “doubt” instead of “statement.”

he instructed him to write this letter to Jehoram on his behalf, to carry it to him, and to tell him that this letter was sent to him from heaven by <sup>5</sup> Elijah. All this was done to frighten Jehoram, a sinner, and to humble his heart so that he would turn away from the evil deeds <sup>6</sup> he had committed. And the author of *ha-Shemen* said that it was said in the *Seder Olam* that it had been already seven years after Elijah was hidden when <sup>7</sup> the letter came to Jehoram.<sup>24</sup> To this point, his words. And I will also share my opinion and say that perhaps the view of the Rav of blessed memory, when he said, “And do not be deceived by the <sup>8</sup> statement: *A letter came to him from Elijah* [para. 516],” was referring to the case of verses with missing text (*mikra haser*). And it should have been said: “A letter came to him from Elisha, <sup>9</sup> the disciple of Elijah.” There are numerous such verses with missing text, such as “he said him bread” [1 Kings 11:18], with the intention of “he said to give him bread.” <sup>10</sup> And similarly, “the donkey bread” [1 Sm 16:20], (instead of) “the donkey carrying bread,” etc. And as he said: “It is like: *Let there be luminous bodies*” [para. 520]. This means that he said in the singular <sup>11</sup> instead of the plural. And when he said: “The shortening of the years, as you may know, was because of the depravity of his generation – lest they deprave him [para. 520].” This point is similar to what is written: <sup>12</sup> “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His righteous.” As we will discuss this issue, God willing, in parasha *Shemini* [Lev. 9:1–11:47] in the verse, “And they died before the Lord” [Leviticus 10:2], in which <sup>13</sup> the Rav of blessed memory mentioned the verse, “Precious in the sight of the Lord.” And as he said: “The prolongation of life should be explained in the manner of a miracle” [para. 520], the Rav, the author of *ha-Shemen* said that “It is the opinion of the Rav, of blessed memory, that it is <sup>14</sup> a great miracle among these people that they lived for many years, just as sometimes it can be said of a certain type of person that he will be greater <sup>15</sup> than the rest of the people. And sometimes there will be this question for some reason, for example, because of being in a climate called the equator, <sup>16</sup> where night and day are always equal. Or as a result of food, when he gets used to special food <sup>17</sup> to maintain elemental humidity. Or by getting used to eating and drinking and having sexual intercourse according to the necessary order and only to satisfy <sup>18</sup> the needs of life. And not out of lust, or to kill, or to protect oneself from cold or heat, etc. Or by a miracle, referring to what <sup>19</sup> was determined in the act of creation.” To this point, his words.

## 2. Commentary on the Edited Text

In the quoted passage from *Maamar Mordekhai*, the explanations written by Aaron ben Judah and Mordecai ben Nisan are intertwined. Mordecai ben Nisan quotes Aaron ben Judah’s explanations, presumably in the order in which they appear in his manuscript,

<sup>24</sup> See *Seder Olam Rabbah*, ch. 17. Cf. David Kimhi’s commentary on 2 Kings 21:12: היה כי כבר היה בסדר עולם אמר כי כבר היה. “It was said in the *Seder Olam* that it was after seven years since Elijah was hidden, when a letter from him came to Jehoram.”



supplements them, and comments on them. These explanations are usually factual and easy to understand. Only occasionally does he add his polemical comments. Statements on the soul, intellect, and matter, based on the metaphysics of Aristotle and Plato, relate to considerations on the subject found in *More nevu'khim* (*Guide of the Perplexed*) and *Eš hayyim* (*Tree of Life*). The commentary refers to, among other things, the concept of the immortal soul as an intellect *in actu* (see folio 52 recto, 40). Regarding the controversial issue of the “body of the pious,” Aaron ben Judah admits that the body can conform to the soul (see folio 52 verso, 4: “it also resembles the soul and follows it, as was the case with Elijah”), but essentially rejects the possibility of bodily ascension. The use of the phrase “for He took him” is interpreted by both exegetes to mean that Enoch’s soul was transferred directly to the Garden of Eden because of his piety, as Mordecai ben Nisan writes, “that He took his soul before the Shekhinah” (folio 52 recto, 42). Aaron ben Judah explains that “for God took him” is an allusion to the fact that God took him and he united with the angels and became a spiritual being. And the body was destroyed by the element of fire, which is under the sphere of the moon, and it returned to its elements” (folio 52 verso, 9–10). Regarding “And he was taken to his ancestors”<sup>25</sup> [para. 513], he comments: “It means that it is written in the plural because the body goes to the holy bodies, and the soul to the holy souls (folio 52 verso, 7–8).”<sup>26</sup> It is also worth noting that Mordecai ben Nisan seems to indicate that providence was at work, stating that “it seems to me that the intention of the Rav of blessed memory was that God’s support would be with him in all bodily and spiritual matters, to ensure his success in fulfilling the commandments, and that he would have an inheritance in both worlds” (folio 52 recto, 41–42). It is also interesting that Aaron ben Judah was clear on the issue of Elijah’s cloak (cf. folio 52 verso, 11), stating that it fell on purpose, destined for Elisha to strike water with. He thus addressed the logical problem of the fate of other parts of Elijah’s garment raised by Rabbanite exegetes. Mordecai ben Nisan’s logical and insightful argument on the question of the chronology of Elijah’s letter (see 2 Chronicles 21:12) is motivated by the requirement that “the biblical passages must be clarified so that there is no contradiction in them” (folio 52 verso, 40–41). Interestingly, Aaron ben Judah, in the quoted statement, seems to imply that Elisha might have been instructed to send the letter by Elijah, who was already in the Garden of Eden, implying the providential activity of Elijah after the ascension (folio 53 recto, 2–6). Mordecai ben Nisan’s own opinion is definitely rational and points to the possibility of an error in the text of the Bible, specifically an error involving the omission of a passage of the text. That is, the correct text should read: “A letter came to him from Elisha, the disciple of Elijah” (assuming that there was an omission of the passage in brackets

25 Literally, “and was gathered to his peoples.”

26 In this connection, see also the statement of Isaac of Troki (1533/4–1594) in the eleventh chapter of *Hizzuk emunah*: “[...] in the case of the righteous it is the opposite; and the intention of what was said of the righteous: *And he was gathered to his peoples* (Gen. 49:33; Deut. 32:50), is that he was gathered and united with the spirits of the righteous who are called ‘his peoples.’” Cf. D. Deutsch, *Befestigung im Glauben von Rabbi Jizchak, Sohn Abrahams s. A.* (Sohrau O.-Schl.: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers 1865) 89.

מ[אלישע תלמידו של] אליהו, i.e. the two words: “Elisha, the disciple of”). Similarly, in the case of ויהי כל ימי הנוך he implies that there may have been an error of omission of the letter *vav*. The correct form should be ויהיו כל ימי הנוך “All the days of Enoch were...”. It is also worth noting that Aaron ben Judah quotes a statement from the *Seder Olam* (folio 53 recto, 6), apparently taken from David Kimhi’s commentary. The text of the *Maamar Mordekhai* is very insightful, rational, and based on logical premises. It is undoubtedly explanatory and complementary with regard to problematic passages (i.e. considered problematic by the commentators) in the text of *Sefer ha-Mivhar*. It shows well the method of argumentation of both exegetes, who undoubtedly had extensive knowledge and theological training, and at the same time were open to different logical solutions. The rationality of the argumentation is remarkable; both exegetes certainly tried to explain the problematic issues as rationally as possible, in accordance with “common sense” but also with theological doctrine, which of course does not necessarily meet the criteria of rationality.

### 3. The Impact of *Maamar Mordekhai* on Karaite Exegesis

*Maamar Mordekhai* significantly influenced both *Tirat kesef* (written c. 1825) by Joseph Solomon Lutski and *Mahberet sukkat David* by David ben Nisan of Kukizov (written c. 1848 and published in St. Petersburg in 1897), two later comprehensive commentaries on *Sefer ha-Mivhar*. The *Tirat kesef* commentary, which undoubtedly draws on the explanations contained in *Maamar Mordekhai*, is in the form of a textbook. It is a systematic didactic lecture on the text of *Sefer ha-mivhar*. Compared to *Maamar Mordekhai*, it has a decidedly more practical and utilitarian character. The lecture in it is in the form of an *ex cathedra* and is more theologically cautious. Undoubtedly, Joseph Solomon ben Moses Lutski, who was well acquainted with *Maamar Mordekhai* (he was involved in making manuscript copies of this commentary, see manuscript D80, folio 15 verso), used it in preparing *Tirat kesef*, although his explanations are not necessarily in agreement with those found in *Maamar Mordekhai*. Undoubtedly, the strong influence of *Maamar Mordekhai* is evident in the text of the *Mahberet sukkat David* commentary. This becomes quite understandable if we recall how much David ben Mordecai appreciated this commentary and advocated its publication. The following is an English translation of the passage in *Mahberet sukkat David*, which refers to Genesis 5:24, and which deals with the issues discussed in para. 516–519 of *Sefer ha-mivhar*. The reliance on *Maamar Mordekhai* is evident in the concept of sending a letter from the Garden of Eden, as well as in the repeating of information regarding the *Seder Olam*. Nota bene, this passage illustrates well the specific categorical style of David ben Mordecai’s lecture.

What the Rav said regarding *Enoch walked with God and was not, for God took him* is in reference to the prophet Elijah. “And the hardest thing is that he was not separated from him until he ascended. But let us leave it at that [para. 518–519]”. The Rav also complicates this for those considering it, because

the letter that came from Elijah to Jehoram after his ascension was brought from the Garden of Eden. And Rav complicates it. If it was as they think, how could Elisha not know that Elijah, after his ascension, was to reveal himself to the need of the generations, to understand and teach? And why was he so inseparable from him until his ascension? Even though he insisted on separating from him on several occasions? And what the Rav said, “But let us leave it at that”, (literally, “We will turn our face away from it”) means that there is no proof for their opinion to be challenged. And similarly, he wrote in the commentary on Psalm 27, [10] regarding *Though my father and my mother forsake me*: “Fathers, when their will is done, turn away their faces”, etc. Similarly, Radak wrote that Elisha did not part with Elijah until he ascended. And it was still said: *who poured water*, in the past tense, and if he had not yet ascended, it would have been said: “who pours water”. And it was said in the *Seder Olam* that there were 7 years between Elijah’s ascension and the coming of the writing from him to Jehoram.<sup>27</sup>

The authority of the *Maamar Mordekhai* commentary among the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites in the early 19th century was reflected in the custom of copying the *Sefer ha-mivhar* with short explanatory glosses (Hebrew: נמוקים *nimmukim*) based on its text, spontaneously added by the copyists. A good example of this custom is the Reggio 4 manuscript in the Bodleian Library. The glosses in this manuscript were graphically emphasised by writing in reduced type in compact sections of text. The creator of this manuscript, written in Kukizov in 1826, is Yeshuah Joseph ben Moses Mordkowicz (1802–1884). He served as hazzan in the Kukizov community (for several years starting in 1822) and in Halich (Pol. Halicz) (1867–1884)<sup>28</sup>.

Presumably, the author of the same type of commentary (i.e., *nimmukim*) was also Shalom ben Zachariah (Zachariasiewicz, 1765–1813), a hazzan in Halich (1802–1810).<sup>29</sup> We know of its existence from a note by Shalom ben Zachariah in the colophon to the manuscript of the Torah that he copied (it has probably not survived). This note is reported in an anonymous article published in *Karaj Avazy* in 1932, where we read about Shalom ben Zachariah (p. 16):

Our teacher was very anxious to have a copy of the *Mivhar*. Finally, in 1801, he set to work. He transcribed this work together with the glosses of Mordecai son of Nisan of Kokizów (these glosses are called

27 See David ben Mordecai Kukizov, *Sefer Semah David*, III. *Mahberet sukkat David* (ed. Nisan ben David Kukizov) (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Berman i K. 1897) 140.

28 He is known for the many manuscripts he copied. On Yeshuah Joseph ben Moses Mordkowicz, see Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia*, 110–112.

29 Cf. Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia*, 105: “He was the author of the grammatical treatises *Dover Shalom* (Peaceful speaker) and *Eder ha-Yakar* (Costly garment), as well as *Nimmuqim* (Explanations) to Mordecai ben Nisan’s supercommentary on *Sefer ha-mivhar*.” Kizilov cites Fürst’s note in *Geschichte*, pp. 138–139, saying that: “Auserdem werden ihm noch Nimmukim zu einem alten Werke zugeschrieben.” It is now known that both of the aforementioned treatises (the second of which is actually a commentary on *Adderet Eliyyahu*) have survived, their manuscripts being in the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg (cf. Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia*, 105, note 81, where he states that “it seems that none of these works has survived”). Concerning Shalom ben Zachariah, see also R. Tuori, “Defining Karaite Faith in Early Nineteenth-Century Europe: A Poem on the Five Principles of Faith,” *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 39 (2014) 86–88.

*nimmukim*), and, well understanding the obligations of those who read the Law, he made it even more difficult with his own words.<sup>30</sup>

This information (perhaps distorted by the translation from the Hebrew) indicates that Shalom ben Zachariah added glosses taken from the text of the *Maamar Mordekhai* commentary.<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, the text of *Maamar Mordekhai* itself has also been the subject of commentaries (i.e. supercommentaries), either polemical or supplementary. This is evidenced by a manuscript with the text of *Maamar Mordekhai* copied (on order) by Joseph Solomon ben Moses Lutski (manuscripts D80, Genesis–Exodus, and D81, Leviticus–Deuteronomy, from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, copied in 1819, written in the Crimean script). While transcribing the text, Joseph Solomon Lutski added his own glosses in the margins (in smaller type in compact sections of text). Glosses with his explanations were inserted selectively in various places (in the D80 manuscript, however, there is no gloss on Genesis 5:24). He titled the entire commentary (i.e., a collection of his *nimmukim*) created in this manner עוללות אפרים “Gleaning of Ephraim” (cf. Judg 8:2), see manuscript D80 folio 15 recto.

A similar practice is evidenced by the commentary titled *Kaf Nahat* (“Handful of Tranquility,” Ecc 4:6), a copy of which is preserved in the manuscript Evr II a 163, 5, folios 1–21 verso. This is a commentary by Abraham ben Levi *Harosh* (Abraham Leonovich, Pol. Leonowicz) of Halich, dated 1838. Abraham Leonovich was a hazzan in the Halich community from 1810 to 1851.<sup>32</sup> The commentary contains 15 glosses on the comments contained in *Maamar Mordekhai* (concerning the text of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus, i.e. up to parasha *Shemot*, Exodus 1:1–6:1), which he found controversial. As the author explains in the introduction, he only had access to the text of the commentary on Genesis and the beginning of Exodus (see folio 1 verso; 21 recto) in *Maamar Mordekhai*; i.e. to the beginning of the manuscript of *Maamar Mordekhai* copied by Moses ben Joseph of Kukizov, father of Joseph Solomon Lutski.<sup>33</sup> In the *Kaf Nahat*, questions concerning Enoch appear indirectly in the context of comments concerning the construction of heaven and the disintegration of Elijah’s body, folio 14 verso, and about the Garden of

30 Translated from the Polish translation from the original in Karaim by Anna Sulimowicz, see A. Sulimowicz, “Tislemleri Askanlyknyn – Okruchy przeszłości. Zapomniani nauczyciel,” *Awazymyz* 13/2 (2006) 16. The original text in Karaite was published in *Karaj Awazy* in 1932 (part 1, issue 1(3); part 2, issue 2(4)). The author published it under the pseudonym ‘Karaucu’ (presumably the author is Zarach Zarachowicz (1890–1952), see Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia*, 106).

31 According to the same source, Shalom ben Zachariah sold this copy to Joseph Solomon Lutski in Halicz in 1804. See Sulimowicz, “Tislemleri Askanlyknyn,” 16.

32 Regarding Abraham Leonovich, see Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia*, 107–109.

33 He visited Halich before leaving for Crimea; he died in Crimea in 1808 without completing his copy of the *Maamar Mordekhai*, which was to be a memento for his son, Joseph Solomon. The copy was completed by Joseph Solomon himself. See manuscript D80 folio 15 verso. Nota bene, this note may indicate that there was no *Maamar Mordekhai* manuscript in Halich in the early 19th century (sic!).

Eden and the meaning of the verb לַהֲתַהֲלֵל, folio 15 recto–16 recto (I do not discuss their contents here).

At this point, we should also mention the Crimean supercommentary to *Sefer ha-mivhar* titled *Meil Shemuel* (*Samuel's mantle*, unpublished), which was written almost half a century after *Maamar Mordekhai*. The author of the commentary is Samuel ben Joseph, a teacher (*melammed*) in the community of Kale. The commentary was not completed because Samuel ben Joseph died prematurely in early 1754. He only completed the text of the commentary up to parasha *Shemini* (Leviticus 9:1–11:47). The comments on the other parashot, which he had begun, remained unfinished. The text of the commentary in this form was rewritten, edited, and provided with an introduction by the Polish Karaite Simhah Isaac ben Moses Lutski (1716–1760), who settled in Kale c. 1754.<sup>34</sup> While it is not clear whether Samuel ben Joseph was familiar with the text of *Maamar Mordekhai* and may have been inspired by it, it is still worth quoting in this context.<sup>35</sup> The text of the commentary refers to selected topics which the author subjectively considered important and on which he wished to comment.

Regarding Genesis 5:24, Samuel ben Joseph of Kale discusses two problematic issues, namely the ascension of the body (of Elijah and Enoch) and the chronology of the letter in 2 Kings 21:12. Of course, like other commentators, he argues that in the case of both Elijah and Enoch, only their souls were taken up to heaven. He also appeals to Aristotelian metaphysics, pointing out that the body was to be burned with the clothes “in the fire of the elements or in the highest air” (folio 20 recto, 26–27). Moreover, he optionally assumes that the phrase “horses of fire” is an allusion to the disintegration of the elements, not the burning of the body (folio 20 recto, 28–29). He suggests that the cloak fell when the body was separated from the soul (before the body disintegrated into the elements). He emphasises that Elijah “was alive until he ascended into the highest air” (folio 20 verso, 6–7). As for the problem of when the letter was sent, he seems to allow for the possibility that it could have been after Elijah’s ascension (folio 20 recto, 30 – folio 20 verso, 1), as does Aaron ben Judah. The following is the translation of the relevant passage based on manuscript B26 of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, folio 20 recto–20 verso):

folio 20 recto

23 “And whoever looks at Elijah, the horses of fire, and the chariot of fire, will understand. [2 Kings 2:11]” 24 This means that even in the case of Elijah it was said: If you see me when I am taken from you (2 Kings 2:10). His taking was not with his body, but with his pure soul. 25 Likewise in the case of Enoch. And when he says, “will understand,” it means that when Elijah ascended into heaven in the storm, 26 his pure soul was separated from his

34 He completed his work in 1860, according to the date recorded in the “Introduction” (see manuscript B26, folio 4 verso).

35 It is perhaps worth mentioning at this point that when Mordecai ben Nisan left Kukizov for Crimea in 1709, he took a copy of the recently written commentary with him for this very Karaite community, among others. Cf. manuscript D80, folio 15 verso.

body. And he ascended to heaven. The body burned with his clothes in the fire of the elements,<sup>27</sup> or in the highest air. And this is what was said: “The horses of fire and the chariot of fire. The body separated, and his cloak fell.”<sup>36</sup> 28 If he had lived, his cloak would not have fallen. Or: What was said: The horses of fire, etc., is an allusion to the disintegration of the elements. And not 29 that his body burned. And before he arrived there, each element returned to its element. That’s why his cloak fell. And not 30 burned. “And do not be deceived by the statement: A letter came to him from Elijah” (2 Chronicles 21:12). This means that Elijah

folio 20 verso

1 was alive at that time. For there is no evidence in it that he could have written this letter while he was still alive 2 and deposited it with someone for safekeeping. And what is written (shows) that he receives it as if it came now from Elijah. Or these were the words of 3 Elisha, and because of his relation to Elijah, it was written that it was him instead of Elisha. As it was said: *Elisha the son of Shaphat, you shall anoint 4 as a prophet in your place* [1 Kings 19:16]. And likewise it is written, *Who poured water on the hands of Elijah* [2 Kings 3:11]. And it is not said, “He pours” or “will pour”. It is in the 5 past tense. “That he was not separated from him until he ascended [para. 518]”. That means he was separated and saw Elijah ascend, 6 fully with his own eyes, with his body. And his body was not destroyed. And his cloak fell off. We have already said that he was alive until he ascended 7 into the highest air. And there his soul went out, and his body was destroyed.

## Conclusion

The supercommentary to *Sefer ha-mivhar* presented in this article, titled *Sefer maamar Mordecai*, by Mordecai ben Nisan of Kukizov (and co-authored by Aaron ben Judah), was written in the early 18th century, at the peak of the intellectual flourishing of the Karaite community in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It testifies to the development and achievements of the exegetic work of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites and their excellent knowledge of the Bible. It demonstrates the nature of Karaite exegesis, its insights, its premises (based on the principles of logical reasoning), its theological and philosophical foundations (including those based on the ideas of Plato and Aristotle), as well as the manner in which statements were formulated and arguments were developed. It contains original exegetical ideas and certainly deserves to have a place in the history of biblical exegesis. It also makes a significant contribution to the exegetical study of the text of Genesis 5:24. The commentary excerpt edited in the article, which deals with the character of Enoch, is representative of the nature and specificity of Karaite exegetical thought in the 17th and 18th centuries.

<sup>36</sup> Reference to 2 Kings 2:13.

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## David as a Prophet in the Text of “David’s Compositions” (11Q5 xxvii 2–11) against the Background of the Qumran Literature

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**ABSTRACT:** The main aim of this paper is to analyse the biblical figure of King David as a prophet based on the apocryphal text of “David’s Compositions,” which is part of the Great Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 at Qumran (11Q5 xxvii 2–11). The paper consists of three parts. The first part is an analysis of the text of “David’s Compositions” itself. It includes the Hebrew text with its translation into English, the context, and the detailed exegesis of the composition with a strong emphasis on the interpretation of the ending of v. l.3 and the first half of vv. l.4 and l.11 (col. xxvii), relevant to the subject of the presentation. The objective of the second part is to look, in the context of “David’s Compositions,” at the terminology defining the function and figure of the prophet in the Qumran Caves Scrolls. This enables us to limit a huge number of manuscripts only to those in which this terminology occurs. Their content is further verified in terms of their connection to the figure of David. The final, third part concerns the interpretation of three fragments from 4QMMT.

**KEYWORDS:** David, prophet, Qumran, 11Q5, David’s Compositions

The texts from the period of Second Temple Judaism characterise the figure of King David in various ways. He is presented as the progenitor of the Messiah, a triumphant warrior, an ideal ruler and king, the author of psalms, the founder of worship in Jerusalem, a man distinguished by piety and righteousness, an exorcist, and a prophet. This paper will analyse the latter image, i.e. David as a prophet. The source text for the following analyses is the so-called “David’s Compositions” found in the Great Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 at Qumran. Interpreting this work in terms of the chosen objective will also allow us to look at those Dead Sea Scrolls that can provide more information about the functioning of such a perception of the figure of David in the Intertestamental period.

“David’s Compositions” form a part of the penultimate column (col. XXVII) of the Great Psalms Scroll from Cave 11, referred to as 11QPs<sup>a</sup> or 11Q5<sup>1</sup>. They are found

1 The whole 11QPs<sup>a</sup> manuscript contains 49 compositions, seven of which were preserved on fragments that are separate from the scroll (A, B, C, D, E, F), while the rest was preserved in 11Q5, in columns I–XXVIII. Most of the texts, as many as 40, are the psalms known from the Masoretic Text; the remaining nine texts are apocryphal compositions, which were not included in the Masoretic Psalter or other biblical texts: Ps 154; “Plea for Deliverance”; Sir 51:13–20b, 30b; “Apostrophe to Zion”; Ps 155; “Hymn to

between the fragment 2 Sam 23:7 and Ps 140:1–5, covering 10 of the 15 lines of the entire column XXVII<sup>2</sup>. When discussing the placement of this work in 11Q5 (the best-preserved Qumran scroll with psalms), it should be noted that before the fragment of 2 Sam 23:7, there is the text of the “Hymn to the Creator” (col. XXVI),<sup>3</sup> while immediately after the fragment of Ps 140:1–5, there are texts of Psalms 134:1–3 and 151A and B (col. XXVIII).<sup>4</sup>

The position of the works preceding the text of “David’s Compositions,” placed in col. XXVII in l.2–11, and those immediately following it may suggest that the arrangement of “David’s Compositions” in the Great Psalm Scroll (11Q5) was not accidental,<sup>5</sup> but was an attempt at selecting texts containing similar expressions and presenting similar themes. Furthermore, as Flint demonstrated in his structural analysis of 11Q5, the text of “David’s Compositions” opens the final group of the compositions in the Scroll (“David’s Compositions,” Ps 140, 134, 151A and B), in which references to the figure of David become more and more frequent and culminate in Ps 151A and B,<sup>6</sup> where David himself speaks (this text is narrated in the 1st person singular).

#### Hebrew text and its translation<sup>7</sup>

“David’s Compositions” (11Q5, col. XXVII, 2–11) and its translation into English

Hebrew text	line
ויהי דויד בן ישי חכם ואור כאור השמש וסופר	2
ונבון ותמים בכל דרכיו לפני אל ואנשים ויתן	3

the Creator”; 2 Sam 23:7; “David’s Compositions”; Ps 151A and B. Three of them, Psalms 151, 154, 155, appeared in other versions of the Psalter. Until 1961, Ps 151 was known in the Greek version (Septuagint), the Syriac version (Peshitta) and the Latin version (Vulgate), while the other two apocryphal Psalms, 154 and 155, functioned in Syrian translations. The following two texts, 2 Sam 23:7 and Sir 51, could be found in other books of the Bible. The last four works: “Plea for Deliverance”, “Apostrophe to Zion”, “Hymn to the Creator” and “David’s Compositions” were previously unknown. According to the official edition by J. Sanders, the scroll is 4 m and 11.2 cm in length. U. Dahmen, in a later publication devoted to a new reconstruction of the scroll, thinks that, considering the compositions which could originally have been part of the scroll, and which have not been preserved due to the damaged beginning of the scroll, its length could have been between 5.30 and 5.60 m (J. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 (11QPsa)* [DJD 4; Oxford: Clarendon 1965] 4; U. Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter-Rezeption im Frühjudentum. Rekonstruktion, Textbestand, Struktur und Pragmatik der Psalmennrolle 11QPsa aus Qumran* [STDJ 49; Leiden: Brill 2003] 25).

2 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, P1. XVI.

3 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, P1. XVI.

4 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, P1. XVII.

5 An in-depth analysis of the context of the text of “David’s Compositions” is presented by J. VanderKam in the second part of the paper (J. VanderKam, “Studies on ‘David’s Compositions’ (11QPsa 27: 2–11),” *ErIsr* 26 [1999] 212–213); some observations on the sequence in the ending of 11Q5 are made by U. Dahmen (“Davidisierung und Messianismus. Messianismus in der Psalmenüberlieferung von Qumran,” *Apokalyptik und Qumran* [eds. J. Frey – M. Becker] [Eniblicke 10; Paderborn: Bonifatius 2007] 181–188.)

6 P. Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* (STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill 1997) 192.

7 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 92; Dahmen, *Psalmen- und Psalter*, 97.

4	לו יהוה רוח נבונה ואורה ויכתוב תהלים
5	שלושת אלפים ושש מאות ושיר לשורר לפני המזבח על עולת
6	התמיד לכול יום ויום לכול ימי השנה ארבעה וששים ושלוש
7	מאות ולקורבן השבתות שנים וחמשים שיר ולקורבן ראשי
8	החדשים ולכול ימי המועדות וליום הכפורים שלושים שיר
9	ויהי כול השיר אשר דבר ששה ואבעים וארבע מאות ושיר
10	לנגן על הפגועים ארבעה ויהי הכול ארבעת אלפים וחמשים
11	כול אלה דבר בנבואה אשר נתן לו מלפני העליון

### Translation

2	There was David, son of Jesse, wise and enlightened like the light of the sun and (he was) a scribe
3	and a wise man and perfect in all his ways before God and men. The Lord gave
4	him a discerning and enlightened spirit. He wrote psalms
5	three thousand six hundred, and songs to sing before the altar over the perpetual
6	offering on every day for all the days of the year – three hundred and sixty-four;
7	and for the sabbath offerings – fifty-two songs; and for the offerings of the new
8	moon and for all the days of the appointed festivals and the Day of the Atonement – thirty songs.
9	All the songs which he spoke were four hundred and forty-six, and songs
10	to perform over the possessed – four. The total was four thousand and fifty.
11	And all of these he spoke thanks to the prophecy that had been given to him from before the Most High.

In terms of structure, considering both syntax and content, the above text can be divided into two parts.<sup>8</sup> The first part forms the content of the entire lines l.2 and l.3, except for the last word, which is the syntagma ויתן, indicating, from the point of view of syntax, the beginning of a new sentence. This part (lines l.2–3) includes a sequence of words enumerating the characteristics of David, his attributes, and a description of his genealogy. David is presented as the perfect figure. This is primarily evidenced by the use of the adjective הזכם, meaning a wise, skilful, clever, experienced man. Later in the text, we encounter the expression ואור השמש כאור – “enlightened like the light of the sun.” Further, the classical participle in the conjugation Qal – טופר – was used, which denotes not only a scribe, a literate man, but also indicates an expert in the Law, a scholar who can explain Scripture.<sup>9</sup> Another characteristic of David is defined by the first word in line l.3: נבון, describing him as a reasonable and prudent man. The last word referring to David in the first part of “David’s Compositions” is the adjective תמיים, usually meaning: “perfect,” “complete,” “ideal,” “impeccable,” “devoid of defect,” “without blemish.” What is more, this adjective is linked to

8 For more information on the division and structure of “David’s Compositions,” see an earlier paper written by the author, M. Biegas, “The Division and Structure of ‘David’s Compositions’ (11Q5),” *BibAn* 13/32 (2023) 326–332.

9 *HALOT*, 767.

the following content of line l.3, in which the expression occurs: בכּוּל דְּרַכּוֹ לִפְנֵי אֵל וְאֲנָשִׁים – “in all his ways before God and men,” which may refer both to the adjective תָּמִים on its own, as well as combined with all previous expressions characterising David in lines l.2 and l.3. The association of this expression with the person of David presents him as an idealised figure, which is also characteristic of post-exile literature. Such an interpretation is in line with the general interpretive tendency after the Babylonian Exile, when all rulers<sup>10</sup> were compared to David and evaluated on that basis.

Immediately after the sequence containing the presentation of David’s positive attributes at the ending of line l.2, the second part of “David’s Compositions” begins, which includes all the remaining lines of the text, i.e. l.4–11, in which the author enumerates David’s supernatural gifts received from God.<sup>11</sup> These can be divided into three subsections:

II.1 v. 2 (l.4) – David received a discerning and enlightened spirit;

II.2 vv. 3–5 (l.4–10) – enumeration of David’s psalms and songs;<sup>12</sup>

II.3 v. 6 (l.11) – David possesses the gift of prophecy.<sup>13</sup>

In l.4 we can speak of the first, though not explicit, allusion to David’s prophetic function. We can formulate such a position by looking at the text in terms of its literary form and structure, which enables us to notice the inclusion of words לֹו נָתַן לֹו in lines l.3–4 (last and first word) and in line l.11. The last word of v. l.3 and more than half of l.4 form a verbal sentence וַיִּתֵּן לֹו יְהוָה רוּחַ נְבוּנָה וְאוֹרָה “the Lord gave him a discerning and enlightened spirit.” The author of the composition makes God (יְהוָה), the subject of this sentence, from whom the gift of the spirit (וַיִּתֵּן) also comes, and presents David as the recipient of God’s gift. This is evidenced by the expression לֹו used here as the dative of benefits (*dativus commodi*), of purpose.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore clear that David receives the gift of the spirit from God, and the use of the above expression is an allusion to his prophetic function; this is evident even when the text is read cursorily. A problem arises, however, in relation to the reading of the historical books in which David’s story is described. According to these books, he performs the role of the king – first in Hebron, and then in Jerusalem. Moreover, before he begins to perform it, he is given the gift of the spirit by God, as indicated in the text of 1 Sam 16:13. This verse (1 Sam 16:13) is part of the narrative about David and Saul (1 Sam 16–31)<sup>15</sup> accounting for the gradual fall of the rule of Saul and his descendants,

<sup>10</sup> F.V. Reiterer – R. Unfried, “David,” *NLB*, 140.

<sup>11</sup> Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 92.

<sup>12</sup> P. Porzig, “David in the Judean Desert: Beobachtungen an ausgewählten Qumrantexten,” *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the “History of David’s Rise”* (eds. H. Bezzel – R.G. Kratz) (BZAW 514; Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter 2021) 15–22.

<sup>13</sup> C.A. Evans, “The Reputation of Jesus in Light of Qumran’s Tradition of David as Prophet,” *Reading the Bible in Ancient Traditions and Modern Editions: Studies in Memory of Peter W. Flint* (eds. A.B. Perrin – K.S. Baek – D. Falk) (EJL 47; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press 2017) 643.

<sup>14</sup> T. Muraoka, *A Syntax of Qumran Hebrew* (Leuven – Paris – Bristol: Peeters 2020) 140–141.

<sup>15</sup> R.P. Gordon, *I and II Samuel. A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Regency 1986) 67–68; O. Sergi, “Saul, David und die Entstehung der Monarchie in Israel. Neubewertung des historischen und literarischen Kontexts von 1Sam 9–2Sam 5,” *David in the Desert: Tradition and Redaction in the “History of David’s Rise”* (eds. H. Bezzel – R.G. Kratz) (BZAW 514; Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter 2021) 35–56.

while highlighting the political and religious qualities of the new pretender to the throne – David.<sup>16</sup> The pericope of 1 Sam 16:1–13,<sup>17</sup> which ends the aforementioned v. 13, contains an account of the mission that God entrusted to Samuel, which involved anointing a new king from among the sons of Jesse of Bethlehem. In the text of 1 Sam 16:6–10, the Deuteronomist indicates that Samuel did not choose a new king among David's older brothers, despite their physical qualities, because, according to v. 7, the ultimate criterion for evaluating the candidates was their internal quality, which is confirmed by the final part of v. 7: ויהוה יראה ללבב – “the Lord looks on the heart.”<sup>18</sup> This course of events gives the author the opportunity to introduce the figure of David into the content of the narrative. He describes the function (v. 11), appearance (v. 12), and the moment of anointing the youngest son of Jesse (v. 13) in just three verses (vv. 11–13).<sup>19</sup> Grace is indicated as directly linked with the rite of anointing. The author of the book defines it as רוּחַ יְהוָה “the spirit of God” which תִּצְלַח “came” upon the newly anointed king, i.e. David.<sup>20</sup> The text makes it clear that the gift of the “spirit of God” is not linked to the prophetic role, but to the royal function. It is also important to note a certain chronological order. “The Spirit of the Lord” came upon David, and earlier upon Saul (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6). However, in the case of the first king of Israel, the gift of the spirit (1 Sam 11:6) is not directly related to his anointing. His charismatic endowment described in 1 Sam 10:6, 10, considering the chronology of events, is separated from the anointing itself. In David's case, the gift of the “Spirit of the Lord” is a natural consequence of his anointing; the duration of the gift is permanent (1 Sam 30:25), and its transfer was not associated with the spasmodic behaviour that occurred in similar situations with Saul. When comparing the account of Saul's anointing with the narrative of David's anointing, one can conclude that the Deuteronomist thus demonstrates the superiority of the gift of the “spirit” given to David over the same gift enjoyed by Saul, both in its close association with the anointing rite and in its permanence.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, when considering the information provided in v. 1.4 of the text of “David's Compositions” about David receiving the gift of “a discerning and enlightened spirit,” in the light of the aforementioned biblical narrative depicting the moment in which the gift is bestowed upon the protagonist, one can come to a general (albeit early) conclusion that the author of “David's Compositions” does not want to define David as a prophet, but refers to his royal function. In that case, this gift of a discerning and enlightened spirit

16 J. Lemański, “Opowiadanie o Arce przymierza (1 Sm 4,1–7,1; 2 Sm 6) jako klucz do teologii Księg Samueli,” *SC* 11 (2007) 25.

17 The precise division of the pericope is presented in: A. Campbell (ed.), *1 Samuel* (FOTL 7; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2003) 161–162.

18 P.K. McCarter, *1 Samuel. A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 8; Garden City, NY: Doubleday 1980) 277; M.J. Evans, *1 and 2 Samuel* (NIBC OT 6; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson 2000) 80.

19 R.W. Klein, *1 Samuel* (WBC 10; Waco, TX: Word Books 1983) 160–162; Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 151; A.G. Auld, *1 & 2 Samuel. A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2011) 186–187.

20 W. Dietrich, *Samuel. 1Sam 13–26* (BKAT 8/2; Göttingen: Neukirchener Theologie 2015) 238–245.

21 Klein, *1 Samuel*, 162.

would refer to his intelligence, which is necessary for such a responsible function. But is this the author's intention?

To answer this question, it is necessary at this point to pay attention first to the semantic field of the noun רוּחַ, and then to the context of its occurrence in "David's Compositions." As far as the meaning range of this noun is concerned, it is most often associated with God – "the spirit of the Lord"; it occurs in the description of the creation of the world (Gen 1:2), interaction with man (Gen 6:2), power and transference (1 Kings 18:12), the will of God (Isa 30:1; Ps 51:14) and his presence (Isa 34:16; 63:10–14; Ps 51:13; 106:33; 139:7; 143:10).<sup>22</sup> The second, not uncommon use of this noun is contained in the fragments where it was introduced in reference to a man. In this case, the biblical authors use it to express life-force (Num 16:22; 27:16), vitality (Gen 45:27; Judg 15:19; 1 Sam 30:12), courage, inner strength (Josh 2:11; 5:1; Isa 61:3; Ezek 21:12; Ps 76:13; 77:4), reason, intellect (Ex 28:3; Deut 34:9; Isa 19:3, 14; 29:10, 24; Ezek 20:32; Ps 77:7), disposition, feeling (Isa 57:15), will, inclination towards something (Ex 35:21; Deut 2:30; Ezek 13:3), desire, longing (2 Sam 13:39), temper, anger (Judg 83; 9:23; Job 15:13), gift of prophecy (Num 11:17, 25, 26), morality, or inner nature (Ezek 11:19, 18, 31; Ps 51:12).<sup>23</sup>

If the closest context in which the noun רוּחַ occurs in "David's Compositions" is to be determined, it is worth noting that it occurs immediately after the sequence of adjectives and nouns characterising David as an idealised figure (l.2–3), and before the enumeration of psalms and songs composed by him (l.4–10). In line l.4 itself, immediately after the noun רוּחַ, the author placed two directly related adjectives נְבוֹנָה and אֹרֵרָה; meaning "discerning and enlightened," that form, from the syntactic point of view, the apposition of trait and character.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, taking into account both the semantic field of the noun רוּחַ presented above in relation to a man, as well as the closest context of the entire expression רוּחַ נְבוֹנָה וְאֹרֵרָה, it can be concluded that the author of "David's Compositions," introducing the noun רוּחַ into the text in the lexical context presented above, aimed to describe the sphere related to the mind, rather than the gift associated with the performance of the royal function. As far as the prophetic role is concerned, the author signalled it in an indirect way. Thus, the entire expression רוּחַ נְבוֹנָה וְאֹרֵרָה metaphorically portrays David as one who was equipped by God with the gift of an acute and enlightened mind, in addition to his above-average intelligence. Once again, it should be noted that such an interpretation follows from the closest context of the work and is in line with the ideal image of David presented at the beginning of "David's Compositions." Moreover, it directly refers to David's writing activity, presenting him as a person who composes psalms and songs thanks to God's gift of an enlightened and discerning mind.

<sup>22</sup> DCHVII, 431–432.

<sup>23</sup> DCHVII, 432–433.

<sup>24</sup> Muraoka, *A Syntax of Qumran Hebrew*, 176, 297; B. Waltke – M. O'Connor, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns 1990) 230.

However, it cannot be said that the end of line l.3 and the beginning of line l.4 of “David’s Compositions” are not presenting David as a prophet. This is confirmed by the aforementioned analysis of literary form and structure, which allows us to notice that the words נתן לו are included in this part of the text. This expression serves to emphasise the importance of God as the giver and David as the recipient of gifts coming from on high; in terms of the structure, it indicates the beginning and end of the core literary section of the work.

In the second part of the core section of “David’s Compositions” [II.2 vv. 3–5 (l. 4–10)], the author presents the reader with a list of the psalms and songs written by David,<sup>25</sup> devoting the whole of lines l.9 and l.10 to a summary of these psalms and songs. Initially, in line l.9 there is the first conclusion indicating that David דבר “spoke” 446 ששה וארבעים וארבע מאות “songs”; then, at the end of line l.9 and at the beginning of line l.10, the author mentions four more specific songs that were composed in order to be performed over a group of people, referred to as הפגועים “possessed,” or “being under the influence of demonic spirits.”<sup>26</sup> Placing this reference at this point in the text is important because it presents David in the role of an exorcist.<sup>27</sup> Then, in the second part of line l.10, the text of “David’s Compositions” contains the final conclusion, which provides the reader with information about the total number of David’s songs and psalms: ויהי הכול ארבעת אלפים וחמשים “the total was four thousand and fifty.”

With the beginning of line l.11, the author introduces an explanation of the reason for the creation of these psalms and songs. The text is unambiguous about it: כול אלה דבר “All these he spoke in prophecy which had been given to him before the Most High.”

The words נתן לו, found in line l.11, refer to God’s gift to David (as in lines l.3–4). In this case, the subject, i.e. God, is defined by the noun עליון “the Most High,” who gives David the gift of נבואה “prophecy.”<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the phrase linked to the text about the gift of prophecy, contains additional information, which is not provided at the beginning of “David’s Compositions.” In lines l.3–4 the expression, referring to David’s spiritual gifts, his discerning and enlightened spirit (רוח נבונה ואורה), indicates intelligence, and implicitly,

25 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 92; W.H. Brownlee, “The Significance of David’s Compositions,” *RevQ* 20 (1966) 569–574; VanderKam, “Studies on ‘David’s Compositions,’” 214–220; N. Vered, “The Origin of the List of David’s Songs in David’s Compositions,” *DSD* 13 (2006) 134–149.

26 J.P.M. van der Ploeg identifies four songs of David with the content of scroll 11Q11, which contains three songs of an exorcistic nature, and Ps 91, which in the Qumran community and in the period of late antiquity was regarded as a song providing protection against demons and evil spirits (“Un petit rouleau de psaumes apocryphes (11QPsApa),” *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt; Festgabe für Karl Georg Kuhn zum 65. Geburtstag* [eds. J. Gert – H.W. Kuhn – H. Stegeman] [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1971] 129; F. Garcia-Martinez et al. [eds.], *Qumran Cave 11 – II: 11Q2–18 & 11Q20–31* [DJD] 23; Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998] 181–205).

27 Evans, “The reputation of Jesus,” 643–645; K.E. Pomykala, “Images of David in Early Judaism,” *Of Scribes and Sages: Early Jewish Interpretation and Transmission of Scripture* (ed. C.A. Evans) (JSPSup 50; London: Clark 2004) I, 45.

28 *DCHV*, 582–583; *HALOT* II, 660.

prophecy. Line 1.11 makes it clear that David has a much greater gift than intelligence, i.e. the gift of prophecy.

The noun נְבוּאָה used in the text, associating this gift with the person of David, is a novelty compared to other manuscripts belonging to the Qumran literature and the entire HB. The word נְבוּאָה occurs only in a few places in the HB, in late post-exilic texts, i.e. 2 Chron 9:29; 15:8; Ezra 6:14; Ne 6:12,<sup>29</sup> but none of them expresses the essence of David's mission. The same is true of the Qumran manuscripts, where it is used in only two places (except for "David's Compositions" of 11Q5). The first is 4QIsa<sup>c</sup> (4Q165) 1–2: 1<sup>30</sup> (*pesher* to the Book of Isaiah), where this noun (appearing in the plural) was used in the title of the composition contained in this manuscript (a fragment from Isa 40:11–12), and was included in the text in the plural, in its classical understanding as the content given by God. The second is 4Q458 15:2 (fragment 15, line 2). The preserved text of this manuscript is too fragmentary to draw any conclusions from it. In the whole of fragment 15, only three lines survive, in which only two words can be identified (in l.1 the noun בְּכוֹרִי "my firstborn"; in l.2 הַנְּבוּאָה "prophecy").<sup>31</sup>

Except for "David's Compositions" of 11Q5, the collection of the Qumran manuscripts does not link the noun נְבוּאָה to the person of David to present a full image of David as a prophet. In the Qumran manuscripts, attention should be paid to the terms that contain references to prophet and prophecy and the context in which they are used. This will make it possible to determine whether there is any link between the person of David and these terms in the Qumran writings.

Another word related to the noun נְבוּאָה found in "David's Compositions" is the verb נָבֵא, derived from the same root, which means to prophesy, or to be in the prophetic rapture (1 Sam 10:11; 1 Kings 22:12; Jer 19:14; Ezek 11:4; Joel 3:1 and others).<sup>32</sup> It is rarely used in the manuscripts, and appears only nine times in the Qumran literature: CD VI, 1; 3Q4 3; 4Q267 2, 6; 4Q269 4i2; 4Q385 2, 5; 4Q385 2, 6; 4Q385 2, 7; 4Q385b 1, 2; 4Q386 1i4.<sup>33</sup> In most cases, as many as five times, the verb נָבֵא occurs in the text of Pseudo-Ezekiel (4Q385 – 386), which is a paraphrase of the vision of dry bones from Ezek 37. In CD VI, 1, this verb is present in the section referring to the prophets of Israel who are holy and anointed. The author of CD condemns their opponents because their prophecy (נְבוּאָה), which encourages Israel to turn away from God, is false. Similar uses of the same verb are found in 3Q4 3; 4Q267 2, 6; 4Q269 4i2, in which there are no references to the person of David. The same is true for CD and Pseudo-Ezekiel. Thus, in 3Q4 3 the verb נָבֵא occurs

29 Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll*, 93; J.A. Fitzmyer, "David, Being Therefore a Prophet... (Acts 2:30)," *CBQ* 34 (1972) 336; P. Flint, "The Prophet David at Qumran," *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (ed. M. Henze) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 160.

30 J.M. Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I (4Q158–4Q186)* (DJD 5; Oxford: Clarendon 1968) 28–29.

31 S. Pfann et al., *Qumran Cave 4 – XXVI: Cryptic Texts and Miscellanea, Part 1* (DJD 36; Oxford: Clarendon 2000) 364; although the noun in question does not occur in other Qumran manuscripts, it is noteworthy that it is present in the targumic texts to the Book of Psalms.

32 *DCHV*, 582–583.

33 Flint, "The Prophet David at Qumran," 161.



in the context of Isaiah’s prophecy regarding Judea and Jerusalem, while in 4Q267 2, 6 and 4Q269 4i2 it is used to characterise the words of the false prophets.

Another word that, when combined with the name of David, would clearly indicate his prophetic role in the Qumran writings, is the noun נביא “prophet.” Compared to the lexical items mentioned above, this noun occurs more frequently (57 times). It is used most often in the corpus of manuscripts from Cave 4 and 11.<sup>34</sup> Peter W. Flint, who analysed the use of this noun in the Qumran texts, distinguished seven contexts of its use:<sup>35</sup>

No.	Context	Example of manuscript
I.	Definition of individual prophets known from the books of the Old Testament: הנבי יחזקאל – prophet Ezekiel, הנביא ישעיה – prophet Isaiah, הנביא ירמיה – prophet Jeremiah, הנביא זכריה – prophet Zechariah.	CD III, 21 CD IV, 13 CD XIX, 7 4Q385a, 18ia-b, 2 4Q385a 18ia-b, 6 4Q385a B, 1
II.	Definition of the prophets in a general sense.	1QS VIII, 15–16
III.	Definition of the relationship between the prophet and God through the expression: “My/His servants the prophets”.	1QS I, 3
IV.	Defines the books of the prophets – either alone or in combination with other groups of writings.	4Q397 14–21, 15 CD VII, 17 (individual books e.g. the Book of Amos) 4Q397 14–21, 10 (groups of writings: the Books of Moses, the Books of the Prophets and David)
V.	Occurs in texts, pericopes of an eschatological nature, to describe the person of the prophet who will come with the Messiah at the end of time.	1QS IX, 11
VI.	Is used to refer to the awakening, the coming of an undefined “new prophet”.	4Q175 I, 5
VII.	Characterises the contemporary prophets of the Qumran community, most often presented in a negative way.	1QH <sup>a</sup> XII, 16 11Q19 LIV, 8 11Q19 LVI, 1–5

Unfortunately, the places in the text where the noun נביא occurs do not refer to David. The last noun present in the texts from Qumran, which, similarly to the HB, defines the prophet, is the noun הוזהר “seer,” “watcher.”<sup>36</sup> We find it ten times in the Qumran extra-biblical texts; in the War Scroll (1QM XI, 7–8), in the Damascus Document (CD II, 12–13), 1QH<sup>a</sup>, 4Q163, 4Q174, 4Q280, 4Q517, 4Q518. It should also be noted that this term is not found in the Qumran manuscripts in the form of *status absolutus*. It always occurs in the text in the form of *status constructus* in combination with another noun, taking on the negative meaning הוזהר רמיה, as in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XII, 10; XII, 20 or positive meaning הוזהר אמת: CD II, 12; 1QH<sup>a</sup> XII, 18. Most importantly, in the Qumran texts, this term is used without

34 J. Bowley, “Prophets and Prophecy at Qumran,” *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment* (eds. P. Flint – J. Vanderkam) (Leiden: Brill 1999) II, 356.

35 Flint, “The Prophet David at Qumran,” 161–162:

36 DCH III, 182.

a clear reference to the prophets known from the biblical literature<sup>37</sup> and, what is important for this study, without any reference to David.

In the case of the denominative *participium* נִרְאָה, which has a similar meaning to נִרְאָה “seer,”<sup>38</sup> no conclusions can be drawn, since this term does not occur (in this form, i.e. the denominative *participium* in the Qal conjugation) in the Essene texts in relation to the figure of David. Moreover, its use in the biblical texts found in Qumran is quite rare; it occurs in this form only in three places (1QIs<sup>a</sup> and 4Q57).

The analysis of the texts presented above, in which lexical items such as: “prophecy,” “to prophesy,” “prophet,” “seer,” “watcher,” allows us to formulate a cautious, but not unfounded, opinion that David was regarded as a prophet by the Essene community. In the light of the above, it is easy to notice that, apart from the text of “David’s Compositions,” the Qumran scribes displayed a very cautious approach to directly ascribing a prophetic function to David.<sup>39</sup> As demonstrated above, none of these texts, with the exception of the passage in 11Q5, contains a term linked to the person of David that would attribute this function to him.

According to Flint, the link between David and the function of the prophet can be established in the light of the three Qumran *pesbers* to the “Psalms of David”: 1QpPs (1Q16),<sup>40</sup> 4QpPs<sup>a</sup> (4Q171),<sup>41</sup> and 4QpPs<sup>b</sup> (4Q173).<sup>42</sup> This exegete based his hypothesis on the fact that almost all *pesbers* found in Qumran relate to the books of the prophets, i.e. *pesbers* to Isaiah,<sup>43</sup> Hosea,<sup>44</sup> Micah,<sup>45</sup> Nahum,<sup>46</sup> Habakkuk,<sup>47</sup> Zephaniah,<sup>48</sup> Malachi.<sup>49</sup> The fact that almost all the *pesbers* were composed for the books of the prophets,<sup>50</sup> among which

37 Bowley, “Prophets and Prophecy,” 359–360.

38 DCH VII, 362

39 G. Xeravits, “נִרְאָה,” *TbWQ* (eds. H.-J. Fabry – U. Dahmen) (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 2011) II, 847–852.

40 In this fragmentarily preserved manuscript, the *pesber* to Ps 57:1,4; 68:12–13 has survived. 26–27, 30–31, D. Barthelemy – J.T. Milik, *Qumran Cave I* (DJD 1; Oxford: Clarendon 1955) 81–82.

41 This manuscript contains the *pesber* to Ps 37:7, 8–19a, 19b–26, 28c–40; 45:1–2; 60:8–9 (108:8–9): Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I* (4Q158–4Q186), 42–50; G. Brooke, “Thematic Commentaries on Prophetic Scriptures,” *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (ed. M. Henze) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 141–142; M.P. Horgan, *Pesbarim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books* (CBQMS 8; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America 1979) 192–226.

42 This manuscript presents the *pesber* to Ps 127:2–3, 5; 129:7–8 and a short quotation from Ps 118 (most likely referring to v. 26 and v. 27): Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I* (4Q158–4Q186), 51–53; Flint, “The Prophet David at Qumran,” 165; Horgan, *Pesbarim*, 226–228.

43 3QpIsa<sup>a</sup> (3Q4), 4QpIsa<sup>a-c</sup> (4Q161–165), M. Baillet – J.T. Milik – R. De Vaux, *Les «Petites Grottes» de Qumrân: Textes Exploration de la falaise; Les grottes 2Q, 3Q, 5Q, 6Q, 7Q à 10Q* (DJD 3; Oxford: Clarendon Press 1962) 95–96; Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I* (4Q158–4Q186), 11–30.

44 4QpHos<sup>a-b</sup> (4Q166–167), Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I* (4Q158–4Q186), 31–36.

45 1QpMic (1Q14), 4QpMic (4Q168), Barthelemy – Milik, *Qumran Cave I*, 77–80; Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I* (4Q158–4Q186), 36.

46 4QpNah (4Q169), Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I* (4Q158–4Q186), 37–42.

47 1QpHab.

48 1QZeph (1Q15), 4QpZeph (4Q170), Barthelemy – Milik, *Qumran Cave I*, 80; Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I* (4Q158–4Q186), 42.

49 5QpMal (5Q10), Baillet – Milik – De Vaux, *Les «Petites Grottes» de Qumrân*, 180.

50 S. Berrin, “Qumran Pesbarim,” *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (ed. M. Henze) (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2005) 110–133 (in particular pp. 118–122); G. Brooke, “Prophecy and Prophets in the Dead

three concern the “Psalms of David,” who is believed to be their author, may indicate that the Qumran community considered the psalms to be prophetic works. The consequence of this is that their author was granted the status of a prophet.<sup>51</sup>

This hypothesis appears to be difficult to defend, as pointed out by Sargent, who, commenting on Flint’s position, argues correctly that the referenced *pesbers* to the psalms contain no references to David’s authorship.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the interpretation of the psalms contained in these manuscripts refers mainly to issues related to the life and functioning of the community and refers to the person of the “Teacher of Righteousness,” the “Wicked Priest” and the “Man of falsehood.”<sup>53</sup>

For example, in the commentary to Psalm 37 (4Q171, 173),<sup>54</sup> the commentator, when explaining the work, finds some prophecies about contemporary events. The subject of the teaching of Ps 37 is the issue already pointed out by the prophet Jeremiah, but without giving any solution, i.e. the issue of the persecution of the righteous by perverse men.<sup>55</sup> Since the terms “righteous” and “perverse” were a kind of code for the author of *pesber*, the author assumed that they contained an allusion to the Teacher and his opponents. He thus confirmed the antagonistic relationship between the two leaders by providing an account of their clashes and disputes.<sup>56</sup>

Finally, attention should be paid to the hypothesis formulated by Pomykala. This exegete referred to the content of 4QMMT. In the manuscript 4Q397 14–21, in lines l.10–11, there is a text that reads as follows:

4QMMT (397 14–21; ll.10–11)<sup>57</sup>

Hebrew text	line
[כתב]נו אליכה שתבין בספר מושה [ן]בספר [י]הנ[ביאים ובדו]י [ד]	10
[במעשי] דור ודור ובספר כתוב [ ]ל[ ]ים ל לוא	11

Sea Scrolls: Looking Backwards and Forwards,” *Prophets, Prophecy, and Prophetic Texts in Second Temple Judaism* (eds. M.H. Floyd – R.D. Haak) (LHBOTS 427; New York: Clark 2006) 157–158; Horgan, *Pesharim*, 10–192.

51 Flint, “The Prophet David at Qumran,” 167; A similar position was taken by Witherington in relation to the analysis of 4QFlor 1, 7–13, B. Witherington, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1998) 146.

52 B. Sargent, *David Being a Prophet. The Contingency of Scripture upon History in the New Testament* (BZNTW 207; Berlin: De Gruyter 2014) 78.

53 Barthelemy – Milik, *Qumran Cave I*, 81–82; Allegro, *Qumran Cave 4 – I (4Q158–4Q186)*, 42–53.

54 A commentary on this text can be found in the latest commentary on the Book of Psalms published by Herder, D. Böhler, *Psalmen 1–50* (HThKAT; Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder 2021) 687–688; J. Goldingay, *Psalms. I. Psalms 1–41* (BCOTWP; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2006) 518.

55 Böhler, *Psalmen 1–50*, 656–690; Goldingay, *Psalms*, 514–535.

56 J. VanderKam, *Manuskrypty znad Morza Martwego* (Warszawa: Cyklady 1996) 58–59.

57 E. Qimron – J. Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4 – V: Miqsat Ma’ase ha-Torah* (DJD 10; Oxford: Clarendon 1994) 58–59.

## Translation

10	We have written to you so that you may study the Book of Moses and the Books of the Prophets and (the writings of) David
11	the events of ages past. In the Book it is written [ ] not

As stated in line l.10, the author encourages the addressee to study carefully the books of Moses, the books of the Prophets, and (the writings of) David. On this basis, Pomykala suggests that, since David's writings are listed alongside the books of Moses, who was regarded as a prophet by the Qumran community (as exemplified by the content of the Temple Scroll, 1QS 1:1–3),<sup>58</sup> and alongside the books of the Prophets, David's writings should also be regarded as prophetic texts and their author himself should be recognised as a prophet.<sup>59</sup>

In order to properly assess this proposition, i.e. whether the author of 4QMMT seeks to portray David as a prophet, it is necessary to look at the manuscript holistically, paying particular attention to the places where David is mentioned. This refers to the two manuscripts that comprise the entirety of this legal document: the already mentioned 4Q397 (14–21, 10) and 4Q398 (11–13, 1; 14–17 II, 1).<sup>60</sup>

The first fragment of 4Q398 (11–13, 1) reads as follows:

4QMMT E (+ d) (= 4Q398 11–13, 1) with the translation into English<sup>61</sup>

	Hebrew text	line
	[הבר[כת]בא[ג]ו ב [ ] ] בימי שלומה בן דויד ואף הקללות	18
	[ש]באו ב[מי]ר[ובעם בן נבט ועד גל[ג]ת ירושלם וצדקיה מלך יהוד[ה]	19
	[ ] [ש]יב[ר]אם ב[ ]	20

## Translation

18	[The blessings have (already) befallen in...] in the days of Solomon the son of David. And the curses
19	[that] have (already) befallen from the days of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and up to when Jerusalem and Zedekiah King of Judah went into captivity
20	that He will bring them[ ]

58 The author of the Temple Scroll clearly presents the prophetic status of Moses. It should be noted, however, that he is not presented in the same way as the "classical" prophets, such as Isaiah or Jeremiah, who through the visions given to them commented on faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the Law of God in their contemporary community. Rather, Moses is portrayed as a figure who was given, as Brooke argues, the "original" revelation associated with the transmission of the Law to which the prophets later referred ("Prophecy and Prophets," 154, 161–162; Bowley, "Prophets and Prophecy," 361–362; G. Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet: Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library* [STDJ 47; Leiden: Brill 2003] 174–184; G. Brooke, "Moses in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Looking at Mount Nebo from Qumran," *La construction de la figure de Moïse* [ed. T. Römer] [Transeuphratène 13; Paris: Gabalda 2007] 207–221; Flint, "The Prophet David at Qumran," 161.)

59 Pomykala, "Images of David," 42.

60 Porzig, "David in the Judean Desert," 11.

61 Qimron – Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4 – V: Miqsat Ma'ase ha-Torah*, 60.

The above-cited fragment is an interpretation of the text of Deut 30:1–2, which contains a prediction of a blessing and a curse in connection with two ways of behaving towards God. According to the author of the manuscript, all the blessings found their fulfilment during the reign of Solomon, the son of David, while the curses came during the reign of the later kings of Israel and Judah; Jeroboam and Zedekiah. At the end of time, once the reign of the inept kings ceases, the blessing will return, as mentioned in the subsequent lines (21–22) of the cited fragment. It will last forever and will not be revoked. Curses will fall on the wicked who will be extirpated. Although the remark concerning the coming of the days of David is not explicitly expressed in the text, according to Qimron and Strugnell, the use of the expression בִּימֵי justifies this interpretation.<sup>62</sup> Thus, in the above-mentioned fragment, David is identified with a historical figure, the father of the king (2 Sam 5:14; 11:3; 12:18, 24; 1 Chron 22:9), during whose reign Israel was blessed, and there is no reference to his prophetic function.

The third and final fragment from 4QMMT, thematically linked to David as king, is found at the end of Part C in lines l.25–26.

4QMMT E (+ d + f) (= 4Q398 14–17 ii) with the translation into English<sup>63</sup>

Hebrew text	line
[נשן]אי עונות זכור [את] דויד שהיא איש חסדים [ן]אף	25
היא [נ]צל מצרות רבות ונסלוח לו ואף [ ]	26

### Translation

25	[whose] misdeeds were forgotten. Remember David, who was a man of righteous deeds and indeed [i]
26	was delivered from many troubles and was forgiven [ ]

In order to encourage a positive attitude in the addressees, the author of the manuscript depicts David as a law-abiding king, distinguished by righteous deeds, thanks to which he avoided many troubles in his life and obtained forgiveness for his sins. These words of encouragement were addressed, according to the researchers of this manuscript, to an addressee contemporary to the author of the manuscript, who was an unspecified ruler or high priest from the times of the Hasmonean era. He was thus encouraged to follow the example of David, described as איש חסדים “a man of righteous deeds,” and thus a king who sought and observed the Torah.<sup>64</sup> Citing, among other things, these historical facts from David’s life, the author of 4Q398 suggests that if the addressee (a ruler or high priest) acts

62 Qimron – Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4 – V: Miqsat Ma’ase ha-Torah*, 60; C.A. Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *The Scrolls and the Scriptures. Qumran Fifty Years After* (eds. S.E. Porter – C.A. Evans) (JSPSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1997) 186.

63 Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 62.

64 Qimron – Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4 – V: Miqsat Ma’ase ha-Torah*, 121; Pomykala, “Images of David,” 37.

in a similar way to David, he can expect similar outcomes in his life.<sup>65</sup> Thus, the cited text and its message also cannot be regarded as arguments in favour of the view that David was presented as a prophet.

Thus, it can be said that in the two fragments that comprise 4Q398, the author refers to the figure of David in historical terms,<sup>66</sup> highlighting his positive characteristics but does so in the light of his royal function. A hypothesis that speaks of David as a prophet, based on a fragment of document 4Q397, is difficult to accept. In the opinion of the authors of the critical edition, but also of other exegetes, the name of David occurring in line 10 probably refers not so much to the psalms of David as to the כתובים “Scriptures” and provides significant evidence in favour of the formative history of the triple division of the later principle.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, this phrase can be seen as a way of referring to the whole of Scripture, which we find a little later in Luke 24:44.<sup>68</sup> In the conclusion to the whole Gospel, just before presenting the scene of the ascension, Luke evokes the image of the last meeting of the apostles with the resurrected Christ, emphasising the Christological nature of the fulfilment of the whole of Scripture.<sup>69</sup> The only peculiarity of this pericope (Luke 24:36–49) is the division of the Scriptures not into two parts, the Law and the Prophets (cf. Luke 24:27), but into three parts. Luke is, apart from earlier premises present in the literature from Qumran, the first New Testament witness of such a division. Indeed, he considers the psalms to be scriptural texts.<sup>70</sup> In the light of the above analysis, it can be concluded that the entire legal text of 4QMMT does not contain any references to David as a prophet.

## Conclusion

The attribution of the prophetic role to David intensifies during the period of the Second Temple. There is no passage in the entire Hebrew Bible where David is directly referred to as נביא “prophet.” Nevertheless, this perception of him can be found in several places in the books of the Bible. These include 2 Sam 23:1–7 (“David’s last words”), 2 Chron 8:14, where David is referred to as איש־הֵאלֹהִים “the man of God,” a title used for certain prophets (Elijah – 1 Kings 17:18; an unnamed prophet – 1 Kings 20:28; 2 Kings 1:9, 11, 13; Elisha – 2 Kings 4:16, 21, 25, 27; 5:8, 14, 15). The same term איש־הֵאלֹהִים used in reference to David is also used in Ne 12:24, 36, in the context of the list of priests and Levites from the time of Jehoiakim and the dedication of the rebuilt walls of Jerusalem. In 2 Chron 29:25, David

65 Evans, “The Reputation of Jesus,” 642.

66 Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 185–189.

67 Qimron – Strugnell, *Qumran Cave 4 – V: Miqsat Ma’ase ha-Torah*, 59.

68 Sargent, *David Being a Prophet*, 77; F. Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28–24:53* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2012) 394.

69 This fulfilment is emphasised by Luke using the appropriate Greek terminology: δεῖ “must”, the verb πληρῶω “to fulfil” and τα γεγραμμένα “what is written”.

70 Bovon, *Luke 3*, 394.

is mentioned alongside Gad, the royal seer, and Nathan, the prophet, when attributing importance to music and musical instruments for cultic purposes. Although David is not explicitly named in the text by any term peculiar to a prophet, mentioning him alongside the two prophets may indicate this function.<sup>71</sup>

Unlike the texts of the Old Testament, the author of "David's Compositions" analysed in this paper clearly presents David as a prophet. This is evident at the beginning of the second section of "David's Compositions," before the enumeration of the psalms and songs of David. The last word of line l.3 and a half of line l.4 contain the first, though not explicit, allusion to David's prophetic function. This view can be formulated based on the verbal sentence present in this place ויתן לו יהוה רוּחַ נְבוֹנָה וְאוֹרָה "the Lord gave him a discerning and enlightened spirit."

With the beginning of line l.11, which is the last line shaping the content of the entire work, the author provides the reason for the composition of the aforementioned psalms and songs. The author notes in a direct and unambiguous manner: כּוֹל אֱלֹהִים דִּבֶּר בְּנְבוּאָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לוֹ מִלְפָּנֵי הָעֶלְיוֹן "All these he spoke in prophecy which had been given to him before the Most High." The noun נְבוּאָה used in the text, expressing this gift in connection with the person of David, is a novelty compared to other manuscripts belonging to the Qumran literature and the entire HB. The entire corpus of manuscripts from Qumran contains only one reference to such a function of David. This reference is to be found precisely in "David's Compositions."

The evolution of this thought will take place in the texts of the New Testament (Mark 12:36; Acts 1:16; 2:30). Acts 2:30 is a text that can be considered a breakthrough in this understanding of the person of David in the canonical books. For the first time in the biblical texts, his name will be associated directly with the noun προφήτης. The use of the syntagma seems to have influenced the interpretations of later Christian commentators who, like the author of the Acts of the Apostles, associate David directly with the prophetic function. The reference here is to a pseudo-epigraphic work entitled *Letter of Barnabas* written between 70 and 130 BC, St Jerome's commentary on the letter to the Galatians (*Hieronymi Presbyteri Commentariorum in Epistulam Pauli Apostoli ad Galatas*), where the reader can encounter the words: "De Dauid quoque, licet multi de Domino nostro aestiment prophetatum (quod nos etiam non negamus),"<sup>72</sup> which should be translated "As for David, many believe that he prophesied concerning the Lord (and we don't deny that he did)."

Such a belief was established in later centuries, the best proof of which is the work of St. Isidore of Seville entitled "De ortu et obitu patrum." The whole of this work is contained in 86 chapters, each of which is devoted to the characteristics of one of the characters of the Old or New Testament. In chapter 33, Isidore, beginning to characterise David,

<sup>71</sup> R.W. Klein, *2 Chronicles* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 2012) 126.

<sup>72</sup> G. Raspanti (ed.), *S. Hieronymi presbyteri opera. Pars I, 6: Opera exegetica, Comentarium in epistulam Pauli apostoli ad Galatas* (CCSL 77A; Turnhout: Brepols 2006) 196.

emphasises his origin and royal-prophetic function: “David, rex idem atque propheta, ortus de genere Juda, filius Jesse, natus in Bethlehem...” (33, 56),<sup>73</sup> “David, king and also a prophet, of the tribe of Judah, son of Jesse, born in Bethlehem...”

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## The Intermediate State: Revelation 6:9–11 and 20:4–6, 13 in the Light of Daniel 12:2, 13

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**ABSTRACT:** In the Book of Revelation, John sees souls under the altar, who then come to life (Rev 6:9–11; 20:4–6, 13). The passages describing the scene are often used as arguments to confirm the existence of a conscious state after death. This article criticises this dualistic interpretation and argues that Dan 12:2, 13 are verses of high importance for the correct interpretation of Rev 6:9–11 and 20:4–6, 13. The article discusses the six parallels between these texts and, based on the Old Testament background, shows that the word ψυχή in Rev 6:9–11 means “blood,” which represents the slain martyrs. The article argues that the teaching on the state of the dead in the Books of Daniel and Revelation is based on a holistic anthropological concept.

**KEYWORDS:** Rev 6:9–11, Dan 12:2, 13, intermediate state, resurrection, souls under altar, Book of Daniel, Book of Revelation

The shadow of death constantly hangs over people and the loss of relatives raises the question about the state of the dead. Most religions believe in an afterlife. Christianity is also dominated by the idea of the existence of life after death.<sup>1</sup> It is worth noting that the afterlife is a rather confusing and difficult topic.<sup>2</sup> On the one hand, the understanding of the state of the dead is based on the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.<sup>3</sup> On the other,

- 1 See B.D. Ehrman, *Heaven and Hell: A History of the Afterlife* (London: Oneworld 2021); N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: HarperOne 2008); P.M. Sprinkle, *Four Views on Hell* (Counterpoints: Bible and Theology; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2016).
- 2 See J. Moskala, “The Current Theological Debate Regarding Eternal Punishment in Hell and the Immortality of the Soul,” *AUSS* 53/1 (2015) 91–125; K. Corcoran – J.B. Green – S.L. Palmer, *In Search of the Soul: Four Views of the Mind-Body Problem* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2005).
- 3 See C. Cavarnos, *Immortality of the Soul: The Testimony of the Old and New Testaments, Orthodox Iconography and Hymnography, and the Works of Eastern Fathers and Other Writers of the Orthodox Church* (Belmont, MA: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies 1993); E. Alexander, *Proof of Heaven: A Neurosurgeon’s Journey into the Afterlife* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2012); J. Osei-Bonsu, “The Intermediate State in the New Testament,” *SJT* 44/2 (1991) 169–194.

theologians emphasise the unconscious state of the dead and the resurrection, which are prerequisites for eternal life.<sup>4</sup>

The theme of life after death is found in some biblical books, including the books of Daniel and Revelation, written in the apocalyptic genre. There is a close connection between them, and many of the symbols in the Book of Revelation are based on the Book of Daniel.<sup>5</sup> The two books contain important passages related to the topic of the state of the dead. Daniel 12:2, 13 compares death to sleep and is also one of the key resurrection texts in the Old Testament. In the Book of Revelation, the passage that stands out is Rev 6:9–11, which describes the souls under the altar who then come to life in Rev 20:4–6, 13.<sup>6</sup>

Only a few scholars have examined these passages considering the theme of the intermediate state. Regarding Dan 12:2, 13, commentators generally agree that the dead are represented as being in the earth in a state of sleep.<sup>7</sup> However, almost all studies focus more on the topic of resurrection. Regarding the Apocalypse, more progress has

4 See C.L. Wahlen (ed.), *What Are Human Beings that You Remember Them?* (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association 2015); D.P. Gushee, *Only Human: Christian Reflections on the Journey Toward Wholeness* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 2005); O. Cullmann, *Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead?: The Witness of the New Testament* (New York – London: Macmillan – Epworth Press 1958); S. Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny* (Berrien Springs, MI: Biblical Perspectives 1997).

5 G.V. Allen, “Scriptural Allusions in the Book of Revelation and the Contours of Textual Research 1900–2014: Retrospect and Prospects,” *CwBR* 14/3 (2016) 319–339, provides a comprehensive overview of research spanning from 1900 to 2014.

6 There is a strong connection between Rev 6:9–11 and Rev 20:4–6. In both passages, John presents a similar image of the souls of the martyrs, using almost identical terminology: “and I saw” (Καὶ... εἶδον; Καὶ εἶδον) | “the souls” (τὰς ψυχὰς) | a violent death (τῶν ἐσφαγμένων; τῶν πεπελεκισμένων) | “the word of God” (τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ) | “the witness” (δια τὴν μαρτυρίαν). S. Pattemore writes: “A comparison of the texts leaves little doubt that the beheaded souls here are to be identified with the slaughtered souls in 6:9–11, who cried for God to judge their enemies.” (S. Pattemore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse* [SNTSMS 128; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004] 108–109). Also see D.E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22* (WBC 52C; Dallas, TX: Word Books 1998) 1087–1088. John first describes the souls as victims (Rev 6:9), but in the end, they are presented as victors (Rev 20:4–6). A.E. Kurschner writes: “it should be understood that the fifth seal episode in 6:9–11 functions to anticipate the souls’ resurrection at the Parousia. This brings us to 20:4–6, which progresses the narrative to the climactic rewards of the fifth seal martyrs.” (A.E. Kurschner, *A Linguistic Approach to Revelation 19:11–20:6 and the Millennium Binding of Satan* [LBS 23; Leiden: Brill 2022] 172). Therefore, given the clear parallel and unity of these texts, it was decided to consider them together in this study. Moreover, these two passages from Revelation (Rev 6:9–11; 20:4–6, 13) correspond well with Dan 12:2, 13. In both apocalyptic books, the texts point to three elements: death as the beginning of the intermediate state, the intermediate state, and resurrection or eternal punishment as the end of the intermediate state.

7 See A.A. Stele, “The Relationship between Daniel 12:2 and Daniel 12:13,” *The Word: Searching, Living, Teaching* (ed. A.A. Stele) (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association 2015) I, 91–103; A.A. Stele, *Resurrection in Daniel 12 and Its Contribution to the Theology of the Book of Daniel* (Diss. Andrews University; Berrien Springs, MI 1996); A.E. Gardner, “The Way to Eternal Life in Dan 12:1e–2 or How to Reverse the Death Curse of Genesis 3,” *ABR* 40 (1992) 1–19; B.J. Alfrink, “L’idée de résurrection d’après Dan., Xii, 1,2,” *Bib* 40/2 (1959) 355–371; D.P. Bailey, “The Intertextual Relationship of Daniel 12:2 and Isaiah 26:19: Evidence from Qumran and the Greek Versions,” *TynBul* 51/2 (2000) 305–308; F. Raurell, “The Doxa of the Seer in Dan-Lxx 12, 13,” *The Book of Daniel in the Light of New Findings* (ed. A.S. van der Woude) (BETL 106; Leuven: Leuven University Press – Peeters 1993) 520–532; M.S. Moore, “Resurrection and Immortality: Two Motifs Navigating Confluent Theological Streams in the Old Testament (Dan 12:1–4),”

been made. David Seal focuses on prayer as a divine experience in the petition of the martyrs (Rev 6:9–11) and defines empathy and emotion. Although Seal writes briefly about the state of souls after death and seems to emphasise their existence in a conscious state in heaven, he does not develop this topic further.<sup>8</sup> Larry L. Lichtenwalter takes a different perspective and analyses Rev 6:9–11 and 20:4–6, 13 in the broader context of the anthropological imagery of the Book of Revelation, showing their connections to various theological ideas.<sup>9</sup> He illuminates the understanding of the term “soul” in the light of holistic Jewish anthropology as a “person” or “whole being.” Despite Lichtenwalter’s research, the most popular opinion among commentators on the Book of Revelation is that the word ψυχή (Rev 6:9) must be interpreted in the context of the Hellenistic idea of an immaterial, immortal essence.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it seems there is a contrast or contradiction between the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation: in the former, the dead are in the earth and asleep, while in the latter, the dead are in heaven and in a conscious state. Although scholars have analysed passages in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation separately, they have not examined them in conjunction. So, the questions that remain are – to what degree are the two apocalyptic books related to each other in the theme of the intermediate state? What are the similarities and differences? What aspects of the doctrine have been developed and become more complete in the New Testament book?

In this article, it is argued that Dan 12:2, 13 is important for the correct interpretation of Rev 6:9–11 and 20:4–6, 13. The Old Testament was the basis of John’s theological developments and Dan 12:2, 13 sets a correct perspective for understanding the state of the dead in the last book of the New Testament. In this article, it is proposed that, in light of the Old Testament background, the term ψυχή in Rev 6:9 should be translated as “blood” rather than as a reference to the idea of an immaterial, immortal essence. Therefore, the article aims to determine the state of the dead in Rev 6:9–11 and 20:4–6, 13 in the light of Dan 12:2, 13. The formulated goal requires carrying out a number of tasks: (1) to detect the Old Testament background of Rev 6:9–11; (2) to find parallels between Dan 12:2, 13 and Rev 6:9–11; 20:4–6, 13 and interpret them; (3) to define and analyse the key aspects of the state of the dead.

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*TZ* 39/1 (1983) 17–34. Also see C.A. Newsom – B.W. Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2014) 361–363.

8 See D. Seal, “Emotions, Empathy, and Engagement with God in Revelation 6:9–11,” *ExpTim* 129/3 (2017) 112–120.

9 See L.L. Lichtenwalter, “Souls Under the Altar: The ‘Soul’ and Related Anthropological Imagery in John’s Apocalypse,” *JATS* 26/1 (2015) 57–93.

10 See B.K. Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 2009) 132; B.M. Fanning, *Revelation* (ZECNT 20; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic 2020) 246; D.E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (WBC 52B; Dallas, TX: Word Books 1998) 403–404; G. Maier, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: Kapitel 1–11* (HTA 5; Witten: SCM R. Brockhaus 2012) 330–331; J. Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (ZBK 18; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1984) 83.

## 1. Six Parallels

The strong connection between the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation can be seen in the theme of the intermediate state. Between Dan 12:2, 13 and Rev 6:9–11; 20:4–6, 13 there are six parallels, which shall now be considered.

### 1.1. Intermediate State

The first parallel is an intermediate state. In both the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, the analysed passages describe the state of people between death and resurrection. In the Book of Daniel, the idea of death is conveyed through the metaphor of sleeping in the dust of the earth: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth” (Dan 12:2). Daniel was told of his death: “go your way till the end” (Dan 12:13). Death is the beginning of the intermediate state of man, ending with the resurrection. Dead “shall awake, some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan 12:2). Daniel also received assurances: “you... shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days” (Dan 12:13). Obviously, this is the idea of returning to life through resurrection. Thus, in Dan 12, there is certain information that sheds light on the author’s understanding of the intermediate state of man.

Moving on to the Book of Revelation, the scene in John’s vision (Rev 6:9–11) represents a moment in time in the intermediate state of man. Twice mention is made of death and that souls belong to dead martyrs (σφάζω, ἀποκτείνω – Rev 6:9, 11). Also, in the complementary text in Rev 20:4, John saw “the souls of those who had been beheaded (πέλεκίζω).” In addition, resurrected souls are contrasted with “The rest of the dead” (Rev 20:5), indicating that they themselves were dead before being revived.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, souls are in an intermediate state between death and resurrection.<sup>12</sup>

Although the context helps to understand that this refers to an intermediate state, the question remains, how much does the term “soul” itself reflect it? The word ψυχή is often interpreted by theologians in the context of the Hellenistic idea of an immaterial immortal essence.<sup>13</sup> However, here it is argued that the Old Testament background helps better understand the meaning of this word in this context. One should not lose sight of the deep symbolism of the Book of Revelation in general and of this vision in particular.<sup>14</sup>

11 G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC 21; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans – Carlisle: Paternoster 1999) 391.

12 C. Koester notes that “Revelation pictures the martyrs’ souls (psychai) between their deaths and final resurrection” (*Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* [AYBC 38A; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2014] 399).

13 Fanning 246, states that “Their ‘souls’ (τὰς ψυχὰς) or immaterial selves were under the altar, anticipating the resurrection and full redemption yet to come” (Fanning, *Revelation*, 246). Also see Blount, *Revelation*, 132; Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 403–404; Maier, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 330–331; Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 83.

14 K. Huber states: “Nowhere else among the New Testament writings do pictures, symbols, and metaphors appear as frequently and extensively” (“Imagery in the Book of Revelation,” *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation* [ed. C. Koester] [Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020] 53).

Accordingly, the cries of the souls under the altar are not necessarily a real, literal scene in heaven.<sup>15</sup>

The word  $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$  occurs seven times in the Book of Revelation (Rev 6:9; 8:9; 12:11; 16:3; 18:13, 14; 20:4) and means “life, a creature/person,” and “the seat of one’s desires.”<sup>16</sup> Not once does John describe the concept of  $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$  in the non-material Hellenistic dimension.<sup>17</sup> A number of important points, schematically depicted below (Fig. 1), indicate that the term  $\psi\upsilon\chi\acute{\eta}$  in Rev 6:9 means “blood,” which represents the slain martyrs.<sup>18</sup>

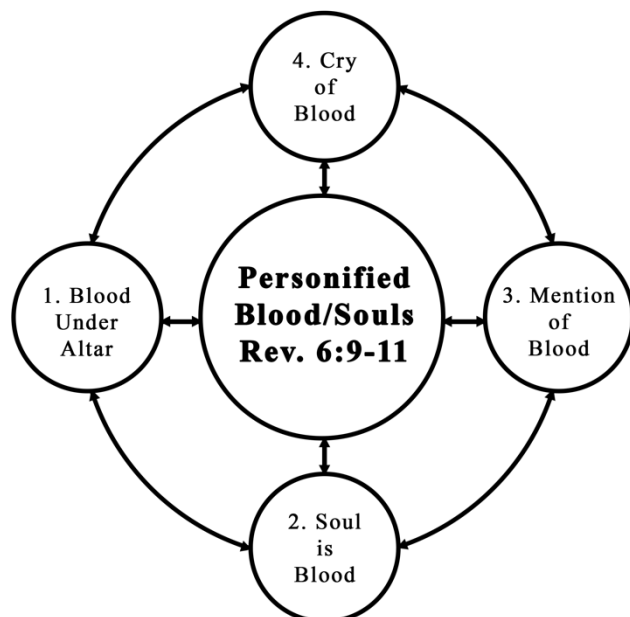


Fig. 1. The meaning of the soul as blood, own compilation

<sup>15</sup> F.H. Cortez writes: “This passage contains many images that should not be understood literally, just as the horse riders of the first four seals are not to be taken literally” (“Death and Hell in the New Testament,” in *What Are Human Beings That You Remember Them?* [ed. Clinton Wahlen] [Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association 2015] 195).

<sup>16</sup> See Lichtenwarter, “Souls Under the Altar,” 64–66.

<sup>17</sup> Koester notes: “Some people thought of the soul as an immortal element trapped in a perishable body, so death released the soul from its prison for life with God or the gods (Seneca the Younger, Ep. 102.22). Revelation, however, refrains from calling the soul immortal and emphasizes that creatures with ‘souls’ do die (Rev 8:9; 12:11; 16:3; 20:4). Death does not release the soul to immortality but leads to a period of waiting in the care of God” (*Revelation*, 399). Also, Pattemore writes: “It does not seem necessary to invoke an anthropology involving separable bodies and souls” (*The People of God in the Apocalypse*, 77).

<sup>18</sup> M. Barker states: “Since the soul was believed to be in the blood, the vision of the fifth seal was a vision of blood under the altar” (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Which God Gave to Him to Show to His Servants What Must Soon Take Place (Revelation I.I)* [Edinburgh: Clark 2000] 154).

First, this is indicated by their placement under the altar. The fact is that in the temple service in Israel, the blood of the sacrifices flowed and poured under the altar (Lev 4:7, 18, 25, 34; 5:9; 8:15; 9:9).<sup>19</sup> This “symbolism relies on Old Testament understandings about sacrifice.”<sup>20</sup> Second, the meaning of the word ψυχή as “life” is closely intertwined with the meaning “blood.”<sup>21</sup> The Book of Leviticus says the following about the soul: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev 17:11) and “For the life of every creature is its blood: its blood is its life... the life of every creature is its blood.”<sup>22</sup> S. Bacchiocchi notes that “The reason the soul – *nephesh* is equated with blood is presumably because the vitality of life – *nephesh* resides in the blood.”<sup>23</sup> This Old Testament definition of the soul as blood cannot be ignored when interpreting the symbolic picture used in the Apocalypse.<sup>24</sup>

Third, the passage itself mentions blood (Rev 6:10).<sup>25</sup> Blood demands from the divine Protector of life “divine judgment and vindication.”<sup>26</sup> Fourth, the cry of blood for vengeance is a familiar metaphor for biblical authors (Gen 4:10; Heb. 12:24; cf. Ezek 3:18, 20; 35:6; Matt 23:29–36),<sup>27</sup> and this theme can be traced in the Jewish tradition (*I En.* 47:1–4; 2 Macc 8:3; 2 Esd 15:8; *Sib. Or.* 3.311–13).<sup>28</sup> H. Wolff claims that the “power of the blood (in which life has gone out of the murdered man and which cries out for revenge) goes on working in the Old Testament since it finds a hearer in Yahweh.”<sup>29</sup> With the help of a literary device, blood is personified and acts as a living person. Blood has a “voice,” and can “cry,” and “speaks” to God (Gen 4:10; Heb. 12:24). It seems logical that personification does not allow one to interpret blood in the anthropological dimension as a real living substance that continues to live after death. The same can be said about the blood-soul in Rev 6:9–11.<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, “Revelation then, does not support the Platonic view of the immortality of

19 See A. Satake, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (KEK 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2008) 221; Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 391; C.S. Keener, *Revelation* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2000) 219; R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: With Introduction, Notes, and Indices, Also the Greek Text and English Translation* (ICC 44; Edinburgh: Clark 1920) I, 172.

20 P.S. Williamson, *Revelation* (CCSS; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2015) 128.

21 See Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?*, 42–43; G.B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John* (BNTC 19; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers 1966) 84.

22 The word “life” here is translated from the Hebrew word חַיִּים.

23 Bacchiocchi, *Immortality or Resurrection?*, 43.

24 R. Stefanović, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press 2009) 240.

25 E.F. Lupieri writes: “The term ‘soul’ (ψυχή) probably means ‘life’ (see 8:9; 16:3), which is a principle residing in the blood; the context explicitly recalls that their blood has been shed” (*A Commentary on the Apocalypse of John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2006] 145).

26 J.P. Heil, “The Fifth Seal (Rev 6,9–11) as a Key to the Book of Revelation,” *Bib* 74/2 (1993) 225.

27 W.J. Harrington, *Revelation* (SP 16; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press 1993) 93.

28 See S.S. Smalley, *The Revelation to John: A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2012) 160; Williamson, *Revelation*, 129. Aune states that “Yahweh is depicted as the *ḏorēš dāmīm*, ‘avenger of blood’ (Ps 9:13; 72:14), i.e., the one who sees that justice is done to those who murder his people (Deut 32:43; 2 Kgs 9:7; Ps 9:12; 79:10)” (cf. Aune, *Revelation* 6–16, 408).

29 H.W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress 1974) 61.

30 J.N. Musvosvi, *Vengeance in the Apocalypse* (AUSDD 17; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press 1993) 232.



the soul. It does not describe the soul as a separable and intangible entity of a person.”<sup>31</sup> So, the term “soul” in Rev 6:9–11 in the meaning of “blood” is indeed another marker indicating an intermediate state, since blood after death acquires the dimension of a personification of a once living person, crying out for revenge. There is harmony between the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation regarding the intermediate state of man. It comes after death and ends with resurrection.

## 1.2. Earth as the Place of the Dead

The second parallel is the location of the dead in the earth.<sup>32</sup> According to the text of the Book of Daniel, the dead are in “the dust of the earth” (אֶדְמַת עֶפֶר, Dan 12:2). This is a metaphor for the grave.<sup>33</sup> In the text, the dead are presented as whole persons in the ground: “many of those who”;<sup>34</sup> “some... others” (Dan 12:2). There is no separation between certain parts of human nature. It is not said that the bodies of people or any part is in the ground. The whole person in their all dimensions goes into the ground. It contains an allusion to Gen 3:19, which also includes a personal reference to Adam: “till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”<sup>35</sup> A living soul (Gen 2:7) becomes a dead soul because of sin (Gen 3:19).<sup>36</sup> Dead people return to “dust,” their place of residence (Job 7:21; 10:9; 21:26; 34:15; Ps 22:16; 104:29; Eccles 3:20; 12:7; Isa 26:19).

The same picture can be seen in the last book of the New Testament. According to the Book of Revelation, the dead are in the depths of the earth.<sup>37</sup> First the righteous are

31 Lichtenwalter, “Souls Under the Altar,” 67; T. Longman III comments “To think of the souls of these saints as disembodied beings is to ignore the immediate context and read the passage in the light of Neo-Platonic philosophy with its body-soul dichotomy. The Old Testament does not imagine at any point that God’s human creatures exist without a body. Christian theology should speak not of the immortality of the soul but of the resurrection of the body” (*Revelation Through Old Testament Eyes* [TOTE; Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic 2022] 108–109).

32 This parallel is noted: Barker, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 365; Koester, *Revelation*, 780.

33 J.P. Tanner writes that “the dust of the earth” is “a figurative expression for the grave” (*Daniel* [EEC; Bellingham: Lexham Press 2021] 736–737). L.F. Hartman and A.A. Di Lella admit: “the grave is meant as well as Sheol, the underworld abode of the dead; cf. Job 7:21; 17:16” (*The Book of Daniel* [AB 23; New York: Doubleday 1978] 307). P.R. Davies describes the phrase thus: “a poetic expression for the grave” (“Daniel,” *The Oxford Bible Commentary* [eds. J. Barton – J. Muddiman] [Oxford: Oxford University Press 2001] 570). For the concept of Sheol in the Old Testament, see E. Galeniaks, *The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term Sheol in the Torah, Prophets, and Writings* (Berrien Springs, MI: ATS Publications 2005).

34 A.E. Steinmann emphasises that it is about personalities: “The adjective פָּשָׁי, ‘asleep, sleeping,’ is used here as a substantive, ‘sleeping persons’” (*Daniel* [ConcC; Saint Louis, MO: Concordia 2008] 556).

35 Gardner states that text Dan 12:2 has “clear reference to Genesis 3” (“The Way to Eternal Life in Dan 12:1e–2,” 5). Z. Stefanovic comments: “Although in a somewhat different form, the two nouns ‘earth’ and ‘dust’ occur also in the stories of the creation of Adam (Gen 2:7) and of the Fall (Gen 3:19)” (*Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* [Nampa, ID: Review and Herald Publishing Association 2007] 436).

36 G.J. Wenham writes: “implicitly this ‘living creature’ is being contrasted with a dead one, e.g., Num 5:2; 6:6, 11” (*Genesis 1–15*, 2 vols. [WBC; Waco, TX: Word Books 1987] I, 60).

37 Barker states that “The earth and the treasures are not mentioned in 20:11–15 as giving up their dead, but this is implied” (*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 366).

raised (Rev 20:4), and then the dead are raised to life from the graves, metaphorically represented as the sea, Death and Hades (Rev 20:12–13).<sup>38</sup> Synonymous designations of the places of stay of the dead indicate the full and comprehensive resurrection.<sup>39</sup> The underworld of the dead returns its “prisoners,” and this idea is also present in the Jewish tradition.<sup>40</sup> The passage, *1 En.* 51:1 says: “And in those days the earth will return that which has been entrusted to it, and Sheol will return that which has been entrusted to it, that which it has received, and destruction [Abaddon] will return what it owes.” Similarly, *4 Ezra* 7:32 says: “And the earth shall give back those who sleep in it, and the dust those who dwell silently in it, and the chambers shall give back the souls which have been committed to them.” The souls are also connected to the earth because they are under the altar. This refers to an altar for sacrifice, located outside the sanctuary and symbolising the earth in the cosmology of the Apocalypse.<sup>41</sup> Accordingly, “Rev 6,9–11, using cultic imagery, describes the lives of the martyrs under the earth where their blood had been spilled.”<sup>42</sup> The cry of blood comes from the earth (Gen 4:10; cf. *1 En.* 47:1) because the blood of the holy martyrs (Rev 6:9–11) was shed on the earth (Rev 18:24; 19:2). So, in both biblical apocalyptic books, the abode of the dead is the earth, i.e., grave.

### 1.3. Rest/Sleep

The third parallel is the staying of the dead in a state of sleep and rest.<sup>43</sup> All people “who sleep” (מִישָׁנִי, Dan 12:2) in the grave are resting. Sleep and lying down are sometimes metaphors for death in the Old Testament (1 Kings 1:21; 2 Kings 4:31; 13:21; Job 3:13; 7:21; 14:12; Ps 13:3; Isa 26:19; Jer 51:39, 57; Nah 3:18). J. Goldingay states “The OT’s standard way of envisaging dying and coming back to life is by speaking of lying down and sleeping, then of waking and getting up.”<sup>44</sup> The following words are used in the Hebrew Bible: verb שָׁכַב “lie down, rest, sleep”; verb יָשַׁן “sleep, put to sleep”; adjective יָשָׁן “sleeping” (also used in Dan 12:2). The Septuagint translates: “many of those who sleep” (καὶ πολλοὶ τῶν

38 C. Rotz, *Revelation: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (NBBC; Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press 2012) 288–289. For death and hell in the Bible, see Galenicks, *The Nature, Function, and Purpose of the Term Sheol*; F.H. Cortez, “Death and Future Hope in the Hebrew Bible,” *What Are Human Beings That You Remember Them?* (ed. C. Wahlen) (Silver Spring, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association 2015).

39 L.L. Morris, *Revelation* (TNTC 20; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2009) 230.

40 *1 En.* 51:1; *4 Ezra* 7:32; *Ps-Philo* 3:10; 33:3; *2 Bar* 21:23; 42:8; 50:2; *Apoc. Pet.* 4:3–4; 10–12; Apocryphal quotation in Tertullian, *De Res.* 32.1; *Midrash on Psalms* 1:20; *Midrash Rabbah on Canticles* 2:1:2; *Pirqe de R. Eliezer* 34; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21:4; *b. Sanh.* 92a; Keener, *Revelation*, 469. Also see R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: Clark 1998) 56–70; R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (NovTSup 93; Leiden: Brill 1998) 269–289.

41 C.P. Sanchez writes: “One could envision the cosmos as a kind of temple complex; heaven acts as the sanctuary which contains the ark of the covenant (11,19) and a golden altar of incense (8,3–5), and the earth acts as the outer court which holds the altar of burnt offering (6,9–11; 16,7)” (“Blood Purification and the Temple in Revelation,” *ZNW* 114/2 [2023] 251).

42 Sanchez, “Blood Purification,” 251.

43 Steinmann, *Daniel*, 567.

44 J. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas, TX: Word Books 1989) 307.

καθεδόντων, Dan 12:2). The following words are used in the Greek text: verb ὑπνώω “put to sleep”; verb καθεύδω “lie down to sleep, sleep” (Dan 12:2).

Another dimension of the death metaphor is rest.<sup>45</sup> Daniel was told that he would die<sup>46</sup> and must rest, waiting for his reward at the end of time: “you shall rest” (קחך, Dan 12:13). The Greek text uses the word ἀναπαύω “to rest, to cause to rest” (Dan 12:13). The metaphor of rest fits well with the metaphor of sleep because in both cases activity ceases. In the Old Testament, the understanding of death is familiar as gaining peace, tranquillity and rest from the hardships of life (Job 3:17; Isa 57:2).<sup>47</sup>

Turning to the Book of Revelation, one can find a similar picture. The Lord asks the martyrs to wait, and they are told to “rest” for a while (ἀναπαύσονται, Rev 6:11). The book’s author uses the verb ἀναπαύω which, along with other words ἀνάπαυσις, καταπαύω and κατάπαυσις, was used to refer to the metaphor of death.<sup>48</sup> John may have had this connotation in mind, as the verb ἀναπαύω refers to Christians killed by violence (τῶν ἐσφαγμένων, Rev 6:9). This conclusion is supported by the parallel in Rev 14:13.<sup>49</sup> The text presents a contrast: sinners have no rest (ἀνάπαυσις, Rev 14:11), whereas the righteous find it (ἀναπαύω, Rev 14:13). In the first case, it refers to the lack of peace of mind resulting from separation from God (cf. ἀναπαύω, Isa 57:20–21), while in the second case, rest signifies the absence of hardship and affliction.<sup>50</sup> John writes that the saints “may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them” ἀναπαύσονται ἐκ τῶν κόπων αὐτῶν, τὰ γὰρ ἔργα αὐτῶν ἀκολουθεῖ μετ’ αὐτῶν, Rev 14:13). Work and deeds signify both the challenges and persistent Christian service (Rev 2:2, 19; 3:15), which are no longer relevant for the dead.<sup>51</sup> It should be noted that, as in Rev 6:11, the word ἀναπαύω appears in Rev 14:13 in the context of the actual death of believers.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, it is natural to assume that the rest of the saints after death (Rev 14:13) also includes the idea of sleep as a metaphor for death. Dead Christians (Rev 6:11; 14:13) have fallen asleep in death, removed from the deeds

<sup>45</sup> E. Haag, *Daniel* (EB 30; Würzburg: Echter Verlag 1993) 83.

<sup>46</sup> J.M. Sprinkle comments that “The words ‘to the end’ imply Daniel’s death. The Old Greek and Theodotion lack ‘to the end.’ But even without it the phrase ‘you will rest’ implies Daniel’s death” (*Daniel* [EBTC; Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press 2020] 340).

<sup>47</sup> Tanner, *Daniel*, 769.

<sup>48</sup> See Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, 411.

<sup>49</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 395. Cf. Cortez states: “That the martyrs are not in a bodiless intermediate state but are resting in their graves is evident from the only other use of anapaūō in Revelation: of the dead who die in the Lord – they rest (anapaūō) from their labors (Rev 14:13)” (“Death and Hell in the New Testament,” 196).

<sup>50</sup> Smalley, *The Revelation to John*, 370.

<sup>51</sup> See P. Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001) 447.

<sup>52</sup> The word “dead” (οἱ νεκροί, Rev 14:13) in this context does not refer to the spiritually dead but to actual deceased Christians (“those who die,” οἱ... ἀποθνήσκοντες, Rev 14:13). In the New Testament, spiritual death is attributed to sinners or the past sinful life of repentant Christians (Eph 2:1–2; Col. 2:13). In Rev 14:13, John writes about the righteous: 1) These include one of the beatitudes (μακάριοι οἱ νεκροί), which in Revelation applies exclusively to the saints; 2) The phrase “in the Lord” (ἐν κυρίῳ) signifies belonging to Jesus (Eph 1:1; Col 3:18–20); and 3) The deeds of the deceased are portrayed positively. Therefore, “rest” refers to the intermediate state, which will end in resurrection.

of this world, and are in a state of rest, awaiting awakening at the second coming of Jesus Christ (Rev 20:4, 5; cf. 1 Thes. 4:14).

So, the authors of the two books of Daniel and Revelation equally likened death to sleep. The comparison of death with sleep was based on certain similarities between these phenomena. Thomas H. Macalpine points to some of them: inactivity and posture.<sup>53</sup> However, on the other hand, the sleep metaphor has its limits and limitations. The purpose of poetic comparison is not to describe the ontological nature of death.<sup>54</sup> First of all, this poetic comparison emphasises the possibility of awakening, that is, a return to life.<sup>55</sup> However, the repeated evidence of other Old Testament texts that after death a person ceases to experience emotions and their mental activity stops indicates an unconscious existence after death (Ps 6:5; 88:10,11; 115:17; 146:4; Eccles 9:5,6,10; Isa 38:18). Only in this context can it be argued that a person falls asleep in the sleep of death, disconnects from reality, and enters into rest from any physical/mental activity.

#### 1.4. Time of the End

The fourth parallel is the eschatological message. Both passages indicate the end time. The context of Dan 12:3, 13 contains the description of the most difficult period of trial – “a time of trouble” (Dan 12:1), which is a continuation of the events described in Dan 11:40–45.<sup>56</sup> Dan 11:40 begins with the words “At the time of the end” which refer to the end events.<sup>57</sup> Dan 12:1 repeats the phrase “at that time” twice and mentions the salvation of everyone whose name is written in the book. The author of the book emphasises the association of the book of life with the resurrection, which indicates the final judgment at the end of earthly history (Rev 20:13).<sup>58</sup> The idea of the resurrection in Dan 12:2, 13 confirms that it refers to the end of the age.<sup>59</sup> Z. Stefanovic states that “the time of the end is closely related to the concept of God’s judgment during which God will punish the unrepentant world.”<sup>60</sup> Daniel himself is promised a reward and a resurrection that will take place “at the end of the days” (Dan 12:13). All of this points to the time of the establishment of

53 T.H. Macalpine, *Sleep, Divine and Human in the Old Testament* (JSOTSup 38; Sheffield: JSOT 1987) 149.

54 W. Paroschi, “Death as Sleep: The (Mis)Use of a Biblical Metaphor,” *JATS* 28/1 (2017) 40–41.

55 J.G. Baldwin states: “The reason for using ‘sleep’ here as a metaphor for ‘die’ is that sleep is a temporary state from which we normally awake, and so the reader is prepared for the thought of resurrection” (*Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* [TOTC; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity 1978] 204).

56 Goldingay writes: “At that time...: the phrase again indicates continuity with what precedes... The ‘time of trouble’ is thus a resumptive summary reference to the troubles of 11:40–45” (*Daniel*, 305–306).

57 D. Ford, *Daniel* (Anvil Biblical Studies; Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association 1978) 280. Also see G. Pfandl, “Daniel’s ‘Time of the End,’” *JATS* 7/1 (1996) 141–158.

58 J.J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress 1993) 391.

59 C. Elledge, *Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism, 200 BCE–CE 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2017) 21–22.

60 Stefanovic, *Daniel*, 435.

the eternal kingdom of God.<sup>61</sup> A. Steinmann comments that this phrase “refers to the end of world history at the return of Christ.”<sup>62</sup>

The connection of Dan 12:2 with Isa 66:24 confirms this idea.<sup>63</sup> The text of the Book of Daniel says that sinners will receive “shame and everlasting contempt” (לְחַרְפוֹת לְדָרָאוֹן וְעוֹלָם, Dan 12:2). The Septuagint has an addition: “to reproach, to dispersion and shame everlasting” (οἱ δὲ εἰς ὀνειδισμὸν, οἱ δὲ εἰς διασπορὰν καὶ αἰσχύνην αἰώνιον, Dan 12:2). Here is described in various words the shameful fate of God’s enemies and “the motif of the exposure of the wicked has a this-worldly connotation.”<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Isa 66:24 describes events in the new reality – the new heavens and the new earth (Isa 66:22).<sup>65</sup> The righteous will worship God in the New Jerusalem, and the sinners will lie dead in the valley of Hinnom and “they shall be a contempt to all flesh” (וְהָיוּ דְרָאוֹן לְכָל בִּשְׂרָר, Isa 66:24).<sup>66</sup>

In Rev 6:9–11 there is an allusion to the Day of the Lord – God’s judgment. Souls ask, “How long, O Master, holy and true, you not judge and avenge” (ἕως πότε, ὁ δεσπότης ὁ ἅγιος καὶ ἀληθινός, οὐ κρίνεις καὶ ἐκδικεῖς, Rev 6:10). They expect an eschatological restoration of justice. The martyrs ask for judgment (κρίνω). Although souls have to wait for a while (Rev 6:11), it will happen at the end of sinful earthly history.<sup>67</sup> John shows the final realisation of the promise to souls in Rev 20.<sup>68</sup> The Lord will sit on the throne as Judge and make judgment (κρίμα, Rev 20:4). He will judge everyone according to their deeds (κρίνω, Rev 20:12–13) and the righteous and sinners will receive their reward – resurrection/eternal life and second death/eternal destruction. So, both Daniel and John, describing the final fate of man, direct the reader’s gaze to the future, to the end time.

61 M. Delcor, *Le Livre de Daniel* (SB 296; Paris: Gabalda 1971) 259.

62 Steinmann, *Daniel*, 567.

63 Apart from the lexical parallel – the word דְרָאוֹן, abhorrence, occurs only twice in the Old Testament (Isa 66:24; Dan 12:2), there are also similar theological ideas. See G.B. Lester, *Daniel Evokes Isaiah: Allusive Characterization of Foreign Rule in the Hebrew-Aramaic Book of Daniel* (LHBOTS 606; London: Bloomsbury – Clark 2015) 100–101.

64 Goldingay, *Daniel*, 307–308.

65 S. Wells and G. Sumner comment that “it is also an account of a new creation tied closely to the first” (*Esther & Daniel* [BTCB; Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press 2013] 213).

66 Goldingay states: “its picture of people in Jerusalem looking at the corpses of the wicked decomposing in the Valley of Hinnom suggests a metaphor for a feature even of the new Jerusalem” (*Daniel*, 307–308). In addition, the words about the worm that does not die, and the unquenchable fire are applied in the New Testament to the final fate of sinners in eternal fire Mark 9:43–50. For the use of Isa 66:24 in teaching about the fate of the wicked in the Synoptic Gospels, see K. Papaioannou, *The Geography of Hell in the Teaching of Jesus: Gehenna, Hades, the Abyss, the Outer Darkness Where There Is Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock 2013).

67 J.C. Thomas – F.D. Macchia, *Revelation* (THNTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 2016) 352–353; Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 84.

68 Maier, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: Kapitel 1–11*, 330; cf. J. Frey, “Das Apokalyptische Millennium. Zu Herkunft, Sinn Und Wirkung Der Millenniumsvorstellung in Offenbarung 20, 4–6,” *Millennium. Deutungen Zum Christlichen Mythos Der Jahrtausendwende* (Gütersloh: Kaiser 1999) 24–25, 49.

### 1.5. The Promise of Salvation

The fifth parallel is the theme of the eternal destiny of man. In both passages, the characters are given the assurance and guarantee of eternal life. The righteous will receive “everlasting life” (Dan 12:2). This expression is unique throughout the Old Testament, although the concept itself occurs in some passages (Ps 21:4; 28:9; 37:18, 27–28; 41:13; 133:13; Prov 10:25, 30).<sup>69</sup> The author of the Book of Daniel “is the first Old Testament writer to affirm unambiguously the truth of eternal life after death.”<sup>70</sup> Gabriel personally said the following words to Daniel: “you... shall stand in your allotted place” (ותעמד לגרלך) (Dan 12:13). Daniel received the assurance that death is not the final end.<sup>71</sup> The word גורל “lot” often means casting lots, or drawing lots, as a result of which a person receives something. In the history of God’s people, the Israelites inherited the land based on a lottery (for example Josh 18:10). In this context, the word גורל can refer to a new earth, an eternal inheritance. In other cases (Jer 13:25; Ps 125:3), as well as in Qumran literature (1QS 3,24; 11QMelch 1,8), the word גורל signifies a person’s destiny.<sup>72</sup> Daniel inherits the reward, inheritance and his destiny is eternal life among the righteous.<sup>73</sup>

Theodotion’s translation uses κλήρος “lot, portion,” while the Septuagint uses another word: “you will rise in the glory” (καὶ ἀναστήσῃ εἰς τὴν δόξαν, Dan 12:13). The use of δόξα in Dan 12:13 brings to mind a connection with Isa 26:19, in which context Isa 26:10 says that sinners will not see “the glory of the Lord” (τὴν δόξαν κυρίου).<sup>74</sup> The Greek word δόξα “glory” “later forms part of the eschatological anthropology of Wisdom and of the apocalyptic texts of the intertestamental literature which speak of the ‘glory of Adam’ reserved for the righteous.”<sup>75</sup> Glory in Dan 12:13 echoes Dan 12:3: “And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” Thus, the word δόξα emphasises the idea of restoration and eternal life in the presence of God’s glory. F. Raurell states “In addition to the idea of resurrection it seems as if it wishes to hint at the raising up of the seer in a shining eschatological dignity.”<sup>76</sup> Some

69 Steinmann, *Daniel*, 561.

70 Hartman – Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 308.

71 J.C. Lebram, *Das Buch Daniel* (ZBK 23; Zürich: Theologischer Verlag 1984) 137.

72 Tanner, *Daniel*, 769.

73 Collins notes that “Daniel’s destiny is clearly with that of the *maskilim*, who rise to eternal life” (*Daniel*, 402). Also see D. Bauer, *Das Buch Daniel* (NSKAT 22; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk 1996) 214.

74 F. Raurell, “LXX–Is 26: La ‘Doxa’ com a participació en la vida escatològica,” *RCT* 7/1–2 (1982) 75–77; Raurell concludes: “Therefore, when Dan LXX 12,13 links the eschatological destiny of the seer with δόξα, it moves within semantic ground which had been worked previously by other Greek translators of the O.T.” (“The Doxa of the Seer in Dan-LXX 12, 13” 531).

75 Raurell, “The Doxa of the Seer in Dan-LXX 12, 13,” 530; F. Raurell believes that in Wisdom of Solomon, the author described the salvation of the people of God as glory. In particular, he interprets the phrase “eternal glory” (δόξαν αἰώνιον, Wis. 10:14) in an eschatological sense (“The Religious Meaning of δόξα in the Book of Wisdom,” *La Sagesse de l’Ancien Testament* [ed. M. Gilbert] [Leuven: Leuven University Press 1990] 369). Raurell also cites passages from Qumran, which trace the idea that the glory of Adam, lost due to sin, will be restored and bestowed on the righteous (1QS 4:7–8; 1QH 17:15; CD 3:20) (“The Doxa of the Seer in Dan-LXX 12, 13,” 532).

76 Raurell, “The Doxa of the Seer in Dan-LXX 12, 13,” 529.

scholars draw a parallel with the words of the Apostle Paul: “the inheritance of the saints in light” (τοῦ κλήρου τῶν ἁγίων ἐν τῷ φωτί, Col. 1:12).<sup>77</sup>

In the vision (Rev 6:9–11), the eyes of Christians are full of hope and looking to the future.<sup>78</sup> In earthly life, they did not receive merit but suffered. However, salvation awaits believers at the end of time (Rev 20:4–6). The assurances and promises of God are depicted in symbolic language: “they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer” (καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτοῖς ἐκάστω στολή λευκή καὶ ἐρρέθη αὐτοῖς ἵνα ἀναπαύσονται ἔτι χρόνον μικρόν, Rev 6:11). In the symbolism of the Apocalypse, clothes reflect the spiritual state of a person (Rev 3:18; 16:15; 19:8).<sup>79</sup> White clothes are a symbol of honour, purity, and victory (Rev 3:4, 18; 7:13–14; 16:15; 19:14).<sup>80</sup> It means salvation and belonging to a new, sinless world.<sup>81</sup> The time will come when souls will come to life and reign with Jesus Christ (Rev 20:4). So, in two biblical apocalyptic books, a strong motivation for faithfulness to God is presented – eternal life, promised to all the righteous.

#### 1.6. The Resurrection of the Righteous and the Resurrection of Sinners

The sixth parallel is the general resurrection of the saints and the wicked. Both books contain passages that describe the final resurrection of the dead. Most scholars believe that the text of Dan 12:2 contains a clear teaching of the individual bodily resurrection.<sup>82</sup> The text says that “many” (רַבִּים, Dan 12:2)<sup>83</sup> of those in the earth will be brought back to life. At first glance, it may seem that it is a reference to a limited resurrection of a certain group of people.<sup>84</sup> However, the word רב (in LXX πολὺς) can also mean “all” in the inclu-

77 Steinmann, in *Daniel*, 577; Collins, *Daniel*, 402, argues that the text of Col. 1:12 is “the most pertinent parallel.”

78 Seal, “Emotions, Empathy, and Engagement with God,” 120.

79 See J.L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John’s Apocalypse* (BibInt 32; Leiden: Brill 1988) 41; Pattemore, *The People of God in the Apocalypse*, 87.

80 Roloff states that “White is the color of eschatological joy, but also of impeccable purity” (*Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 84). See also Koester, *Revelation*, 314.

81 See H. Kraft, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (HNT 16a; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1974) 119; M.G. Reddish, *Revelation* (SHBC 30; Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing 2001) 132.

82 Collins states that “there is virtually unanimous agreement among modern scholars that Daniel is referring to the actual resurrection of individuals from the dead, because of the explicit language of everlasting life” (*Daniel*, 391–392).

83 In the Greek text translated as πολλοὶ many.

84 See A. Lacocque, *Le livre de Daniel* (CAT 15b; Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé 1976) 178; N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God 3; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press 2003) III, 110; O. Plöger, *Das Buch Daniel* KAT 18; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn 1965) 171; R. Martin-Achard, “L’espérance des croyants face à la mort selon Esaïe 65, 16c–25 et selon Daniel 12, 1–4,” *RHPR* 59/3 (1979) 447; R. Martin-Achard, *From Death to Life: A Study of the Development of the Doctrine of the Resurrection in the Old Testament* (Edinburg: Oliver and Boyd 1960) 144. Some commentators speak of a unique resurrection of a group of the righteous and a group of special sinners: Stele, “Resurrection in Daniel 12”; Stele, “The Relationship between Daniel 12:2 and Daniel 12:13,” I, 91–103; F.D. Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association 1955) IV, 878; W.H. Shea, *Daniel 7–12* (ed. G.R. Knight) (The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier; Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1996) 215–216.

sive sense.”<sup>85</sup> In many biblical texts, the Hebrew word כָּל and the Greek word πᾶς are used to mean absolutely everyone.<sup>86</sup> Given the eschatological context, when all people will receive their final destiny, the word “many” here is used “simply to signify a large number, with no upper limit on how large that number is.”<sup>87</sup>

Resurrection is presented by the author as the awakening from sleep of those who are in the earth. The dead “shall awake” (קִיּוּצוֹ, Dan 12:2) for eternal reward or punishment. Daniel was promised: “you shall stand” (וַתֵּעַמַּד, Dan 12:13). Waking up from sleep and getting up is a metaphor for resurrection.<sup>88</sup> Theologians see here a parallel with Isa 26:19. D. Bailey claims that “The language of ‘awakening’ from the sleep of death in Daniel 12:2 is apparently borrowed directly from Isaiah 26:19.”<sup>89</sup> Isaiah in this text writes: “Awake and sing, you dwellers in the dust” (הִקִּיּוּצוֹ וְרִנְנוּ שְׁכֵנֵי עָפָר, Isa 26:19). The hope of resurrection in the Book of Daniel inspired confidence that faithfulness to God would lead to eternal life, while rebellion and disobedience – to eternal shame.<sup>90</sup> One of the features of Dan 12:2 is that this is the only text in the Old Testament that simultaneously speaks of the awakening from the sleep of death, of both faithful and unbelievers.<sup>91</sup> There is an obvious division in the text between the two groups of resurrected people. One category of the resurrected is the righteous, and the second category is the sinners.<sup>92</sup>

The passage, Rev 20 also describes the resurrection at the end of time,<sup>93</sup> but it offers a more developed and detailed explanation.<sup>94</sup> John describes a resurrection involving the righteous, depicted as souls (Rev 20:4–6).<sup>95</sup> The text says the souls “came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” (ἐζήσαν καὶ ἐβασίλευσαν μετὰ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χίλια

85 G.F. Hasel, “Resurrection in the Theology of Old Testament Apocalyptic,” *BZAW* 92/2 (1980) 278.

86 See Exod 23:2; Deut 7:1; 1 Kgs 18:25; Ps 71:7; 109:30; Job 23:14; Prov 10:21; 19:6; Isa 2:2–3; 52:14–15; 53:11–14; Mark 14:24; Rom 5:15; Stefanovic notes that “The plural form of the Hebrew noun rabbim, ‘many,’ is also used three times in the preceding chapter (vv. 14, 33, and 39). The same word is also used in Daniel 9:27, where the Messiah makes a strong covenant with rabbim, ‘many’” (*Daniel*, 436).

87 Steinmann, *Daniel*, 560.

88 M.L. Chase, “‘From Dust You Shall Arise’: Resurrection Hope in the Old Testament,” *SBJT* 18/4 (2014) 24.

89 Bailey, “The Intertextual Relationship of Daniel 12:2 and Isaiah 26:19,” 305–308.

90 P.R. House writes: “Awaiting Resurrection Becomes Daniel’s Hope and Comfort in 12:1–13” (*Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* [TOTC 23; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic 2018] 184).

91 Moore comments: “Even stronger retribitional promises are delivered by the Apocalypticist in Dan 12.2 as he not only posits a restoration of the righteous dead to life (as in Ps 49 and 73), but also describes the ‘eternal’ fate of the wicked after their resurrection (unlike Ps 49 and 73)” (“Resurrection and Immortality,” 30).

92 Alfrink, “L’idée de résurrection d’après Dan., XII, 1,2,” 362–363; T. Longman III states: “Of course, we must not develop a whole doctrine of the afterlife from this one verse. But we can confidently affirm that it celebrates the vindication that will come both in the reward for which the righteous are destined and in the punishment for which the wicked by which we are to understand those who have worked against the purposes and people of God are reserved” (*Daniel* [NIVAC; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2002] 284).

93 Regarding the opposite approach to Rev 20 – Amillennialism, see Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 973–1038. K. Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books 2013).

94 Jesus Christ made a distinction between the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of sinners (John 5:29).

95 Here the souls represent all the saved, see Roloff, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 193.



ἔτη, Rev 20:4), and this revival is called “the first resurrection” (τὰ χίλια ἔτη, Rev 20:5). The context suggests that John was referring to the physical final resurrection expected to take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ.<sup>96</sup> This is indicated by the word ζῶω (“came to life,” ἐζήσαν, Rev 20:4), which John elsewhere uses for bodily resurrection (Rev 1:18; 2:8).<sup>97</sup> Moreover, there is a contrast between souls who “came to life” (ἐζήσαν, Rev 20:4) and sinners who “did not come to life” (οὐκ ἐζήσαν, Rev 20:5).<sup>98</sup> The second resurrection occurs after the millennium and sinners come to life in it (Rev 20:5, 8, 12–14). J.W. Mealy writes that “there will be a ‘second’ resurrection at the end of the thousand years, in which the followers of the beast and the rest of (unsaved) humankind take part.”<sup>99</sup> Since the resurrection of sinners for punishment by the second death is a physical resurrection (Rev 20:5, 9, 14), the resurrection of the righteous is also not spiritual but literal and physical.<sup>100</sup> Also, the word ἀνάστασις is found in the Apocalypse only in Rev 20 and is naturally understood as a real resurrection.<sup>101</sup>

These and other points indicate that John in Rev 20 writes about two general resurrections at the end of time: the first of which will take place at the second coming of Jesus and is intended for the righteous, while the second will occur after the thousand-year period and is intended for sinners.<sup>102</sup> The resurrection for the two groups of people continues the tradition set out in Dan 12:2, but in the Apocalypse, it is placed in temporal sequence and separated by a thousand years.<sup>103</sup> As in the Book of Daniel, so in the Book of Revelation, the general resurrection at the end of time marks the end of the intermediate state of man. Thus, Daniel and John agreed on the fate of the righteous and sinners. John, however, developed the concept of two resurrections further.

96 Koester writes: “The context is resurrection to life after bodily death (i.e., beheading in Rev 20:4). It cannot be equated with the newness of life that comes through baptism or faith” (*Revelation*, 776). Also see T.R. Schreiner, *Revelation* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2023) 688.

97 Kurschner writes: “However, in John’s discourse he does not use ζῶω to refer to conversion or to the soul’s translation to heaven. Instead, there is precedent in his discourse to use it for physical resurrection, for example, Jesus’s resurrection (1:18; 2:8) and the beast’s resurrection (13:14)” (*A Linguistic Approach to Revelation 19:11–20:6*, 169). Koester writes: “Since Jesus’ resurrection brought him to complete life, not merely to an intermediate state of existence, the same is true of the faithful. The righteous experience resurrection ‘first,’ before others do, and there is no suggestion that they undergo another type of resurrection when the rest are brought to life later (20:5, 12–13)” (*Revelation*, 775).

98 E. Mueller writes: “Rev 20:5, in its immediate context, is an anticipatory description of the fate of the dead that is spelled out in more detail in Rev 20:11–15” (“Microstructural Analysis of Revelation 20,” *AUSS* 37/2 [1999] 243).

99 J.W. Mealy, *After the Thousand Years: Resurrection and Judgement in Revelation 20* (JSNTSup 70; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press 1992) 115.

100 G.E. Ladd, “Revelation 20 and the Millennium,” *RevExp* 57/2 (1960) 169.

101 Mealy writes: “there is something exceedingly implausible about denying that resurrection is really meant in 20.6 (‘the first resurrection’), when 20.6 is the only passage in Revelation in which the word ‘resurrection’ actually occurs” (*After the Thousand Years*, 23).

102 See Lupieri, *Apocalypse of John*, 316.

103 See Koester, *Revelation*, 786–787.

## Conclusion

The text of the Old Testament permeates the Book of Revelation and fills it with various meanings. A special connection exists between the Book of Daniel and the Apocalypse. Both books contain eschatological scenes and the teaching on the fate of man is developed in them. In the presented analysis, six major parallels between passages in Daniel (Dan 12:2, 13) and Revelation (Rev 6:9–11; 20:4–6, 13) have been identified that describe the state of the dead.

First, there is some information about the afterlife in both books. Death is the beginning of the intermediate state, and resurrection is its end. John uses the term “soul” to refer to the dead righteous. However, he presents the meaning of this term not in the light of Greek dualistic ideology, but based on Old Testament texts, in which the word “soul” had the meaning of “blood.” John creates a symbolic picture in which he uses blood to personify martyrs crying out for revenge. Second, both Daniel and John provide information about the location of the dead – the depth of the earth, that is, the grave. The dead return to the earth, because people are created from it, and because of the curse after the fall, death has become the lot of all.

Third, in both apocalyptic books, the authors use the metaphor of sleep in relation to death. People fall asleep in death and are in a state of rest, waiting for awakening. Death is a disconnect from reality and the dead are in an unconscious state. Fourth, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament the view is directed towards the end of the age. The future judgment of God will judge all sinners and reward all saints. Fifth, both books contain the promise of salvation and reward. Justice will be restored, and God’s people will receive the promised salvation. Sixth, both Daniel and John write about the resurrection of two groups of people – saints and sinners. However, John furthers Daniel’s idea and introduces the concept of two resurrections separated by a period of a thousand years.

The analysis carried out confirms the theological heredity of the Book of Revelation. Daniel and John share the same theological concepts and their ideas have many common points of contact. Most of the doctrinal aspects regarding the intermediate state of humans are identical. However, there is also a variety of symbols and concepts. Some ideas are conveyed through different devices, symbols, and metaphors. Both books end with hope for the establishment of the Kingdom of God and eternal life on the new earth.

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## Review






C.G. Bartholomew – H.A. Thomas, *The Minor Prophets. A Theological Introduction* (A Theological Introduction series; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press 2023). Pp 390. € 52. ISBN: 978-1-5140-0168-4

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In biblical studies, the books of the Minor Prophets have enjoyed great interest for many years. They are seen as a comprehensive and coherent collection, a testimony to the faith of biblical Israel, and thus as one book consisting of twelve prophecies written over several centuries. This is evident in commentaries as well as theological studies. One of the latest studies of this type is the book by Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas, *The Minor Prophets. A Theological Introduction*. It was published in the series “A Theological Introduction series”. The authors of this book are scholars and interpreters of the Holy Scriptures, especially the prophetic and wisdom books.

The book under review consists of 22 chapters, 17 of which deal directly with individual books of the Twelve Prophets, while the remaining five are general discussions of the entire collection. It is worth taking a closer look at these general studies first. The first chapter is entitled: “Reading the Minor Prophets with the Church” (pp. 7–26). The authors discuss the process of accepting these biblical texts by the Church in both the Hebrew and Greek versions. For linguistic reasons, the latter was more widely accepted. The authors then list commentators and their contributions to the interpretation of the Minor Prophets in the early Church (Church Fathers and early Christian writers, e.g. Origen, St. Jerome, Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus, St. Bede the Venerable, Ishodad of Merv) and medieval writers (e.g. Rupert of Deutz and St. Albert the Great). This chapter ends with a discussion of contemporary research on the collection of the Twelve Prophets treated as a coherent collection or even anthology of OT prophetic texts. Over the last decades, a particular shift has taken place in this aspect. The authors have presented it – in accordance with the research conducted – in its historical, literary and theological dimensions. I know how arduous and difficult this topic is to discuss, because I have been dealing with this issue for many years. The authors have made a synthetic but completely sufficient presentation of research on the process of creating and editing the books of the Minor Prophets and creating them into a coherent collection. This presentation begins with a discussion of the works of H. Ewald, B. Duhm, S. Mowinckel and C. Westermann, the founders

of the historical-critical approach. Although this achievement is currently assessed differently, it is undoubtedly a very valuable and significant study. Next, the literary (including works by M.J. Boda, M.H. Floyd, P.R. House, R.C. van Leeuwen, R. Rendtorff, M.A. Sweeney, K. Budde, J.D. Nogalski, A. Scharf and E. Ben Zvi) and theological (including works by B. Childs, S.J. De Vries) approaches to the collection of the Twelve Prophets as a whole are discussed.

The next chapter (“The Ancient World of Prophecy”, pp. 27–39) is a thorough discussion of the issue and phenomenon of prophecy in antiquity. The historical outline includes a presentation of the prophetic institution in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Transjordan and, of course, Israel. The terms for defining “prophet” and the role that prophets played in the religious, political and social space among individual nations are listed and explained. A valuable contribution is the presentation of the transmission of the prophetic message, which has its source in God (gods) and the relationship between the deity and the prophet. The message was transmitted both through oral teaching and symbolic actions. This is also discussed. The last three chapters of the reviewed book also belong to the holistic view of the Minor Prophets. The chapter “The Theology of Minor Prophets” (pp. 312–332) provides a theological synthesis of the collection of the Twelve Prophets. This part of the book should be considered a special contribution of the authors in the interpretation of the Minor Prophets as a whole, similarly to how the theology of, for example, the Pentateuch, Psalms or the Book of Isaiah is discussed. Such theological syntheses have already been appearing lately, but still very rarely. The authors have designated certain topics for presenting the theological thought of the Twelve Prophets: The God Who Speaks, The Covenant God, Zion – City of the Great King, Creator, Yahweh – and Israel – amid the Empires, God the Judge – the Lord of Hosts, Gracious and Compassionate, Sin and Repentance, Ethics, Spirituality, Eschatology. A particularly innovative approach is the presentation of the spirituality of the Minor Prophets. The authors state that: “In the process they (i.e. the Minor Prophets) also give us important insights into a deep spirituality. [...] If we ask how these prophets were able to exercise such extraordinary ministries, the answer is Jonah: formation” (p. 329), and as examples they give: “Habakkuk is a major resource for living faithfully amid judgment. Jonah is about spiritual formation to become worthy of one’s calling as a prophet. Hosea’s suffering alerts us to what may be involved in becoming like Yahweh and in sharing in the *missio Dei*” (p. 329). Another feature of the spirituality of the Twelve Prophets is the call to silence, to keep quiet and to contemplate God. The next chapter (“The Minor Prophets and Jesus”, pp. 333–354) analyses quotations from the Minor Prophets in the statements of the Lord Jesus. The authors focus on the Gospel of St. Matthew. They carefully analyse the sayings of the Lord Jesus in which He quotes the Minor Prophets (Hos 6:6 → Mt 9:13; 12:7; Mic 7:6 → Mt 10:35–36; Mal 3:1 → Mt 11:10; Jon 2:1 → Mt 12:49; Zech 13:7 → Mt 26:31), as well as those prophecies that were fulfilled with the coming of the Lord Jesus as the Messiah (Mic 5:1 → Mt 2:6; Hos 11:1 → Mt 2:15; Zech 9:9 → Mt 21:5; Zech 11:12–13 → Mt 27:9–10). There is also a very brief

discussion (pp. 348–349) of quotations from the collection of the Twelve Prophets in the Gospel of St. John.

The last chapter is “The Theology of the Minor Prophets for Today” (pp. 355–372). This is a Christological reading of the message of the Minor Prophets, which remains relevant today. Moreover, the authors rightly state:

[...] we ought to retrieve and renew our reading of and listening to the Minor Prophets today because of their importance for understanding Jesus. They are indispensable in grasping the magnitude of the Christ event. Precisely as disciples of Jesus, we are pushed to return to the Minor Prophets and listen to all that they have to say as part of Scripture for today. They bring God’s word to bear on all of life in their particular contexts, and Jesus is Lord of all of life (p. 355).

The main part of the book is a discussion of the individual books of the Minor Prophets (chapters 3–19, pp. 40–311). These chapters are an extensive introduction, developed according to a fixed pattern: historical and literary context, structure, a brief discussion of individual parts, theology and presence in the NT. Additional chapters are devoted to some of the Books (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Jonah, Micah, Habakkuk, Zechariah). In this case, it is an analysis of selected fragments.

The content of the book is enriched with numerous tables that help to better understand the discussed issue. Also helpful are the list of recommended literature on the subject placed after each chapter, the thematic index and the biblical references.

When reading the discussed book, certain comments and reservations arise. First of all, the lack of a comprehensive bibliography is noticeable. The authors quote and refer to numerous publications, which they list in footnotes, and at the end of the chapter – as already mentioned – they provide recommended literature on the subject. However, this is insufficient. Most chapters lack a summary. Yes, each of them begins with an introduction which familiarizes the reader with the discussed issue. An analogous summary would be a presentation of conclusions. In the part discussing the theology of the Minor Prophets, there is no discourse on the priests of the Old Testament. Criticism of the conduct of priests is one of the main themes of the Book of Hosea and the Book of Malachi (and thus the first and last in the collection of the Twelve Prophets), and also appears in other books (cf. *Priests & Cult in the Book of the Twelve*, ed. L.-S. Timmeyer [ANEM SBL 14; Atlanta, GA: SBL Press 2016]). In the part devoted to the role of silence and stillness in the spiritual development proposed by the Minor Prophets, there is not only no discussion, but not even a reference to Amos 5:13: “Therefore he who is prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time” (incidentally, there is not a single reference to this text in the entire book). Also intriguing is the lack of an additional chapter (and therefore a discussion of a selected fragment) for the books of Obadiah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, and Malachi. Of course, these observations do not detract from the value of the book under discussion, which is truly very great and worthy of study for all interested in biblical topics, especially prophetic literature.

Finally, one more quote from the book, testifying to the scholarly and spiritual commitment of its authors:

Our excitement about the Minor Prophets is palpable. We hope it will be infectious. They are extraordinary books and a treasure in the canon of Scripture. They are multifaceted, rich, sobering beyond belief, full of God, and pregnant with his word, which he wishes to speak to us today. Much work remains to be done to retrieve them for today and to create the space for their riveting message to be heard again and again in our day (pp. 371–372).

Indeed, Craig G. Bartholomew and Heath A. Thomas have done a great job, and thanks to their labours the fascinating message of the Minor Prophets can be read a new and better known.