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Apocalyptic Motifs in Targum Neofiti 1 in the Context of the Apocalypse of Abraham

Motywy apokaliptyczne w Targum Neofiti 1 w kontekście Apokalipsy Abrahama

Abstract. The apocalyptic literature developed within Judaism particularly from 200 B.C. to A.D. 135. Its main purpose was to convey God's revelation announcing the coming of salvation. Among the numerous works that explore this idea, one can mention the Apocalypse of Abraham, as well as Targum Neofiti 1, which contains many apocalyptic themes. This paper presents the apocalyptic ideas found in both texts, such as the motif of two worlds, judgment, rewards and punishments, afterlife, the Messiah, and angels. Comparative analysis allows for the identification of ancient traditions within Targum Neofiti 1 that go back to the period of the Gospel's formation.

Abstrakt. Literatura apokaliptyczna rozwijała się w judaizmie szczególnie w okresie między 200 r. przed Chr. a 135 r. po Chr. Jej głównym celem było przekazanie Bożego objawienia zapowiadającego nadejście zbawienia. Wśród licznych dzieł, które podejmują tę myśl, można wymienić Apokalipsę Abrahama, a także Targum Neofiti 1, który zawiera wiele wątków apokaliptycznych. W niniejszym artykule zostaną przedstawione idee apokaliptyczne występujące w obu tekstach, takie jak motyw dwóch światów, sądu, nagrody i kary, życia po śmierci, Mesjasza i aniołów. Analiza porównawcza pozwoli na wyodrębnienie starożytnych tradycji w Targumie Neofiti 1, sięgających okresu powstawania Ewangelii.

Keywords: apocalyptic, Targum Neofiti 1, Apocalypse of Abraham, apocrypha.

Słowa kluczowe: apokaliptyka, Targum Neofiti 1, Apokalipsa Abrahama, apokryf.

The experience of suffering, war and disasters raises many questions and religious doubts in people. Will God intervene and come to help? Will he change the course of painful history? Faith allows one to hope for a breakthrough that will change the fate of an individual or even an entire nation. Israel found itself in a similar situation between the second century B.C. and the second century A.D. In the face of oppression from foreign powers, wars and disasters, the question became increasingly clear: when would God fulfil his promises to Abraham and his descendants? When would the persecution come to an end? For the suffering experienced was at odds with the earlier predictions of salvation, hence the hope of the believers turned more towards future events through which everything was to be transformed. These expectations became the subject of apocalyptic literature, which flourished in these difficult times. Eduard Lohse aptly observes that apocalypticism does not expect the course of history to change for the better, but hopes that this world will come to an end, and with the new one, will come salvation being shared by believers (Lohse 1980, 43).

One of the texts that reflects this thought is the Apocalypse of Abraham, dating to the turn of the first and the second century A.D (Rubinkiewicz 1983, 683). This apocryphal was written in a Palestinian environment and shows many connections with Targum Neofiti 1. Above all, the presence of similar apocalyptic themes can be discerned in both works. The purpose of this paper is therefore to analyse these ideas present in Targum Neofiti 1 in the context of the Apocalypse of Abraham. The first step will be to isolate and describe the most important apocalyptic themes present in the Apocalypse of Abraham, such as the motif of two worlds, judgment, reward and punishment, life after death, as well as the motif of the Messiah and the angels. In the following section, the apocalyptic ideas present in Targum Neofiti 1 will be analysed, which will then allow for a comparative analysis. In this way, the paper will bring new insights into the ideas contained in Targum Neofiti 1, so that early targumic traditions can be identified, which in turn will help to better understand the significance of this work for apocalyptic and New Testament studies.

1. Apocalypse of Abraham and Targum Neofiti 1

Apocalyptic literature as a literary genre is associated with divine revelation given by an intermediary (an angel) concerning salvation to come soon.[1] This trend developed in Judaism between 200 B.C. and A.D. 135. This was the period between the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who ordered them to practise idolatry, and the oppression of the Roman occupying forces, until the Bar Kochba Revolt came to an end (Rubinkiewicz 1987, 81).[2]

One of the most important early Jewish apocalyptic writings is the Apocalypse of Abraham.[3] It was probably written between A.D. 70 and 135 as a response to the destruction of the Temple by the Romans.[4] George H. Box argues that this apocrypha originated in the area of Palestine, when the Judeo-Christians were still in close contact with the Jewish community, thus supporting its early dating (Box 1919, 16; cf. Kulik 2004, 2).[5] Ryszard Rubinkiewicz expresses a similar conviction, pointing out that the work was 'written in Palestine for the Jews living there' (Rubinkiewicz 1987, 61). Researchers stress its Semitic character by claiming that the original text was written in Hebrew or Aramaic. Some add that the Greek version, which is the basis of the extant Slavic translation, was later produced from the original work (Box 1919, 10; Kulik 2004, 5).[6] This

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[1] J. Collins and a group of American scholars made the definition of apocalyptic literature in 1979 (see Collins 1979, 9). For a detailed discussion of the definitions (see VanderKam 2010, 14–16; Parchem 2010, 24–27; cf. Drawnel 2014, 9; Wróbel 2010, 5).

[2] See the history of Jewish apocalyptic studies discussed in detail (Fletcher-Louis 2019, 1569–1607).

[3] The 14th-century manuscript of the Apocalypse of Abraham was discovered in a monastery in St Petersburg by two independent scholars – I.I. Sreznevskij and N.S. Tikhonravov, and subsequently published in 1860 and 1863. Unfortunately, in the 20th century the Soviet rule did not encourage research in the field of Old Russian Christian literature, and thus the attention of scholars to this subject returned only at the end of the 20th century, i.e. after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Turdeanu 1972, 173).

[4] James H. Charlesworth suggests a period between 80 and 100 B.C. (see Charlesworth 1981, 68). For a detailed discussion of dating on the basis of external and internal data (see Rubinkiewicz 1987, 70–75).

[5] See the discussion on the place of origin of the Apocalypse of Abraham (Sommer 2016, 236–256).

[6] Rubinkiewicz agrees that the original language of the work was Semitic (Aramaic or Hebrew), but it is uncertain whether the Greek translation was the basis for the later

may be supported by the fact that almost all early Slavic texts were translated from Greek, so the work in question must have had a Greek source.[7]

The Apocalypse of Abraham is available to scholars today only in a 14th-century manuscript version in an Old Church Slavonic translation. It was not until the 19th century that scholars began to take an interest in the work, but it has not been sufficiently studied because of its atypical source word for ancient Judaic. Nowadays, only a few critical editions of the text have been published (Kulik 2004; Philonenko 1981; Rubinkiewicz 1987). However, among the most notable authors of publications on the Apocalypse of Abraham are Ginzberg (1906), Frey (1928), Turdeanu (1972), Rubinkiewicz (1974), Hall (1988). It is also worth mentioning a contemporary researcher, Andrei A. Orlov, author of several publications on the Apocalypse of Abraham.[8] Amy E. Paulsen-Reed's doctoral thesis (2016) is also a valuable contribution to the subject under discussion, in which the author points to the presence of ancient Jewish material. By comparing this work with later rabbinic literature, she argues that the Apocalypse of Abraham is an early Jewish document, written in the years immediately following the destruction of The Second Temple.

A similar story is presented by Targum Neofiti 1, which contains a complete translation of the Pentateuch into Aramaic. It belongs to a group of so-called Palestinian Targums dating from the 1st to the 3rd century A.D. (Wróbel 2017, 65). This Targum is not a literal translation of the text of the Hebrew Bible, as it repeatedly paraphrases the text or explains the selected text by means of extensive midrash.[9] The text of Targum Neofiti 1 is preserved only in a 16th-century manuscript version found in the Vatican Library in 1949 by Alejandro Díez Macho and published between 1968 and 1978.[10] Many scholars claim that this work contains a number of ancient traditions dating back to the pre-Christian

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Slavic translation (Rubinkiewicz 1987, 36–37). For a broader discussion of extant Slavic manuscripts (see Rubinkiewicz 1987, 15–27; Turdeanu 1972, 153–180).

[7] For more on the Greek original (see Kulik 2004, 37–60).

[8] „Praxis of the Voice", 53–70; „The Gods of My Father", 33–53; „Arboreal Metaphors", 439–451; „The Pteromorphic", 830–842; „The Eschatological", 79–111; „The Likeness", 232–253; „Demons of Change", 601–619; *Heavenly Priesthood*; „The Ritualization", 113–124; *The Atoning Dyad*; *Yetzer Anthropologies*.

[9] E.g. 'The Poem of the Four Nights' – TgN Wj 12,42. More on the phenomenon of targumism and targumization (see Kuśmirek 2014, 23–40; Kuśmirek 2019, 221–248).

[10] For more on the history of the Targum Neofiti 1 (see: Le Déaut 1967, 509–533; Wróbel 2014, XL–LII).

era (Wróbel 2017, 140; cf. Chrostowski 1991, 43). The text of Targum Neofiti 1 has been critically edited in several languages: English, Spanish, French and Polish.[11] Research on this work has focused mainly on the translation, the connection with the text of the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic literature and the New Testament, especially the Gospel of John.[12] Despite these studies, there is still a lack of research on the earliest traditions, which are the common heritage of the culture and religion of the time and are preserved in apocryphal and targumic works. These early traditions consist, among other things, of the apocalyptic themes present in works produced in Palestine: the Apocalypse of Abraham and the Targum Neofiti 1. This aspect has not yet been sufficiently studied, although the work of Ryszard Rubinkiewicz should be mentioned here, who, in a critical study of the apocryphal text, notes on several occasions the connection of certain verses or expressions with targums, including Targum Neofiti 1.[13] The remainder of this paper will therefore analyse the apocalyptic ideas present in the works in question.

2. Apocalyptic ideas in the Apocalypse of Abraham

The Apocalypse of Abraham can be divided into two parts. The first (chapters 1–8) is of a haggadic nature, describing the fate of Abraham and his father Terach, with the emphasis on showing the absurdity of idolatry.[14] The second part

[11] As part of the Bible Project initiative, directed by Martin McNamara, 22 volumes of targumic texts have been translated into English. Work on the Spanish translation is continuing in the Biblioteca Midrásica series under the direction of Miguel Pérez Fernández. A French translation of the Targum of the Pentateuch has been produced by Roger Le Déaut and Jacques Robert. The Polish Aramaic Bible project was initiated in 2014. Its director is Mirosław S. Wróbel. So far, five volumes of the Aramaic Bible have been published. These include translations of the Targum Neofiti 1 for Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, as well as an Introduction to the Aramaic Bible (Wróbel 2014; Wróbel 2017; Tronina 2019; Parchem 2021; Wróbel 2017).

[12] These include publications: Hayward 1974, 412–418; Grossfeld, Schiffman 2000; Morrison 2005, 590–603; McNamara 2010; Morrison 2011, 291–308; Niedźwiedzki 2016, 147–183; Wróbel 2017, 115–130; Chwiła 2021, 5–35.

[13] References to the Targum Neofiti can be found in the index to the study (see Rubinkiewicz 1987, 274).

[14] The first part of the Apocalypse of Abraham may allude to Joshua 24:2–3.14–15 where Terah, Abraham's father, is mentioned as serving foreign gods.

(chapters 9–32) – the apocalyptic part – describes the hero's heavenly journey, during which he sees eschatological visions and learns about God's mysteries. Apocalyptic themes include two worlds, judgement, reward and punishment, life after death, the Messiah and angels.

2.1. The motif of two worlds

The text of the Apocalypse of Abraham repeatedly refers to 'worlds' or 'ages'.[15] It seems that the author intentionally uses the plural to emphasise both temporal and spatial dualism. Moreover, these expressions may confirm their Aramaic origin, since the term עלם can mean both 'world' and 'eternity' (Sokoloff 2002, 409–410). The future world and age are radically different from the time and space currently inhabited by human beings.

The Apocrypha in question speaks of 'two worlds' or a world divided into two parts (Apoc. Ab. 21). On one side is the earth, on the other the garden of Eden. Furthermore, the heavenly reality is divided into several spheres, where the author distinguishes the seven heavens (Apoc. Ab. 19:4–9; Poirier 2004, 391–408). A similar division applies to humanity. It is divided into those who obey God and the gentiles (cf. Apoc. Ab. 21:3–7). Abraham thus sees a picture of creation in which the ungodliness are on one side and the righteous on the other. The present world is portrayed negatively, with no shadow of hope for salvation and conversion, for it is destined 'to be food for the fire of Hades' (Apoc. Ab. 31:3). Despite this pessimistic picture, however, the author stresses that the created world is good in the eyes of God (Apoc. Ab. 22:2).

The dualism is also evident in the presentation of two ages or times. The present age is called 'the Age of ungodliness', while the future age is called 'the Age of righteousness' (Apoc. Ab. 29:13–14). The first is destructive, with the gentiles ruling over the Jews. It lasts for 'twelve periods' (Apoc. Ab. 29:2) and is followed by the final judgement. It is contrasted with 'the coming Age' or 'Age of the righteous' (Apoc. Ab. 29:14, 18). It is also associated with the coming of God's judgment and the ten plagues (Apoc. Ab. 29:14–15). For the righteous, on the other hand, it will be a time of rejoicing because they will destroy those who oppress them (Apoc. Ab. 29:19).

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[15] Apoc. Ab. 9:9; Apoc. Ab. 21:1.

2.2. The motif of judgement

The theme of the Judgement of God is present in both parts of the Apocalypse of Abraham and is its central idea (Henze 2017, 556). It has a double dimension: on the one hand, it has already taken place because God has judged his people; on the other hand, it refers to the eschatological future. Moreover, several forms of God's judgement can be distinguished: on idols and their worshippers, on the people of Azazel, the separation of the Chosen People from the gentiles and the judgement on the gentiles, and finally the eschatological judgement on Israel.

In the first part of book (Apoc. Ab. 1–8), idolatry is presented as one of the gravest sins, punishable by death. As soon as Abraham leaves the house of his father Terach to avoid participating in this sin, fire immediately falls from heaven and consumes all his possessions (Apoc. Ab. 8:5). This scene is referred to twice more in the subsequent narrative (Apoc. Ab. 10:12; Apoc. Ab. 26:5) to emphasise the fate that awaits every idolater.

God announces an eschatological judgement for all people: those who have done good in their lives as well as those who have done evil. Each of them will face God's judgement. This idea is expressed several times in the Apocalypse of Abraham.[16] There is another dividing line between the Chosen People and the gentiles. In one vision, Abraham sees a group of people to his right and another to his left (Apoc. Ab. 21:7). The former symbolise the Israelites and the latter the sinful nations. The author emphasises that this division, like the judgement itself, is the result of God's will and was foreseen before the creation of the world (Henze 2017, 552). This motif will be repeated in Apoc. Ab. 29:4, when reference is made to a false Messiah coming from the left, from the gentiles. But when the true Chosen One appears, a new era will be inaugurated and the sound of the trumpet will gather all the scattered ones of Israel. The gentiles will be brought before the court and judged according to how they have treated the Israelites. In the end, they will be thrown into the eternal fire, so that they will face the same judgement and punishment that befell Terach (Apoc. Ab. 31:2).

In the final scene of the Apocalypse, when Abraham returns to earth, the motif of judgement returns once more. This time the dividing line is not between Israelites and gentiles, but between the Chosen People themselves. Those who have practised justice, done God's will and kept the covenant will be saved

[16] Apoc. Ab. 23:2; Apoc. Ab. 24:7; Apoc. Ab. 25:6.

from punishment and will see the fall of the gentiles (Apoc. Ab. 31:4–5). On the other hand, those among Israel who have followed idols will be 'burned by the fire of Azazel's tongue' (Apoc. Ab. 31:6). The author is therefore convinced that mere membership of the house of Abraham does not protect one from the sin of idolatry. This sin, according to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezekiel 8), was the cause of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (Collins 1998, 227). Similarly, God reveals to Abraham that the temple was destroyed because of an idol that provoked His wrath (Apoc. Ab. 27:7).

The Apocalypse of Abraham uses the characteristic expression several times: 'great judgement'. It will come in the last days (Apoc. Ab. 24:2) and will affect all those who have done evil in their lives (Apoc. Ab. 24:8). It will especially affect those who have sacrificed to other gods. For these acts, like murder, arouse the wrath of the Lord and are a testimony at 'the judgment of the completion at the beginning of creation' (Apoc. Ab. 25:6). Before the coming of 'the Age of righteousness', God announces His judgement against the perverse gentiles, which will be carried out by the Israelites (Apoc. Ab. 29:14). The Apocalypse concludes with the announcement of judgement on the gentiles that has enslaved and oppressed the Chosen People for 'one hour of the impious age' (Apoc. Ab. 32:2–3). We can see here an allusion to the judgement that will come upon the Romans and the apostates after the coming of the Messiah (Paulsen-Reed 2016, 184).

2.3. The motive of reward and punishment

The Old Testament principle of retribution, according to which there is a reward for good deeds and a punishment for bad ones, is also present in the Apocalypse of Abraham. Here, however, it takes on an eschatological dimension, since the reward is only foreseen after death, in the life to come.

The future destiny of the righteous and the ungodliness becomes the subject of the revelation given to Abraham: 'I will announce to you in them what will come upon those who have done evil and just things in the race of man' (Apoc. Ab. 9:10). The place reserved for sinners is the abyss, where they suffer torment, while the righteous enjoy the garden of Eden (Apoc. Ab. 21:4–6). The punishment is also described in terms of the ten plagues that will fall on the 'perverse gentiles' in the last days.[17] The author lists the following calamities: the great tribulation, the burning of cities with fire, the destruction of cattle by plague,

[17] Apoc. Ab. 24:1–2; Apoc. Ab. 29:14–15.

famine on the earth in their generation, earthquakes and death by sword, hail and snow, being devoured by wild beasts, famine and plague, desperate flight, voices of thunder and earthquakes of destruction (Apoc. Ab. 30:4–8). Another image of punishment is the 'fire of Hades' (Apoc. Ab. 31:3) or the 'fire of corruption' (Apoc. Ab. 24:7). It will affect those who have followed foreign idols and 'they shall putrefy in the belly of the crafty worm Azazel, and be burnt by the fire of Azazel's tongue' (Apoc. Ab. 31:6).

The Apocalypse of Abraham underlines the unlimited power of the Almighty over the world and over men. For God is the One who demands payment (Apoc. Ab. 28:6), and it is He who knows the number of the righteous who will be spared from impending judgement and punishment (Apoc. Ab. 29:17). Moreover, a place of glory is prepared for them beforehand. Their reward will be a change from their previous fate, for they will 'destroy those who have destroyed them, and rebuke those who have rebuked them through their mockery, and they will spit in their faces' (Apoc. Ab. 29:19).

2.4. The motif of life after death

It should be stressed that the book in question does not explicitly speak of the resurrection, although its symbol may be the dew seen in the midst of a great multitude of angels (Apoc. Ab. 19:4). However, it can certainly be said that the author of the Apocalypse of Abraham believed in life after death. This is evidenced by the description of the garden of Eden and the fiery abyss called Hades.

After death, the righteous dwell in a garden full of trees, fruit and flowers, where they rest in a land of happiness (Apoc. Ab. 21:6). This is a place prepared by God in advance for good deeds done on earth (Apoc. Ab. 29:17). The image of the garden of Eden alludes to the moment of the creation of the first human beings and their abiding in intimacy with God. Only the sin of disobedience and the desire for evil closed the gates of Eden to them (cf. Apoc. Ab. 23:1–12). The ungodliness, on the other hand, end up in the abyss (Apoc. Ab. 31:3), in the fire of damnation, which is in the inaccessible depths of the earth (Apoc. Ab. 24:7). There is no mention of an intermediate state (Box 1919, 27).

2.5. The motif of the Messiah

The idea of a Messiah who would come at the end of time to bring salvation to the Chosen People was not foreign to the author of the Apocalypse of Abra-

ham.[18] While waiting for the true Messiah, a false one will appear to deceive the people and lead them into idolatry. At the end of time, however, a Messiah sent by God will appear and usher in a new eschatological era.

In Apoc. Ab. 29:4 the author gives a vision of a man who will come from the left, that is, from a gentile. He will be followed by a great multitude of people who will worship him. At the same time there will be a group of people from the right, some of whom will resent this man and beat him, and some of whom will bow down before him (Apoc. Ab. 29:5). Even Azazel will approach him and worship him. The figure is obscure, so Abraham inquires of God, but receives only the answer that he is 'the liberation from the heathen for the people who will be born from you' (Apoc. Ab. 29:8).[19] Daniel Harlow suggests that the figure of the false Messiah serves to contrast more clearly with the person of the true Chosen One (Harlow 2013, 170). God goes on to announce that after 'twelve years' of evil, He will call a man from Abraham's generation who will be the true Messiah (Apoc. Ab. 29:9). He is also called the Chosen One, sent by God (Apoc. Ab. 31:1). Before He comes, however, the Lord will bring a time of plagues and judgement upon the gentiles (Apoc. Ab. 29:14). After that, however, He will come and gather God's people who have been humiliated by the nations (Apoc. Ab. 31:1). He will execute judgement on those who have mocked the Chosen People by ruling over them in this Age (Apoc. Ab. 31:2). This description may be a reference to the political situation in the first century after Christ, where the punished gentile would be the Romans (Paulsen-Reed 2016, 183).

Based on the announcement of the appearance of the Messiah, the following chronology of future events can be given: plagues, coming of the Messiah, gathering of the righteous, punishment of the Romans (Paulsen-Reed 2016, 184).

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[18] In early Jewish literature, one can see a variety of views on the figure of the Messiah. The Qumran texts mention two Messiahs: one from the line of Aaron and the other from the line of David (CD 14,19; CD 19,10; CD 20,1; 1QS 9,11). A similar idea is found in a later work from the seventh to eighth centuries A.D., the Targum of the Song of Songs. It emphasises the coming of one Messiah from the line of David and another from Ephraim (Tg Cant. 4:5). However, in the Apocrypha, such as the Psalms of Solomon (PsSal 17:32; PsSal 18:5.7), the Fourth Book of Ezra (4 Ezra 7:28–29; 4 Ezra 12:31–32), the Apocalypse of Baruch the Syrian (2 Ba 72:2), only one Messiah is mentioned (see Parchem 2015, 69–86; Alexander 2003, 23–24.55).

[19] Some scholars see here a Christian interpolation in order to suggest the figure of Jesus (see Collins 1998, 230).

For the author of the Apocalypse of Abraham, therefore, the Age of justice will begin when the Messiah comes and the Romans are judged. Although the text does not say that the Messiah will assist in the punishment of the Romans, it can be assumed that he will take part in it, since he is responsible for gathering the righteous immediately before the judgment.

2.6. The motif of angels

Angelology plays an important role in the Apocrypha in question, but here too there is a dualism in the representation of spiritual beings. There are good spirits who serve God, and those who rebel against Him and lead man to evil. The first to appear is the good spirit, the angel Iaoel. His name contains God's holy name (YHWH and El), which cannot be uttered (Apoc. Ab. 10:3). He is sent to Abraham to strengthen and guide him. It can be seen that he takes over Michael's main task, which is to protect and watch over Israel (Ginzberg 1906, 91; cf. Dan 12:1). The angel Iaoel welcomes Abraham and calls him 'the friend of God who has loved you' (Apoc. Ab. 10:5). His mission is described in detail. His task is to strengthen and bless Abraham (Apoc. Ab. 10:6), to calm disputes and teach songs (Apoc. Ab. 10:9), to hold Leviathan (Apoc. Ab. 10:10), to open the gates of Hades so that all idol-worshipers may perish (Apoc. Ab. 10:11). It was to him that God commanded the house of Terach to be burned because of the sin of idolatry (Apoc. Ab. 10:12). The author goes on to describe the angel's appearance, which sounds very mysterious: a body like sapphire, an appearance like chrysolite, hair as white as snow, a turban on his head like a rainbow, robes like crimson, and in his right hand he holds a golden sceptre (Apoc. Ab. 11:2–3). Abraham himself confesses that during the forty-day journey to Mount Horeb, his food was the sight of the angel and his drink was his words (Apoc. Ab. 12:2). Iaoel accompanies the patriarch during the sacrifice with the other angels (Apoc. Ab. 13:1) and then leads him on his heavenly journey (Apoc. Ab. 15:2). It is noteworthy that he is the most important figure in Jewish angelology, the heavenly guide, the leader of the choir, the protector of the chosen people and capable of submission to God (Box 1919, 25). The Apocalypse of Abraham presents him as a figure who takes his place after God himself, but he does not receive worship, rather he teaches Abraham himself to worship God (Apoc. Ab. 17:4–6).

In contrast to Iaoel is Azazel, who appears as an evil spirit inhabiting the earth (Apoc. Ab. 13:8), although his real kingdom is Hades, where he rules as

Lord (Apoc. Ab. 31:6).[20] He is described as an unclean bird that sits on the carcasses of the animals that Abraham sacrificed (cf. Genesis 15:9–11). It is no ordinary bird, however, for it enters into discussion with Abraham. Its demonic nature is quickly revealed when Iaoel calls it 'evil' (Apoc. Ab. 13:6). The figure of Azazel alludes to the description in the Book of Henoch (1 He 6:1–5), where it is mentioned that he made a pact with other angels by taking human wives and participating in the disclosure of heavenly knowledge to humans (Paulsen-Reed 2016, 169; cf. Helm 1994, 217–222). In this regard, the Apocalypse of Abraham says that he spreads the secrets of heaven on earth and conspires against the Mighty One (Apoc. Ab. 14:4). As a result of his own choice (Apoc. Ab. 13:8), his dwelling place became the earth (Apoc. Ab. 13:7–8), he lost his integrity and his heavenly garment, which was now destined for Abraham (Apoc. Ab. 13:15). God has set clear limits to his actions, for although he is a source of wrath and trial for generations of wicked people, he cannot tempt the righteous, for God has not delivered them into his hands (Apoc. Ab. 13:10–12). Azazel only has power over those who have already chosen evil (Apoc. Ab. 23:12). In the vision describing the temptation of Adam and Eve, his appearance is described: he is like a serpent, but his hands and feet are like a man, and he has six wings on his back, on the right side and six on the left (Apoc. Ab. 23:6).

In conclusion, it should be noted that in the Apocalypse of Abraham, as in the other Apocalypses, there is the figure of an angel who reveals the mysteries of God, but the Lord himself is also the one who directly interprets the future. This testifies to the special privileges of Abraham, who is called 'the friend of God' (Apoc. Ab. 9:6) and is promised to be the father of many nations (Ludlow 2019, 48). The figure of Azazel, on the other hand, is linked to motifs traditionally attributed to Satan, namely his expulsion from heaven and the temptation of Adam and Eve under the figure of the serpent (Helm 1994, 224).

[20] It is worth noting that the term 'Azazel' appears four times in the Hebrew Bible when the rules for the Day of Atonement are mentioned (Lev 16:8.10.26). He is usually identified with the demon for whom the scapegoat loaded with the sins of the people was intended. This tradition, which alludes to a ritual involving a scapegoat as a symbol of the exorcism of demons, is therefore confirmed by 1 Henoch as well as by the Apocalypse of Abraham. Moreover, this rite became a symbol of the eschatological victory over the powers of evil and demons (cf. Helm 1994, 226).

3. Apocalyptic ideas in the Targum Neofiti 1

The Targums, written during the intertestamental period, undoubtedly reflect the prevailing views of the Israelites at that time. There was a widespread eschatological hope for God's intervention in the destiny of the Chosen People.[21] It was believed that the days of tribulation would be followed by the 'end of days', when the Messiah would come and bring liberation from the oppressors. This moment was linked to God's judgement and therefore to a corresponding payment for one's deeds: the righteous would receive a reward, while the wicked would be punished. The remainder of this paper will discuss the main apocalyptic motifs found in the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch, called Targum Neofiti 1.

3.1. The motive of two worlds

The theological interpretation of the end of time and human existence after death was vividly present in the targums, as evidenced by the frequent references to life in the world to come. Michael Sokoloff argues that the expression עלמא דאתי (the world to come) refers to the future and speaks of existence in a future time (Sokoloff 2002, 80–81). Similar in meaning is the expression עולם חורן (another world) which occurs twice in the conversation between Cain and Abel (TgN Gen 4:8).[22] The Targumist uses the brothers' dispute over the existence of another world to explain the reason for Abel's fratricidal death. 'Another world' is thus synonymous with 'the world to come'. In contrast to these expressions, the term עלם הדין (this world) appears repeatedly in Targum Neofiti 1, through which the author highlights the tension that exists between the two.

The future world is clearly different from the one in which man now lives. When it arrives, everyone will receive payment for their deeds: the reward will be shared by the righteous and the punishment by the wicked. This conviction led Joseph to avoid the sin of adultery, knowing that it would not allow him to live in the world to come (TgN Gen 39:10). The world in which man now lives is a space and an opportunity for the Targumist to faithfully observe the Law in order to 'abide as a tree of life in the world to come' (TgN Gen 3:24). For good

[21] For more on the eschatology of the targums (see Gordon 1978, 113–130; Wróbel 2021, 788–795).

[22] The second time written as: עלם אוחרן.

deeds will ensure the righteous person's success in this world as well as the prolongation of his days in the world to come (TgN Deut 22:7). The moment of death therefore does not mark the end of human existence, but opens the way to the 'world to come'. It is then, says Moses, that the reign of death will come to an end, it will be finally defeated (TgN Deut 32:1).

It is noteworthy that the phrase 'the world to come' does not appear in the Targum Onkelos, which is the normative translation for Judaism (McNamara 2010, 201). This in turn would indicate the early traditions of the eschatological themes conveyed in Targum Neofiti 1, which in turn differ significantly from the ideas contained in the Pentateuch of the Hebrew Bible.

3.2. The motif of judgment

The Targumist, in proclaiming Adam's 'rising from the dust of the earth', links this fact to a moment of judgement, defined as 'to give an account and a reckoning of all that he has done' (TgN Gen 3:19). The subject is man's deeds, for which he will receive eternal reward or punishment. The belief in the existence of a Judge and a judgement was so important to the author that it underpinned the targumic explanation of the reason for the conflict between Cain and Abel (TgN Gen 4:8).

In this context it is worth noting the expression יום דינה רבה (day of great judgement).[23] It is characteristic of the Palestinian Targums, as it appears in both Targum Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan, but is absent from Targum Onkelos. The phrase 'the day of great judgement' occurs repeatedly in the context of sin, as in TgN Gen 4:7. God tells Cain that if he does well 'in this world' he will be forgiven 'in the world to come', otherwise his 'sin will be kept from him for the day of great judgement' (McNamara 1992, 65). This day instils fear of doing evil in this world (TgN Ex 15:12). Calling God's name in vain will not go unpunished on the Day of Judgment (TgN Ex 20:7; TgN Deut 5:11). Although Moses calls the Lord a gracious, merciful and patient God (TgN Ex 34:6), he knows that He will not let wickedness go unpunished. On the Day of Judgment, He will remember the sins of the fathers (TgN Ex 34:7), for the 'cup of vengeance' for the wicked is sealed until the Day of Judgment (TgN Deut 32:34). The

[23] The expression 'the day of the great judgement' appears nine times in Targum Neofiti 1: TgN Gen 4:7; TgN Gen 38:25; TgN Ex 15:12; TgN Ex 20:7; TgN Ex 34:7; TgN Num 14:18; TgN Num 31:50; TgN Deut 5:11; TgN Deut 32:34 (see Kaufman, Cook, Sokoloff 1993, 402–405).

deeds of man will therefore be decisive in the final reckoning with God, and those who have been just and good will be able to contribute to the atonement for sins (TgN Num 31:50). And the one who judges will be God – referred to as the Judge of Judges (TgN Gen 18:25). Targum Neofiti 1 emphasises that the Creator will judge His people – the sons of Israel – with good and merciful judgments, and He will then comfort all the righteous and the abandoned and rejected (TgN Deut 32:36).

3.3. The motif of reward and punishment

The author of Targum Neofiti 1 expresses the belief that the afterlife is a reward for good deeds done in mortality. Righteous people who live according to the commandments, who are faithful to the covenant, will enjoy happiness in eternal life and eat the fruit of the garden of Eden (TgN Gen 3:24). The belief in a reward for the righteous is also expressed by Cain (TgN Gen 4:8) and Jacob (TgN Gen 49:1). In the story of Abraham, the Targumist stresses that God sees the patriarch's good deeds and promises him a reward in the world to come (TgN Gen 15:1). In another place, the Lord promises a good reward to all those who keep the commandments of the Law (TgN Lev 22:31). The targumic addition, which elaborates on Balaam's oracle, contains words of blessing over the house of Jacob and a motif of reward prepared in the world to come (TgN Num 23:23). According to the Old Testament principle of retribution, the reward in eternal life is given to the righteous and the punishment to the wicked (TgN Gen 49:1). Sometimes, however, God may reward the wicked for their good deeds in this world, so that they receive their reward in mortal life and only the punishment for their wickedness in the world to come (TgN Deut 7:10).

In Targum Neofiti 1, eternal punishment is called Gehenna (TgN Gen 3:24) and is compared to a sharp double-edged sword (TgN Gen 3:24) or fire (TgN Gen 15:17; TgN Deut 32:35). It is noteworthy that the word does not appear in the Hebrew Bible, whereas it appears quite frequently in rabbinic literature to describe the place of eternal damnation in contrast to the garden of Eden (Jastrow 1903, 236). Both realities – eternal reward and eternal punishment – exist forever: 'Two thousand years before He created the world, He had created the Law. He had prepared the garden of Eden for the just and Gehenna for the wicked' (TgN Gen 3:24). Elsewhere, Jewish tradition states that Gehenna was created on the second day and the garden of Eden on the third (*Gen.R.* 21:9). In the context of the present question, it is worth noting Abraham's vision of Ge-

henna, described in TgN Gen 15:17. The Hebrew Bible says that at the moment of the covenant the patriarch falls into a deep sleep (Gen 15:12) and only God passes between the cut halves of the animals as a sign of the covenant made (Gen 15:17). The targumist, on the other hand, interprets Abraham's dream as a glimpse of revealed reality. He first sees four kingdoms rising up against him: 'Dread: that is Babylon; Darkness: that is Media; Great: that is Greece; Fell upon him: this is Edom' (TgN Gen 15:12). He then has a vision of Gehenna, which resembles a fiery furnace into which the wicked are sent for disobeying the law. The righteous, on the other hand, are saved because of their faithfulness (TgN Gen 15:17). The punishment of fire also appears in the story of Tamar, who was accused of adultery (TgN Gen 38:25). The fire of 'this world' is described as 'extinguished', in contrast to the fire of 'the world to come', which is an unquenchable fire, an eternal fire. The targumist thus emphasises that temporal punishment is far less severe than eternal punishment. In summary, evil deeds committed during earthly life result in punishment in eternal life, while good deeds and observance of the Law are rewarded. Moreover, God has placed the power over evil desires in the hands of man, for it is up to him alone whether it leads him to sin or not (TgN Gen 4:7).

3.4. The motif of life after death

From the very first pages of Genesis, the targumist proclaims the hope of rising from the dead. After the disobedience of the first human beings, God tells them the consequences of their action: Eve will experience the pain of pregnancy and direct her desires towards her husband (TgN Gen 3:16), and Adam will face the hardship of labour, the earth bearing thorns and thistles (TgN Gen 3:17–18). However, by announcing death, God gives man the hope of rising again from the dust of the ground (TgN Gen 3:19). A similar allusion is made in the description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (TgN Gen 19:12–29). Because of the sins of the inhabitants, God decides to send fire and brimstone on the cities, but allows Lot to save his life by going to Soar. At the same time, he is instructed not to stop and look back. The following verses describe the destruction of the city and the scene when Lot's wife, wanting to see the fate of her hometown, looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt. Here the targumic translation adds that her condition is only 'until the time the dead are brought to life' (TgN Gen 19:26).

Many targumic traditions interpret Old Testament texts from an eschatological perspective (Wróbel 2021, 792). One example is the scene in which Esau

sells the privilege of primogeniture for a bowl of lentils. The Hebrew text says that Esau, tired after his work, asked his brother for this food (Gen 25:29–30). Jacob granted his request, but in return Esau had to give up the privilege of the birthright. The biblical author comments on the older brother's attitude as 'despising the birthright' (Gen 25:34), while the Targum interprets the event as 'a denial concerning the vivification of the dead and denied the life of the world to come' (TgN Gen 25:34). Moreover, in TgN Deut 32:39, God is identified as the One who 'causes the living to die in this world, and who brings the dead to live in the world to come'. He is the one and only Lord of life and death and therefore has the power to raise the dead in the world to come.

3.5. The motif of the Messiah

In the Hebrew Bible, the term משיח means 'the anointed one' and usually referred to kings, priests who were anointed with oil to perform their duties (Wróbel 2017, 228). In later Jewish literature the term took on an eschatological meaning, so that the figure of the Messiah was associated with the coming of the end of time.[24] The shape of messianic expectations from the turn of the century was strongly influenced by the historical context. Thus, Israel, experiencing oppression and persecution by foreign powers, hoped that the Messiah would defeat all enemies by bringing liberation and peace. In rabbinic literature there was a belief that the coming of the Messiah would be preceded by various sufferings: disasters, famines, fires or earthquakes (Rosik 2016, 73). This image was referred to as 'the sorrows of the Messiah' (cf. Hos 13:13). His coming was also associated with the coming of a new kingdom, so that the Messiah was often referred to as a king with authority over all nations (Wróbel 2017, 229).

Targum Neofiti 1 describes the figure of the Messiah on several occasions, each time attributing to him a royal dignity (Kuśmirek 2013, 88). The first mention appears at the beginning of Genesis, in what is known as the Protoevangelium. After the sin of the first human beings, God announces salvation for their descendants and an experience of peace at the end, 'on the day of King Messiah' (TgN Gen 3:15). The patriarch Jacob, on the other hand, prophesies that the Messiah will be the king who will reign at the end of time, to whom all the nations of the earth will be subject (TgN Gen 49:10). He will come from the

[24] For a detailed discussion of the idea of the Messiah in intertestamental literature – see Parchem 2015, 69–86; Schiffman 1992, 116–129.

tribe of Judah and will go out to fight against those who hate him (TgN Gen 49:11). The author goes on to give details of His appearance: beautiful eyes, teeth whiter than milk, and garments dipped in blood (TgN Gen 49:11–12).[25] Anna Kuśmirek points out that in the expression (TgN Gen 49:11) 'he will gird his loins' (אסר חרציה) one can see a reference to the idea of the Warrior Messiah, since the translators understood the verb אסר to mean gird the sword (Kuśmirek 2018, 183). On the other hand, in addition to this image, the following verse also presents the Messiah as a peacemaker who brings prosperity and abundance to his people (TgN Gen 49:12). Another important text alluding to the King Messiah is a targumic addition called 'The Poem of the Four Nights' (TgN Ex 12:42). It speaks of God's redemptive interventions in the history of the Chosen People, identified as the night of the creation of the world, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Exodus from Egypt and the coming of the Messiah. This last night will be marked by the presence of Moses walking alongside the King Messiah who will come from on high. Both will walk at the head of the flock, and between them will be the Word (Memra) of the Lord. A similar tradition of Moses walking at the head of the people in the world to come is found in TgN Deut 33:21. The last two references to the King Messiah appear in the Targum of Numbers. TgN Num 11:26 refers to two mysterious figures: Gog and Magog, who will come to Jerusalem and be defeated by the King Messiah. Gog and Magog in the book of Ezekiel are symbolic of Israel's enemies who will attack it in the end times, but will be defeated by God Himself (Ezekiel 38–39). In the New Testament, on the other hand, they are portrayed as nations under the power of Satan who will fight against believers in the end times, but will ultimately be defeated by God (Rev 20:7–9).[26] Targum Neofiti 1 links the victory over the powers of evil with the figure of the King Messiah, who alone will destroy all the enemies of the Chosen People. A similar idea is conveyed by the tradition contained in TgN Num 24:7, which describes the Messiah as the king and redeemer who brings deliverance to Israel.

[25] For more on the image of the Messiah in the Blessing of Judah (Gen 49:8–12) in the Targums (see Kuśmirek 2018, 178–184).

[26] For a comprehensive study of the characters of Gog and Magog (see Böe 2001; cf. Kubisiak 2022, 30–46).

3.6. The motif of angels

The Hebrew Bible portrays the angel as a heavenly being who serves God and does His will (Wróbel 2017, 250). He is God's messenger at God's disposal, somehow connecting heaven and earth (Gen 28:12). The literature of Second Temple Judaism shows a growing interest in angelology. Over time, specific functions, names, hierarchies, and even names of particular groups (e.g., archangels, cherubim, seraphim) are attributed to them (Wróbel 2017, 250).

Angels also appear several times in Targum Neofiti 1. The author attributes to them the ability to distinguish between good and evil, which is an attribute of God in the Hebrew Bible (TgN Gen 3:5). At another point, however, he reminds us that their power is limited, since only God holds the four keys of rain, food, graves and barrenness (TgN Gen 30:22). As spiritual beings, they cannot eat, which is why the Targumist points out that when they entertained Abraham, they only 'were giving the impression of eating and drinking' (TgN Gen 18:8). Their role is to stand before God, to serve (TgN Ex 33:23) and to give Him glory (TgN Gen 32:27). However, they are not allowed to call on the Holy Name of God until the Israelites say the words 'Holy, Holy, Holy' (TgN Deut 32:3; cf. Everson 2010, 241). They are often depicted as whole angelic hosts, 'holy angels' (מלאכין קדישין), and their number is described as 'tens of thousands' (TgN Deut 33:2).

In Targum Neofiti 1, God sends an 'angel of mercy' to carry out His promises of salvation or to save from danger.[27] Abraham, remembering the exodus from his homeland and the covenant he had made, assures his servant that the Lord will send his angel of mercy to help him find a suitable wife for Isaac (TgN Gen 24:7). The Angel of Mercy is sent to lead the Israelites out of Egypt (TgN Ex 20:16), to precede them in their wanderings in the desert (TgN Ex 23:23M), to guard the people (TgN Ex 23:20) and to lead them to the Promised Land (TgN Ex 32:34M). The Chosen People, in turn, are to obey him and not oppose his words.

The motif of the angels also appears in the scene of the sacrifice of Isaac, whose eyes gaze on the angels on high (TgN Gen 22:10). The patriarch Jacob, who meets angels on his journey, recognises them as messengers of the Lord who come to rescue him from the hands of his enemies (TgN Gen 32:3). The mysterious figure struggling with Jacob is identified as an angel called Sariel

[27] TgN Gen 24:7; TgN Gen 28:13M; TgN Ex 23:20; TgN Ex 23:23M; TgN Ex 32:34M; TgN Num 20:16.

(TgN Gen 32:25).[28] He stands at the head of the angels praising God (TgN Gen 32:27). In addition, each of the angels has a specific role. The three strangers who came as guests to Abraham are described as angels sent with three specific tasks, 'because it is impossible for one angel from on high that he be sent for more than one thing' (TgN Gen 18:1). They can also bring death, as in the case of the angel who tries to kill Moses (TgN Ex 4:24) and is also called the 'angel of death' (TgN Ex 4:26).

David L. Everson points out that in Targum Neofiti 1 angels are in some way associated with God's revelation, but are never the instrument of revelation (Everson 2010, 238). Reference can be made to TgN Gen 33:10 where, in order to avoid anthropomorphising God, the angels become the object of revelation. The face of God is here identified with the face of the angels before the Lord. Similarly, in TgN Deut 33:2, the angels do not convey the revelation, but merely accompany God as He reveals Himself.

4. Comparative analysis

Targum Neofiti 1 has many similarities with the Apocalypse of Abraham. In both works there is a motif of two worlds, which are presented in opposition to each other. The present world is a time in which the righteous experience oppression and suffering, and evil seems to reign over them. But the world to come, at the end of time, will bring justice and pay everyone for what they have done. The good will receive a reward, the happiness of dwelling in the garden of Eden, which was prepared for them even before the creation of the world. The wicked, on the other hand, will be judged according to their deeds and condemned to the punishment of fire, a place called Gehenna or Hades. 'The Day of Great Judgment' will be the moment when God's justice will be revealed and man will answer for his deeds. The Apocalypse of Abraham, on the other hand, emphasises more the aspect of the judgement of the peoples who oppress Israel and worship foreign gods. For they will be judged according to how they have treated the Chosen People. It is worth noting that expressions such as: 'this world', 'the world to come', 'Gehenna', do not appear in the Targum Onkelos, which is considered normative for Judaism, and are rarely found in the Targums of the

[28] The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan gives 16 different names of angels (cf. Everson 2010, 239).

Prophets (McNamara 2010, 201). This would attest to the early tradition of the motif and the works described.

Another important idea is the belief in an afterlife. The author of Targum Neofiti 1 explicitly proclaims the hope of 'rising from the dust of the earth' (TgN Gen 3:19). The moment of the resurrection, defined as 'the bringing to life of the dead' (TgN Gen 19:26), is linked to life in the world to come. On the other hand, the Apocalypse of Abraham does not directly mention the resurrection of the dead, but this does not exclude the belief in life after death. This is evidenced by the existence of the garden of Eden, where the righteous rest after death, and Hades, the place of the wicked. Apart from these differences, both works confirm that the value of the life to come is infinitely greater than the price of even the greatest suffering in this life.[29]

Targum Neofiti 1 portrays the Messiah as a King from the tribe of Judah who will be the liberator of the Chosen People. He will bring together all the oppressed Jews of Israel and the Diaspora. He will lead the people with Moses, rule over the nations, be the judge and avenger of Israel, the One who will overcome Gog and Magog. At the end of days He will restore peace, for He will be sent by God 'from on high', and the time of His coming is mysterious, but it is to be on the night of Passover (TgN Ex 12:42). A similar vision of the Messiah is described in the Apocalypse of Abraham. However, later traditions, such as those in the Targum Onkelos, move away from the vision of the Messiah as a warrior and present the Messiah as a teacher of the Law (Fernandez 1981, 143). The reason for this may have been the change in the political situation after the fall of the Bar Kochba Revolt (A.D. 135).[30]

There are also some differences in angelology, although in both works the figures are associated with divine revelation. In Targum Neofiti 1, the angels do not convey revelation, but merely accompany God as He reveals His mysteries. In the apocrypha in question, on the other hand, the angels are seen as bearers of revelation, sent by the Lord. The angel Iaoel leads Abraham on a heavenly journey and reveals to him secret visions.

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[29] The contrast between 'this world' and 'the world to come' can also be found in the apocryphal works of the 4 Ezra from the 1st century A.D. and in 2 Baruch – see 4 Ezra 4:2.27; 4 Ezra 6:9; 4 Ezra 7:12.50.113; 4 Ezra 8:1–2.52; 2 Baruch 44:11–13.

[30] After the defeat of A.D. 70 and the collapse of the Bar Kochba Revolt (A.D. 135), there is a trend in rabbinic Judaism towards a reduction of apocalyptic imagery. The emphasis is on law and its interpretation.

When comparing the works under analysis, it should be noted that the representation of the figure of Abraham itself shows many parallels. This includes a similar interpretation of the biblical scene in Genesis 15, where it is understood as the moment of Abraham's vision. The incoming fowl is a symbol of hostile kingdoms (TgN Gen 15:12) or Azazel, who has a similar symbolism (Apoc. Ab. 13:3–6). The Targum also mentions a vision of Gehenna, where evildoers who fight against the law end up (TgN Gen 15:17), which is also the subject of an apocryphal hero's revelation (Apoc. Ab. 24:7). Moreover, the first part of the Apocalypse of Abraham, concerning the story of Terach worshipping idols (Apoc. Ab. 1–8), finds its parallel in the targumic text speaking of Abraham. For the Word (Memra) of the Lord took him from his father's house when the nations tried to deceive him into serving foreign idols (TgN Gen 20:13).

Finally, it should be noted that apocalyptic elements are strongly emphasised in both works. The ideas contained in the apocrypha, which date from the turn of the first and second centuries A.D., reveal the religious ideas of the people of that time about the end times and the vision of Israel's deliverance from slavery. Similar motifs can be discerned in the Targum Neofiti 1, which would testify to its early traditions. The research carried out in this paper can therefore contribute to a better understanding of the apocalyptic visions characteristic of this period and of the texts contained in the New Testament. This idea is well reflected in the words of Cain, which could be described as an 'eschatological creed': 'There is a judgement, and there is a judge, and there is another world. And there is giving of good reward to the just and vengeance is exacted of the wicked in the world to come' (TgN Gen 4:8).

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