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Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon

A New Reading in the Light of New Textual and Liturgical Witnesses

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Summary

A new analysis of the so-called *Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon* (known mostly from literary documents in Slavonic) is based on the totality of the available sources, including a recently published (2000) Greek recension and recently found (2013) but unpublished two Latin ones. It is argued that the text was written in Hebrew in the late Second Temple period, being therefore roughly contemporaneous to the *Damascus Document* and some other Dead Sea Scrolls and representing a similar but different liturgy and theology. The original liturgical setting of the chalice as a liturgical utensil is some kind of new wine festival.

Keywords

Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon – Ezekiel – Septuagint Papyrus 967 – second Temple period – Zion/Sion – Jewish Christianity – John 11 of Jerusalem – Sion basilica

1 Introduction

There is a growing consensus that attributes *Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon* to the epoch of Christian origins, even though sceptics are still not convinced.¹ Below, I would like to re-evaluate the case, taking into account new

1 As far as I know since 1990, there was no scholarly publication defending any later date of the text. Nevertheless, the editors of the two-volume *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, eds. R. Bauckham, J.R. Davila, and A. Panayotov, vol. 1, Grand Rapids,

textual data (still unpublished) and recent scholarship in the liturgical traditions that have passed under the name of Ezekiel, which are referred to in *Inscription*.

1.1 Slavonic Tradition

The manuscript tradition of the so-called *Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon* in Slavonic is very ample.² *Inscription* is a part of, at least, three macroforms (long works having an invariant structure of their own) and many manuscripts of miscellaneous contents. The three macroforms are the following:

1. The long *Vita Constantini* (ch. 13), one of the two apostles of the Slavs (late 9th century, 58 manuscripts so far studied but no critical edition available),³
2. *Prophecy of Solomon* (often referred to as *Slovesa svjatyx prorok* [*The Words of the Holy Prophets*], according to its title in the 1907 I.E. Evseev's *editio princeps*),⁴ an anti-Jewish Byzantine polemical work, 13th century, preserved in Slavonic only (critical edition based on 5 manuscripts),⁵

Mich. – Cambridge, 2013 (vol. 2 is forthcoming), with whom we have had a conversation in 2009, became unconvinced in a pre-seventh-century date of the text and, therefore, did not include it into their project.

2. The most comprehensive, whereas still not exhaustive review is provided by M. Capaldo, "Respect of the *Textus Traditus* or Venture into Conjecture? On a Recent Interpretation of *Vita Constantini* 13", *Полаата књигописна* [*Polata k'nigopis'naja*], 25-26 (1994), pp. 4-92. This paper has been written in the context of long polemics between Mario Capaldo and Riccardo Picchio (1923-2011), especially against Picchio's "Chapter 13 of *Vita Constantini*: Its Text and Contextual Function," *Slavia Hierosolymitana*, 7 (1985), pp. 133-152. Picchio answered with "Alle prese con la *Vita Constantini*," *АИОН. Slavistica*, 1 (1993), pp. 29-63, and, finally, Capaldo answered with "Sul 'Programma' di Costantino. Per la soluzione di un enigma salomonico in risposta a Riccardo Picchio," *Europa Orientalis*, 15 (1996), pp. 237-260. There is no need to return to the discussion of Picchio's emendation of strophe III and the alleged quotation from Isa 35:2 in the same strophe.
3. For the number of presently known manuscripts of *vc* see G. Ziffer, "La tradizione russa sud-occidentale della *Vita Constantini*," in: *Studi slavistiche offerti a Alessandro Ivanov nel suo 70. compleanno*, ed. M.-L. Ferrazzi (Collana dell'Istituto di Lingue e Letterature dell'Europa Orientale, Università di Udine, 13; Sezione di slavistica, 4), Udine, 1992, pp. 370-397, at p. 372, n. 9.
4. The history of the title in the manuscripts is discussed by R. Stichel, "König Salomon, der Hl. Methodios von Olympos/Patara und die byzantinische Polemik gegen die Juden," in: *ПОЛУГЕТΩΡ. Scripta slavica Mario Capaldo dicata*, ed. C. Diddi, Moscow – Rome, 2015, pp. 281-296.
5. Critical edition by E. Vodolazkin and T. Rudi in Supplement IV of the monograph: E.Г. Водолазкин, *Всемирная история в литературе Древней Руси (на материале хронографического повествования XI–XV веков)*. 2-е издание, переработанное и

3. *Chronographical Palaea*, in both long and short recensions: a Russian compilation based on the Byzantine *Palaea interpretata* but including many other sources available in Slavonic (dozens of manuscripts, no critical edition).⁶

The total number of Slavonic manuscripts seems to be hundreds. All of them contain a christological interpretation of the text, which short summary is put into the mouth of St Constantine (Cyril) by his hagiographer. There is no mark of a common origin of chapter 13 of *Vita Constantini* and the text in the Slavonic anti-Jewish compilations.⁷

The text of the inscription itself, however, is basically the same. Most often the differences are merely the omission of one or two words. It looks like there was a unique Slavonic translation, whereas, of course, more investigations are needed.

1.2 *Non-Slavonic Traditions (Greek and Latin)*

The non-Slavonic recensions are preserved within miscellaneous manuscripts outside any invariant macroforms.

The Greek text is known from two manuscripts, both without any interpretation unless the title attributing this text to the Chalice of Solomon. The two manuscripts contain different recensions of the text.

Recension Greek I (longer). The earliest Greek manuscript of *Inscription* is the Psalter approximately dated to 951 (before 957), Oxford, Bodleian Library *Auct. D.4.1*. The text of *Inscription* was found there by Rainer Stichel and was first announced by him in 1993 in an oral communication. Prof. Stichel is still preparing his study of *Inscription*.⁸ Meanwhile, the text was published, with a

дополненное (Библиотека Пушкинского Дома) [E.G. Vodolazkin, *World History in the Literature of Old Rus' (according to the data of the Chronographs and Palaeas of the 11th-15th centuries)*, reworked and augmented (Library of Pushkinsky Dom)], St. Petersburg, 2008, 2nd edn, pp. 389-467. Cf. my review article with a study of *Prophecy of Solomon*: B. Lourié, "Slavonic Texts of Hard Fate: The *Prophecy of Solomon* and Some Others," *Scr*, 5 (2009), pp. 364-390. Here I argue that the Byzantine compilation was composed in the political situation created by Theodore Komnenos Doukas's coronation as the emperor in 1229.

6 See Capaldo, "Respect of the *Textus Traditus*," for more details.

7 As was established by Capaldo in 1994 against Picchio, who considered *Vita Constantini* as the ultimate source of the entire Slavonic tradition.

8 I am very grateful to Prof. Stichel for having provided me the text in 1996 shortly after its discovery. Moreover, I owe to Prof. Stichel the reference to its publication (see next footnote). However, Prof. Stichel, after having read an earlier draft of this paper, remained unconvinced by my argumentation, even though he agreed with me in considering this text pre-Christian Jewish.

reference to Stichel's finding, by Ihor Ševčenko in 2000.⁹ The text in Greek I is distorted but is more complete than that of Greek II. The title of *Inscription* is: Ἐπίγραμμα τοῦ Σολομώντος εἰς τὸν κρατῆρα σαμαριστῆ. ἑλληνιστῆ. ῥωμαιστῆ καὶ ἑβραϊστῆ (original spelling) "The Epigram on the Chalice of Solomon – in Samaritan, Greek, Latin, and Hebrew"; cf. only Samaritan and Hebrew are mentioned in the most of the sources in Slavonic.¹⁰

Recension Greek II (shorter). This recension was published by Ihor Ševčenko in 1967¹¹ (from a twelfth-century collection of private prayers, Madrid, *Scorial. gr.* Ψ.III.7). The title of *Inscription* is Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς τὸ ποτήριον τοῦ Σολομώντος "The Epigram on the Cup of Solomon." I reserve the word 'chalice' for κρατῆρ, the word used in the text of *Inscription* in both Greek I and Greek II and the title of Greek I and, therefore, I translate here ποτήριον using another English word.

It is still difficult to judge whether the two Greek manuscripts go back to the same Greek *Vorlage* or not.

The two **Latin manuscripts** were found in 2013 by Sergius Temčinas; both are so far unpublished, although Prof. Temčinas is preparing their publication.¹² They represent two different Latin translations. The Latin recensions, unlike the Greek ones, preserve the text on the third edge of the Chalice, thus decisively preventing us from sharing a hypothesis that this text was composed as an addition proper to the Slavonic version.¹³

It would be reasonable to suppose, by default, that the Latin versions were translated from the Greek – at least, unless nothing else is proven. We will see

9 I. Ševčenko, "Captions to a David Cycle in the Tenth-Century Oxford *Auct. D. 4. 1*," in: ΠΟΛΥΠΛΕΥΡΟΣ ΝΟΥΣ. *Miscellanea für Peter Schreiner zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, eds. C. Scholz and G. Makris (Byzantinisches Archiv, 19), Munich – Leipzig, 2000, pp. 324-341, at p. 325, n. 6 (only this long footnote is relevant to *Inscription*).

10 Although Greek is sometimes added: see the synopsis of the relevant texts in Capaldo, "Respect of the *Textus Traditus*," pp. 13-14.

11 I. Ševčenko, "The Greek Source of the Inscription on Solomon's Chalice in the *Vita Constantini*," in: *To Honor Roman Jakobson. Essays on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday 11 October 1966*, 3 vols (Janua linguarum. Ser. maior, 31-33), The Hague – Paris, 1967, vol. 3, pp. 1806-1816, esp. 1812; reprinted in *idem, Byzantium and the Slavs in Letters and Culture* (Renovatio, 1), Cambridge, Mass. – Naples, 1991, pp. 285-298, esp. 294, with *addenda*, pp. 729-733.

12 I am very grateful to Prof. Sergius Temčinas for having provided me the two texts he found. However, of course, I am not authorised to publish them.

13 Such a hypothesis seems to be implied in Picchio, "Chapter 13," p. 138, n. 5; cf. Capaldo, "Respect of the *Textus Traditus*," p. 34.

later (section 2) that there are, moreover, linguistic grounds to exclude the possibility of Latin as the original language.

Neither Greek nor Latin recensions contains the final line with a number. This number is “909” in all main branches of the Slavonic tradition. However, it is different in one minor manuscript family (SlavTolk I it is “10 100 9” but together with “909” in other manuscripts of the same family¹⁴), and there are several other readings proper to unique manuscripts. Mario Capaldo agrees that the reading “909” goes to the archetypes of the Slavonic macroforms.¹⁵

In my opinion, the proper analysis of the text was obfuscated by the ideas influenced by the later Christian interpretations preserved in the Slavonic.¹⁶ There is a need to read the text in the context to which it itself refers and, therefore, forgetting completely the christological interpretation. Such a goal is quite possible due to the intertextuality of our short text.¹⁷

In Table 1, I try to represent the available textual material, despite the actual impossibility to collect the texts of two recensions from the five (unpublished are the two Latin recensions). Thus, I put the signs [+] and [–] to mark the presence or the absence of a line in a given unpublished recension. Moreover, in some cases, I quote (in brackets) some isolated words from the unpublished recensions – where the exact wording is especially important for the further discussion.

The Slavonic text in Table 1 basically follows Capaldo’s reconstruction. As it seems so far, there are no meaningful variant readings, in the Slavonic manuscript tradition, except some evident mechanical corruptions.

14 Capaldo, “Respect of the *Textus Traditus*,” p. 64.

15 Ibid., p. 64, n. 167.

16 K. Mitani is now preparing a study on the accompanying texts in Slavonic, which is relevant to the mediaeval tradition of *Inscription*. See her paper “The Inscription on Solomon’s Chalice in Vita Constantini: An Old Question Revisited” delivered at the joint EABS and SBL International Meeting in Berlin, 7–11 August 2017 (abstract: https://www.sbl-site.org/meetings/Congresses_Abstracts.aspx?MeetingId=30#sthash.vrr00y10.dpuf).

17 Such a goal has been clearly formulated by Capaldo and partially approached in my earlier paper on the topic: В.М. Лурье, “Чаша Соломона и скиния на Сионе. Часть 1. Надпись на Чаше Соломона: текст и контекст” [B. Lourié, “The Chalice of Solomon and the Tabernacle on Zion. Part 1. The *Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon*: Text and Context”], *Byzantinorossica*, 3 (2005), pp. 8–74 (in Russian; written in 1997 and published without updating). This paper could be consulted for a broad Second Temple Jewish and early Christian context of *Inscription*, but I wrote it falling into “parallelomania” in the sense employed by S. Sandmel, “Parallelomania,” *JBL*, 81 (1962), pp. 1–13.

TABLE 1

Slavonic	Translation of Slavonic	Greek I (c. 951) ^a	Greek II (12th cent.)	Lat I (9th cent.)	Lat II (16/17th cent.)
[I.1] ЧАША МОА ЧАША МОА	[I.1] my chalice my chalice	[I.1] κρατήρ μου κρατήρ μου	[I.1] κρατήρ μου κρατήρ μου	[I.1] [+] (crater)	[I.1] [+] (crater)
[I.2] проричан дондеже звѣзда	[I.2] prophesy until the star [ungrammatical or elliptic phrase]	[I.2] προφήτευε έως οὐ ἀστήρ	[I.2] προφήτευσον ἕως οὐ ἀστήρ	[I.2] [+] (usque ad stellam)	[I.2] [+] (usque ad stellam) [II.1] <i>partially shifted here</i>
[I.3] ВЪ ПИВО БОУДИ ГОСПОДИ/ГОСПОДЕВИ ПРЪВЕНЦЮ БДАЦЮУ НОЦІЮ	[I.3] be for drink to/for/of the Lord ^b the first(born) who wakes at night	[I.3] εἰς πόμα ἔσο κυρίου ἐν νυκτί πρ<ωτ>οτόκου ἐγρηγορότος	[I.3] εἰς πομα ἔσω κ(υρίο)υ πρωτοτόκου ἐγρηγορότος ^c ἐν νυκτί	[I.3] (vigilantis)	[I.3] (jugulantis) [sc., joculantis*]
[II.1] НА ВЪКОУШЕНІЕ ГОСПОДНЕ СЪТВОРЕНА ДРЕВА ИНОГО	[II.1] created for the Lord's taste from another tree/ wood	[II.1-2] τρυφήν. ἀναβόησον περίκουπον εἰς γεῦσιν <τρ>υφῆς καὶ ξύλου ἐτέρου πίε· μέθυσον	[II.1]	[II.1] [+]	[II.1-2] [+]
[II.2] ПІИ И ОУПІСА ВЕСЕЛІЕМЪ	[II.2] drink and be drunken from exultation		[II.2] πίε μέθυσον τρυφῆς	[II.2] [+]	
[II.3] И ВЪЗЪПІИ АЛΛΗΛΟΥΑ	[II.3] and cry out Hallelujah	[II.3] ἀναβόησον ἀλληλούϊα	[II.3] ἀναβόησον ἀλληλούϊα	[III.3] [+]	[II.3] [+]
[III.1] СЕ КНАЗЪ И ΟΥЗРИТЪ ВЕСЬ СЪНЕМЪ СЛАВОУ ЕГО	[III.1] lo, the Prince, and the whole congregation shall see his glory	[III.1] [-]	[III.1] [-]	[III.1] [+] (judex) [sc., dux*]	[III.1] [+]

TABLE 1 (cont.)

Slavonic	Translation of Slavonic	Greek I (c. 951) ^a	Greek II (12th cent.)	Lat I (9th cent.)	Lat II (16/17th cent.)
[III.2] и ДАВИДЪ ЦАРЬ ПОСРЕДѢ ИХЪ	[III.2] and king David is in the midst of them	[III.2] [-]	[III.2] [-]	[III.2] [+]	[III.2] [+]
ДЕВАТЬ СОТЪ И ДЕВАТЬ	nine hundred and nine	[-]	[-]	[-]	[-]

* Note: *judex* instead of *dux* and *jugulare* instead of *jocularis* are normal for mediaeval Latin.^d

- a This seriously damaged text was translated by Ševčenko as following (I quote together with his interpretation): “Assuming that the prophecy’s first line refers to the star of Bethlehem; that its second line speaks of Christ at the garden of Gethsemane (cf. <keeping> ‘awake at night’); and that lines four and five allude to the last Supper (?) and the Crucifixion (cf. ‘another tree’, i.e., the Cross), the following translation may be proposed, without resorting to further desperation measures in order to elicit the text’s meaning: *Solomon’s Inscription on the Chalice | in Samaritan, Greek, Latin and Hebrew*. Oh my chalice, oh my chalice, prophesy until the star | Be unto a drink<ing cup> of the first-born Lord, <keeping> awake at night: | Luxuriancy – cry out, cut around, for the taste of luxuriancy and | of Another Tree [i.e. the Cross]. Drink, become inebriated. Cry out Alleluiah” (Ševčenko, “Captions to a David Cycle,” p. 325, n. 6). I would translate here *περίκοψον* as “beat <in cymbals>, when <walking> around” rather than “cut around.”
- b The Slavonic manuscripts normally have under the *titlo* (abbreviation mark) only the letters *гди* which could be read as either *господи* (“oh Lord,” vocative) or *господеви* (“to/for the Lord,” dative), but never *господа* (“of the Lord,” genitive) as would require the exact morphological parallelism to the Greek. Nevertheless, in Slavonic (as well as in Lat II), the dative form could have been used as a rendering of the Greek genitive. Therefore, there are sufficient reasons for rejecting the reading as vocative. Therefore, I consider my previous choice of the reading in vocative (Lourié, “The Chalice of Solomon,” p. 34) as erroneous.
- c Capaldo emendates to *ἐγγυροῶντος*. The corresponding reading of Greek II is even more distorted.
- d W.-H. Maigne d’Arnis, *Lexicon manuale ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*, Paris, 1866, cols. 1236 (s.v. *Judex*) and 1238 (s.v. *Juglator* “Ut Jocularis”).

2 Hebrew as the Original Language

2.1 *An “interférence accidentelle” of the Hebrew Syntax*

It is normally considered that all the present recensions go back to a *Vorlage* in Greek. Now, taking into account the Latin manuscripts, we have proof for this

for the third part of the inscription as well (the original in Latin is *a priori* unlikely and, as we will see soon, *a posteriori* impossible).

According to the consensus of the scholars, Greek is the original language of this text.¹⁸ I have put forward an opinion that the Greek text was translated from Hebrew. Now I would like to substantiate that more rigorously.

The main argument is related to the line [I.2] “prophesy until the star (rises? is? sets?)”. In Slavonic, one can feel the lack of a verb. The Greek shows with certainty that a syntax anomaly is observed: the proposition ἕως οὗ would require genitive, whereas the two available manuscripts have nominative, as it is confirmed with the Slavonic version. In the two Latin translations, the text is changed according to the norms of the Latin language (and this is a proof that the Greek and Slavonic recensions do not go back to a Latin original): *usque ad stellam*, but not **usque ad stella*.

Stichel perceived here a syntax anomaly but failed to explain it.

My understanding of [I.2] is that this is a verbless construction calqued from Hebrew, known from the Septuagint (Cant 1:12: “ἕως οὗ ὁ βασιλεὺς ἐν ἀνακλίσει αὐτοῦ”) but unknown in the original texts written in Greek.¹⁹ It corresponds to the Hebrew construction ‘*ad š-*’, also without verb, having the meaning “so long as.”

The absence of such construction in the original Greek texts, including the Hellenistic Jewish writings, signifies with great likelihood that we are in the presence of a Greek translation from Hebrew and not a Greek text written by a Jew. In the terms of Gérard Garitte, this is a kind of an “interférence accidentelle” and not an “interférence implantée” (a feature of a different language, Hebrew, that became usual in Jewish writings in Greek). Only the “interférences accidentelles” reveal that a given text is a translation.²⁰

Thus, the words ΔΘΗΔΕΞΕ ΖΕΪΞΔΑ / ἕως οὗ ἀστήρ correspond to the Hebrew construction עַד שֶׁכּוֹכַב or עַד שֶׁהַכּוֹכַב (most likely, without the article given that our text is poetical) that means “so long as the star (is seen).” It is important to note that such a construction is absent in Aramaic, being exclusively Hebrew.

18 According to Stichel's still unpublished but publically articulated opinion, *Inscription* is a Jewish Hellenistic text written in Greek.

19 T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint*, Louvain – Paris – Walpole, Mass., 2009, p. 312.

20 G. Garitte, “Traduttore traditore di se stesso,” *Bull. de la Classe de Lettres de l'Académie Royale de Belgique*, 5^e sér., 57 (1971), pp. 39-80.

2.2 Quotation from the Book of Ezekiel: Hebrew against Greek

The second argument for the original in Hebrew follows from the form of the Ezekiel free citation in [iii]. It is somewhat at odds with the Septuagint but not – as Moshe Taube observed in 1987 – with the Vulgate that follows here the Hebrew Bible.²¹

In Greek, including all non-Septuagint versions, Ezekiel 37:24-25 twice has “prince,”²² whereas the inscription has, instead, “prince” and “king.” “Prince” is a well-known messianic term in Second Temple Judaism, whereas its exact meaning is not so obvious, even though it is clear that it was interchangeable with “king” in Ezekiel and elsewhere²³ (we will discuss it later, section 5.2). “Prince” and “king” together occur in the Hebrew Bible and the Vulgate only (see all the witnesses of the Second Temple variations of the relevant verses of Ezek 37 in Table 2²⁴). This is an important fact pointing to the Hebrew original of our inscription – given that the Latin influence is excluded.

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- 21 M. Taube, “Solomon’s Chalice, the Latin Scriptures and the Bogomils,” *Slovo*, [Zagreb] 37 (1987), pp. 161-169. Taube himself has tried to put this observation into the framework of his ideas of a Latin and a dualistic Bogomil impacts on our text. These ideas were extremely vague and included, among others, a supposition that Slavonic “another wood/tree” was a rendering of Greek “one tree.” Taube wrote when only one Greek recension (Greek 1) was known, where the corresponding part of the text is lacking. Taube’s supposition is proved wrong with the second Greek and the two Latin witnesses; cf. also criticisms in Capaldo, “Respect of the *Textus Traditus*,” pp. 55 and 76.
- 22 J. Ziegler, *Ezechiel*, 4. Aufl. (Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum, 16, 1), Göttingen, 2015, p. 271; no variants in Papyrus 967, according to D. Fraenkel’s *Nachtrag* to Ziegler’s edition (published since the 2nd edn, 1977) and the edition of the relevant part of the papyrus: M. Fernández-Galliano, “Nuevas páginas del código 967 del A.T. griego (Ez 28, 19-43, 9) (PMatr. bibl. 1),” *Studia Papyrologica*, 10 (1971), pp. 5-77, at p. 38.
- 23 For a broad overview see A. Rofé, “Qumranic Paraphrases, the Greek Deuteronomy and the Late History of Biblical ישיב,” *Textus*, 14 (1988), pp. 163-174. The liturgical duties of “prince” are beyond the scope of this paper.
- 24 The sources of the texts quoted in Table 2 are the following. Hebrew: M.H. Goshen-Gottstein, Sh. Talmon, and G. Marquis, *The Book of Ezekiel* (Hebrew University Bible), Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 168, 171 (Hebrew pag.); Aramaic (Targum Jonathan): on-line critical edition at the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project* <http://cali.cn.huc.edu/>; ps.-Ezekiel in the Dead Sea Scrolls: D. Dimant, *Pseudo-Prophetic Texts* (DJD, 30; Qumran Cave 4, 21; Parabiblical Texts, 4), Oxford, 2001, pp. 23-24 and 61-62; Syriac: M.J. Mulder, *Liber Ezechielis* (The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshiṭta Version, 3.3), Leiden, 1993, pp. 82 and 84; Greek LXX: Ziegler, *Ezechiel*, pp. 268 and 271; Greek, others: Ziegler, *Ezechiel* (apparatus); Latin: *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, Stuttgart, 2007, 5th edn, on-line edition at The Scholarly Bible Portal of the German Bible Society <https://www.academic-bible.com>.

2.3 *Quotation from the Book of Ezekiel: Greek against Hebrew*

Nevertheless, the inscription has readings that certainly do not go back to the Masoretic Hebrew text. The gathering of the people of Israel is, in our inscription, called συναγωγή “congregation” (a civil and/or liturgical term), whereas in the Masoretic Hebrew text and its Greek (non-Septuagint), Syriac, and Latin translations the corresponding word is “power” (לִּיָּהוּ etc. – preponderantly a military term). The Aramaic targum has a word (מִשְׁרָיִם) which meaning “camp (esp. military camp)” or “troop” is somewhere in between MT and LXX.

Nevertheless, the resurrection scene in the Qumranic pseudo-Ezekiel text (dated to no later than the 2nd century BCE) has a close parallel to the Septuagint Ezekiel 37:10: “a large crowd of people,” not a military regiment. Moreover, its word for “large,” רַב, is closer to the Septuagint πολλή than to the Masoretic גָּדוֹל “great.” And, finally, the corresponding Septuagint reading is attested to, among others, in the late second- or early third-century Papyrus 967, which witnesses an independent (if not earlier than MT) recension of the Hebrew Ezekiel. This is why even cautious Ingrid E. Lilly considers this συναγωγή as a rendering of a different Hebrew original.²⁵

Finally, the words ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν “in the midst of them” in 37:24 are at odds with the reading “over them” in the Masoretic Hebrew and the most of translations, even though they could be influenced by the wording of the next verse, Ezekiel 37:26, where the Hebrew says literally rather “between them” (בְּתוֹכָם) than “in the midst (בְּקִרְבָּם) of them.”

The phrases with “king”, “over them”, or “in the midst of them” refer to different situations: a ruler (king or prince) “over” his subject and a leader “within/in the midst” of a congregation, respectively. However, the reading ἐν μέσῳ for Ezekiel 37:24 is witnessed not only with the Septuagint but also with all other Greek translations from Hebrew, thus proving without doubt that the corresponding reading in Hebrew was quite widespread.

2.4 *Conclusions*

In the quotation from Ezekiel, the two major terms (“king” and “prince”) follow the Hebrew text unknown in Greek, whereas two minor terms (“congregation”

25 I.E. Lilly, *Two Books of Ezekiel. Papyrus 967 and the Masoretic Text as Variant Literary Editions* (SupVT, 150), Leiden – Boston, 2012, p. 115. Lilly’s approach is much more moderate than that of those who insist on the priority of the Hebrew recension translated in Papyrus 967; cf. the seminal paper by J. Lust, “Ezekiel 36-40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript,” *CBQ*, 43 (1981), pp. 517-533. For συναγωγή in Ezek 37:10 as a rendering of a lost Hebrew original, cf. also A.L.A. Hogeterp, “Resurrection and Biblical Tradition: Pseudo-Ezekiel Reconsidered,” *Biblica*, 89 (2008), pp. 59-66, at pp. 63-64.

TABLE 2

Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon	[III.1] сѢ КНАЗЪ И ОУЗРИИГЪ ВЕСЬ СЪНЕМЪ СЛАВОУ ЕГО [III.2] И ДАВИДЪ ЦАРЬ ПОСРЕДЪ ИХЪ	[III.1] lo, the prince, and the whole congregation shall see his glory [III.2] and king David is in the midst of them
Hebrew Ezek 37	[10] חֵיל גְדוֹל מְאֹד־מְאֹד [24] וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד מְלֹךְ עָלֵיהֶם [25] וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי נָשִׂיא לָהֶם לְעוֹלָם [26] וְנָתַתִּי אֶת־מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹכָם לְעוֹלָם	[10] the power [<i>sc.</i> , military = regiment] very great [24] and my servant David [shall be] the king over them [25] and David my servant [shall be] the prince to them forever [26] and I will give/put my sanctuary between them forever
Tg Jonathan (Aramaic)	[10] מְשַׁרְיָן סְגִיָּאן לְחַדָּא לְחַדָּא [24] וְעַבְדִּי דָוִד מְלִכָּא עָלֵיהוֹן [25] וְדָוִד עַבְדִּי מְלִכָּא לְהוֹן לְעָלַם [26] וְאַתִּין יתְּ מִקְדָּשִׁי בִּיְהוֹן לְעָלַם	[10] very great troop/camp [24] and my servant David [shall be] the king over them [25] and David my servant [shall be] the king to them forever [26] and I will give/put my sanctuary between them forever
4Q385 fr. 2, 8 = 4Q386 fr. 1, i 9 (ps.-Ezekiel)	[parallel to 10] עַם רַב אֲנָשִׁים	a large crowd of people
Peshitta	[10] سَلَا رِبَا سَعَا [24] سَحْبُو، رِبَا سَعَا سَلَا سَحْبُو [25] سَحْبُو، رِبَا سَعَا سَلَا سَحْبُو [26] سَحْبُو، رِبَا سَعَا سَلَا سَحْبُو	[10] the power [<i>sc.</i> , military = regiment] very great [24] and my servant David will reign [as the king] over them [25] and David my servant will be to them the shepherd/leader forever [26] and I will give/put my sanctuary between them forever
Septuagint	[10] συναγωγῆ πολλῆ σφόδρα [24] καὶ ὁ δοῦλός μου Δαυιδ ἄρχων ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν [25] καὶ Δαυιδ ὁ δοῦλός μου ἄρχων αὐτῶν ἔσται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα [26] καὶ θήσω τὰ ἅγια μου ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα	[10] the congregation very great [24] and my servant David [shall be] the prince in the midst of them [25] and David my servant shall be their prince forever [26] and I will put my holy (things) in the midst of them forever

Variants from other	[10] δύναμις μεγάλη (Aqu., Sym., The.)	[10] the great power [<i>sc.</i> , military =
Greek versions	<i>valentia</i> [= δύναμις] (Tertullian)	regiment]
Vulgate	[10] <i>exercitus grandis nimis valde</i>	[10] the regiment exceptionally great
	[24] <i>et servus meus David rex super eos</i>	[24] and my servant David [shall be] the
	[25] <i>et David servus meus princeps eorum</i>	king over them
	<i>in perpetuum</i>	[25] and David my servant [shall be]
	[26] <i>et dabo sanctificationem meam in</i>	their prince forever
	<i>medio eorum in perpetuum</i>	[26] and I will give my sanctification
		[<i>sc.</i> , my sanctuary] in the midst of them
		forever

and “in the midst”) follow the Hebrew text known today in Greek translation(s) only. This is easily compatible with the hypothesis of the Hebrew original of our inscription but not with the alternative hypothesis of its Greek original: the latter would require postulating the existence, in Greek, of an unknown recension of Ezekiel 37:24-25, different from the Septuagint and all other known Greek translations. Such a hypothesis is to be cut off with Ockham’s razor.

Our previous observation on the syntax of the phrase “until the star / so long as the star” definitively shifts the balance in favour of the original in Hebrew for our *Inscription*.

There is, moreover, a problem with the last word in [II.2], absent in two Latin versions. Greek τρυφή normally does not correspond to Slavonic βεεαλιε (that normally renders ἀγαλλίασις or εὐφροσύνη, rarely something else but never τρυφή; thus according to all available dictionaries). Therefore, it is probably that the Slavonic and the Greek go back to somewhat different recensions of our *Inscription* in the original language, whatever it could be.

3 A Bird-Eye View on the Contents

3.1 Revelation via Drinking a Cup

The Slavists and mediaevalists who have dealt with the quotation material in our inscription were not in a good position to grasp the meaning of intertextuality in late Jewish and early Christian texts. It was normal that a given text limits itself to some part of a scriptural passage or verse but means that these few words are “evocative of a whole context.”²⁶ This method consists of

26 To use the formulation of R.E. Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 2 vols, Garden City, 1966-1970, vol. 2, p. 955.

recognition and proper usage of the key words that the Jewish or early Christian writers and their intended readers used in a similar way to our modern hyperlinks which one should click and open a new window.

In *Inscription*, the eschatological vision of the resurrecting bones of the house of Israel is opened through the prophecy received from the chalice. Similar chalices providing an eschatological revelation through drinking are known from, at least, two apocalypses: *4 Ezra 14* (Jewish) and *Apocalypse of Peter 14:4* (Christian; τὸ ποτήριον in the Greek papyrus fragment only, but this reading is genuine²⁷). *Apocalypse of Peter* is not too far from our tradition, because it quotes (4.7-9) and elaborates on (ch. 4 as a whole) the Ezekielian vision of the dry bones. Nevertheless, it is not too close to the *Inscription*, because there, the resurrection is the prerequisite scene of the judgement and not of a liturgical gathering. The scene with the chalice in *4 Ezra 14* is much closer to our case, because it implies the renovation of the covenant with an intermediary of a prophet. We will discuss this below (section 5.4).

Drinking is explicitly mentioned in *Inscription*: [11.2] “drink and become drunken” Our text presupposes some revelation *via* drinking of a cup.

3.2 “Another Tree”: the Tree of Vine and not the Wood of Cross

The final (third) part of our text refers to the prophecy that follows Ezekiel’s vision of the resurrecting dry bones (Ezek 37). The text does not contain more references to the ‘canonical’ book of Ezekiel but goes along with the so-called ‘pseudo-Ezekiel’ tradition preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls (4Q385 to 4Q390), especially with the fragment partially preserved in the scrolls 4Q385 to 387 (which are three copies of the same work). In this fragment, the eschatological resurrection of the dry bones, depicted by paraphrasing Ezekiel 37, is appointed to the epoch $\text{יבִרְךָ עֵץ וְיִזְקֶךָ}$ “[... after da]ys a tree shall bend and shall stand erect.”²⁸

27 The 3rd- or 4th-century Greek Rainer papyrus fragment reads (translations are mines): και πορευου <...> και πιε το ποτηριον ο επηγγειλαμην σοι “and go <...> and drink the chalice that I announced you”, whereas the Ethiopic has $\text{ወሓር} : \text{ወሰተ} : \text{ወይን} : \text{ዘእቤሉከ} :$ “and go <...> to the vineyard that I have told you.” See D.D. Buchholz, *Your Eyes Will Be Opened: A Study of the Greek (Ethiopic) Apocalypse of Peter* (SBL Dissertation series, 97), Atlanta, 1988, p. 347, for a comparison between this Greek text and the Ethiopic version. On p. 354, he explained the lack of “chalice” in the Ethiopic text as caused by the metonymic translation of ποτήριον as “wine”: in Ethiopic, ወይን means both “wine” and “vineyard”; then, a further Ethiopian scribe understood this word as taken in the meaning “vineyard”.

28 4Q385 fig. 2, 10: Dimant, *Pseudo-Prophetic Texts*, pp. 23-29; this is the last line of the fragment.

This prophecy is well known in both Jewish Second Temple and early Christian sources. It is often combined with another mark of eschatological epoch, ‘the blood from the tree.’²⁹ The latter is often, while not always, treated as related to the tree of vine (and, therefore, to the wine as ‘the blood from the tree of vine’). The prophecy of the tree that shall bend and shall stand erect is also often treated as relating to the ‘tree of vine’. The pseudoepigraphic second-century Christian *Epistle of Barnabas* (12:1) quotes this prophecy in its fullest form as following: ὅταν ξύλον κλιθῆ καὶ ἀναστῆ, καὶ ὅταν ἐκ ξύλου αἷμα στάξῃ “When the tree shall bend and shall resurrect/stand erect, and when the blood from the tree will drop out.”³⁰ It is clear that the tree able to bend and stand erect needs to be flexible. It is not, therefore, any hard wood, but the vine is ideally suitable for such a purpose.

In *4 Ezra* 5:5 we have the second part of Barnabas’s testimony: “when the blood from the tree will drop out.” *4 Ezra* is especially relevant to our theme because this Jewish apocalypse culminates at the revelation of the divine covenant through drinking a chalice (*4 Ez* 14) – even though ‘tree’ in *4 Ezra* 5:5 seems to be some hard wood and not ‘the tree of vine.’³¹

The tree witnessing the resurrection in 4Q385 is the tree of vine, even though this is not explicit in the preserved context of the Dead Sea Scrolls. This same tree will produce the blood. Already in the canticle of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:14 wine was called ‘blood’: “And of the blood of the grape thou dost drink wine” (Young’s Literal Translation).

The Christian transformation of ‘the tree of vine’ into ‘the tree of the cross’ is traceable in different sources, such as hymns of Ephraim the Syrian or Byzantine hymnography in Greek.³² The never separated two *topoi* continue to be joint together in the modern liturgical usage.

29 For an almost exhausting dossier see Lourié, “The Chalice of Solomon,” pp. 13-19, including a review of earlier attempts of understanding the relevant place of *Inscription*. My present understanding of this place is the same as earlier.

30 B.D. Ehrman, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 2: *Epistle of Barnabas, Papias and Quadratus, Epistle to Diognetus, The Shepherd of Hermas* (Loeb Classical Library, 25), Cambridge, Mass., 2003, p. 56; translation is mine. The first who noticed the parallel between pseudo-Ezekiel and Barnabas was M. Kister, “Barnabas 12:1 and 4Q Second Ezekiel,” *Revue biblique*, 97 (1990), pp. 63-67.

31 Cf. the whole passage: “Blood shall drip from wood, and the stone shall utter its voice”: M.E. Stone and M. Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. Translations, Introductions, and Notes*, Minneapolis, 2013, p. 28. The parallelism with ‘stone’ would refer rather to some hard matter. Below I do not enumerate multiple sources where “the blood out of tree” is understood as related to a wood tree.

32 See Lourié, “The Chalice of Solomon,” pp. 15-16. I limit myself here to the main bibliography: P. Prigent, *Les Testimonia dans le christianisme primitive. L’Épître de Barnabée, I–XVI et ses sources*, Paris, 1961, pp. 116-119; J. Daniélou, “Un Testimonium sur la vigne dans

Jean Daniélou considered to be a Jewish midrash the ultimate source of a gloss in *De uita Moysis* II of Gregory of Nyssa, where Jesus is a grape not only “suspended for us” (τὸν βότρυν ... τὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν κρεμασθέντα), as in the text of Gregory, but also “dropping the blood and ensanguined” (αἷμα στάξαντα καὶ αἱμαχθέντα).³³

The text of our inscription mentions “another tree” (ξύλον) in the context of drinking and in relation to “making the chalice”, that is, to fill the chalice with the wine (the metonymic designation of the contents of a chalice as ‘chalice’ was usual in the antiquity). Taking aside the Christian imagery of Christ as the true vine or grape and the new wine of Christian new covenant, we can point to the earlier Jewish roots of the same tradition, which are represented in the Second Temple period apocalypse 3 *Baruch* 4-5: the habitual vine was first planted in paradise by Satan, but then was uprooted with the flood and planted for the second time by Noah according to the commandment of God and as a blessing.³⁴ This new wine is produced from an ‘another’ tree of vine.

The implied liturgical context of the vine story in 3 *Baruch* is the festival of new wine, the second pentecontad festival after the Passover.³⁵ This festival has certainly something to do with the text of our *Inscription*.

Barnabé XII, 1,” *Recherches des sciences religieuses*, 50 (1962), pp. 389-399; P. Prigent, *L'Épître de Barnabée* (SC, 172), Paris, 1971, pp. 166-167; R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study of Early Syriac Tradition*, Cambridge, 1975, pp. 106-113, esp. 110, 112; M. Philonenko, “Un arbre se courbera et se redressera (4Q385 2 9-10),” *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 73 (1993), pp. 401-404; and R. Hvalvig, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant. The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century* (WUNT 11/82), Tübingen, 1996, p. 191. Cf. also a still understudied Slavonic apocryphon *О винограде и како растяше* (*About the Vine and How It Have Grown*): A.Н. Пыпин, *Ложные и отреченные книги русской старины* (Памятники старинной русской литературы, издаваемые Графом Григорием Кушелевым-Безбородко, вып. 3) [A.N. Pypin, *The False and Rejected Books of the Russian Antiquity* (The Monuments of the Ancient Russian Literature published by Count Gregory Kushelev-Bezborodko, issue 3), St. Petersburg, 1862, pp. 7-8. This Slavonic apocryphon of an unknown origin, even more directly than Ephrem the Syrian (*On the Paradise*, 13.6), identifies the wood of cross with the paradisiac tree of vine.

33 H. Musurillo, *Gregorii Nysseni De uita Moysis* (Gregorii Nysseni Opera, 7/1), Leiden, 1964, p. 126 (apparatus). Cf. Daniélou, “Un Testimonium.”

34 A. Kulik, 3 *Baruch: Greek-Slavonic Apocalypse of Baruch* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature), Berlin – New York, 2010, pp. 187-223 *et passim*.

35 See B. Lourié, “Cosmology and Liturgical Calendar in 3 *Baruch* and Their Mesopotamian Background”, in: *H. Gaylord Memorial Volume* (provisional title), ed. A. Kulik and A. Orlov (Studia Judaeoslavica), Leiden (forthcoming).

3.3 Conclusions

The tradition of the prophecy on the resurrection that passed down under the name of Ezekiel is not limited to the third part of the inscription but encompasses its second part as well. The contents of the chalice as a specific – ‘another’ – kind of wine is also featured within the context of this tradition, where it refers to a messianic kind of wine, not necessarily in a specifically Christian sense.

4 Historical Retrospective

4.1 *The “Post-Liturgical” Setting of the Jerusalem/Sion/Zion³⁶ Chalice and Its Replicas*

According to the Slavonic narratives accompanying the text, the chalice was kept in St Sophia of Constantinople. The church of St Sophia was almost officially proclaimed the new temple of Solomon, but there is no mention of the chalice in Constantinople in any sources unrelated to our *Inscription*. Anyway, the Slavonic texts were hardly unconnected with some middle Byzantine ones. The roughly contemporary another tradition of *Translatio Hierosolymi* to Aksum also included some sacred chalice among the holy objects of first importance.³⁷

Some equally remote echoes of ancient liturgical traditions were preserved in Jerusalem. The alleged chalice of the Last Supper (*calix apostolorum, in quo post resurrectionem Domini missas faciebant*) has been shown to the pilgrims in the Sion basilica in the second half of the sixth century (but not earlier!), when this artefact was out of liturgical usage.³⁸ Our inscription, however, does

36 I shall differ between the spellings ‘Sion’ for Christian usage and ‘Zion’ for Jewish.

37 В.М. Лурье, “Из Иерусалима в Аксум через Храм Соломона: архаичные предания о Сионе и Ковчеге Завета в составе *Кebra Negest* и их трансляция через Константинополь”, *Христианский Восток*, 2 (8) (2000) [B. Lourié, “From Jerusalem to Aksum through the Temple of Solomon: Archaic Traditions about Sion and the Ark of Covenant in the *Kebra Nägäšt* and Their Translation via Constantinople,” *Christian Orient*, 2 (8) (2000), pp. 137-207].

38 C. Milani, *Itinerarium Antonii Placentini. Un viaggio in Terra Sancta del 560-570 d. C.* (Publicazioni della Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Scienze filologiche e letteratura, 7), Mailand, 1977, p. 160 (ch. 20, 10). According to the editor, “[i]l viaggio può risalire ad un periodo o tra il 551 ed il 594 o 637, probabilmente dopo il 560” (p. 36). R. Stichel, “Il culto delle reliquie nella disputa tra Roma e Constantinopoli, ovvero: Quanto c’è di russo in Crimea,” *Ricerche slavistiche*, 14 (60) (2016), pp. 49-59, at p. 56, supposes that the chalice was used in the liturgy of the Anastasis: “... il Calice fatto fare dal re Salomon (ma, come pare, adoperato anche nella liturgia della Basilica della Resurrezione a Gerusalemme).”

certainly refer to some liturgical use and, therefore, to an earlier period of Jerusalem liturgy.

Another later reminiscence of this liturgical usage is the Jerusalem feast of the *inventio* of the Chalice of the Last Supper on 3 July (known exclusively from Jerusalem sources in Georgian³⁹). Its date is itself a trace of an earlier liturgy: 3 July is the day of the second pentecontad after 27 March, the Julian fixed date of Easter according to the main Christian historiographical tradition⁴⁰: 27 March + 49 days + 49 days = 3 July. The day of the second Pentecost is the festival of new wine – as it is called in the Qumranic *Temple Scroll*,⁴¹ which continued to be an important festival in Christianity (in the Armenian and Syriac ‘Nestorian’ rites until now; in other rites, at least, until the middle of the sixth century).⁴² Its Jewish Alexandrian avatar (celebrated at the third and not second pentecontad after Passover) has been called ‘Chalice of Salvation’ (3 *Macc* 6:31: κώθωνα σωτήριον).⁴³ This Jewish feast has been developing in mutual assimilation with the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*): the latter acquired its cup of wine ritual, whereas the wine of the new wine festival acquired the meaning of expiation. In an unpublished Coptic epistle by the third Pachomian abbot, Horsiesius (368-386), there is quoted a ‘scriptural’ saying that is certainly sharing, in one or other way, the background of our inscription: “Par le sang du bois je serai purifié.”⁴⁴

39 G. Garitte, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (x^e siècle)* (SH, 30), Brussels, 1958, pp. 268-269. On the history of the feast see S. Verhelst, *Le Lectionnaire de Jérusalem. Ses traditions judéo-chrétiennes et son histoire, suivant l'index des péripécopes évangéliques, conclu par le sanctoral du Sin.* Géo. 58 Novus (Spicilegii Friburgensis Subsidia, 26), Fribourg, 2012, pp. 144-145, and B. Lourié, “John II of Jerusalem’s Homily on the Encaenia of St. Sion and Its Calendrical Background,” in: *Armenia between Byzantium and the Orient: Celebrating the Memory of Karen Yuzbashian (1927-2009)*, ed. C. Horn, B. Lourié, A. Ostrovsky, and B. Outtier (RSEC), Leiden (forthcoming).

40 A.A. Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus and the Origins of the Christian Era* (Oxford Early Christian Studies), Oxford, 2008, pp. 48-49.

41 The date is unknown, but the most widely accepted date is the 2nd century BCE: F. García Martínez, “Temple Scroll,” in: *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam, 2 vols, Oxford, 2000, pp. 927-933, at pp. 931-932.

42 Cf. Lourié, “John II.”

43 B. Lourié, “The Liturgical Cycle in 3 *Maccabees* and the 2 *Enoch* Calendar,” in: *Perceptions bibliques du temps. Études bibliques à l'occasion du huitième centenaire de l'Ordre Dominicain et des 125 ans de l'École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem*, ed. M. Leroy nad M. Staszak (Études bibliques), Louvain (forthcoming).

44 A. de Vogüé, “Les nouvelles lettres d’Horsiesie et de Théodore. Analyse et commentaire,” *Studia monastica*, 28 (1986), pp. 7-50, at p. 11. The Coptic original was never published.

An important parallel to the line [II.2] of our *Inscription* “drink and be drunken from exultation” is the very wording of Philo’s description of the all-night vigil of the pentecontad festivals (the feast celebrated at the end of the every seventh week throughout the whole year) in the communities of the *therapeutae* (*De vita contemplativa*, 89): the meal at these συμπόσια was ascetical and without wine, but the reading of scriptures and the prayers resulted in “a beautiful drunkenness” (μεθυσθέντες οὖν ἄχρι πρωΐας τὴν καλὴν ταύτην μέθην – “thus they continue till dawn, drunk with this beautiful drunkenness”).⁴⁵

At the present stage of our inquiry, we became authorised to consider Second Temple Jewish and Christian liturgical traditions of chalice rituals as, in some way, relevant to the liturgical setting of our *Inscription*. In fact, as we will see soon, the liturgical setting of our text has evolutionised. We will try to trace this process backwards, from the latest liturgical use of the chalice to the *Sitz im Leben*. The latest liturgical setting of our chalice in Jerusalem must precede by date the visit of the pilgrim from Piacenza to the Sion basilica.

4.2 *The Latest Liturgical Setting: the Sion Basilica under John II of Jerusalem*

The liturgy of the Sion basilica dedicated by John II, archbishop of Jerusalem, in 394, was archaic already for its own epoch and had hardly survived the middle of the fifth century.⁴⁶ Its central liturgical object has been officially called ‘propitiatory’. There are good reasons to believe that this ‘propitiatory’ without the ark was the chalice under discussion. This identification, however, is more relevant to the late fourth-century Jerusalem liturgy than to the origin of our inscription. Therefore, be this as it may, we are now more interested in the two passages of John II’s sermon where some chalice is mentioned explicitly.

The homily describes the liturgical space of the Sion basilica as eight (most probably, concentric) symbolical ‘spheres’. Each ‘sphere’ corresponds to an important feast (from the Shavuot/Pentecost to the Sukkot/Tabernacles) of an early Jerusalem – already Jewish – calendar, which structure is known as well from different Jewish Second Temple works. The chalice is involved to the rites corresponding to the III and the VII spheres. An appearance of the chalice in the III sphere is predictable and somewhat trivial, because this sphere corresponds to the second Pentecost and the festival of new wine. The homilist

45 F.H. Colson, *Philo*, vol. 9 (LCL), London – Cambridge, Mass., 1954, p. 166; literal translation is mine.

46 See a detailed analysis in Lourié, “John II.” The data are recoverable from the homily of John II on the dedication of the Sion basilica (394), which is preserved in the Armenian version.

mentions different trees of paradise but especially one of these trees, the ‘true vine’ that is Christ.

The VII sphere, however, corresponds to the Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement and the Christian feast of Encaenia (dedication) of the Martyrium on Golgotha and the nearby Anastasis church. In the relevant section of the sermon, the homilist elaborates on Proverbs 9:1-2 (Wisdom calling to her house for her chalice filled with the wine): “Lo, this is the true pillar with seven bases with whom the sages are supported, and that makes joyful (ուրախ առնելով) those who are called with the love for the chalice ...” It is worth noting that, in Armenian, the synonym chosen for ‘chalice’ is an exact calque of *κρατήρ* (a vessel for mixing liquids), խառնելիք. Another keyword used by our homilist, ‘to make joyful’, ուրախ առնել, corresponds to Greek *εὐφραίνω*⁴⁷ and, therefore, to the Slavonic and not the Greek version of our inscription in [II.2] (“exultation,” not *τρύφή* “sweetness”).

The rites referred to in the VII sphere are explicitly related to the resurrection, being the Encaenia of the Anastasis on 13 September (this feast was also called ‘Easter’ in the first millennium Jerusalem tradition). This is the most important coincidence with the meaning of our inscription, which is based on the Ezekiel’s vision of the resurrection. Indeed, there is a difference because the Encaenia of the Anastasis and the Christian Easter commemorate the resurrection of Jesus, whereas the vision of Ezekiel, even though used as an Easter reading already in the early Christian liturgies, deals with the resurrection of the whole Israel. We are authorised, however, to make one more step towards the Christian antiquity taking into account that John II’s feast of the Encaenia of the Sion basilica on 15 September was an innovation,⁴⁸ and the topic of the feast of Sukkot/Tabernacles with its commemoration of the resurrection of all was initially not separated from the previous feast on 13 September, Encaenia of the Anastasis. Moreover, sphere VII is called “the temple of Solomon,” which would explain why our chalice is called “the chalice of Solomon.”

John II provides the liturgical setting of a chalice in Jerusalem – “the temple of Solomon” and its September feasts of expiation and resurrection (the Encaeniae of the Martyrium and Anastasis churches), together with the new wine festival at the second Pentecost. John II preserves, moreover, such ‘keywords’ as *κρατήρ* and *εὐφραίνω*.

47 Գ. Աւետիքեան, Խ. Սիւրմելեան, Մ. Աւգերեան, *Նոր բարձրք հայկազեան լեզուի* [G. Awetik’ean, X. Siurmelean, and M. Awgerean, *A New Lexicon of Armenian Language*], 2 vols, Venice, 1836-1837, vol. 2, p. 558.

48 Cf. S.S.R. Frøyshov, “The Early Development of the Liturgical Eight-mode System in Jerusalem,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 51 (2007), pp. 139-178, esp. p. 157.

4.3 A Testimonium from John II of Jerusalem

John II opens to us the Jewish-Christian Jerusalem milieu where the inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic ('Samaritan' language of our inscription in *Vita Constantini*⁴⁹ is a dialect of Aramaic) would have had sense. Without going deeper into almost unexplored field of 'Judaising' factions within and near the 'Great Church' of Jerusalem under John II (387-417), it would be enough for us now to recall the leading role of John in discovering the relics of protomartyr Stephan, Gamaliel, his nephew the righteous Nicodemus, and his beloved son Abib in 415.⁵⁰ The inscription found in their common grave was in 'Syriac', that is, in Aramaic, where Stephan was called *Kaleliel* and Nicodemus *Nasoan*. This fact is historically reliable (witnessed by Avitus, bishop of Braga in his Latin letter about the *inventio* of the relics of St Stephen and those with him⁵¹).

Besides the letter of Avitus, which was translated into different languages throughout the Christian world, there is a *Passio Stephani* (BHG 1649d) which was written, according to Michel van Esbroeck, for the same occasion by John II himself but now best preserved in Georgian (whereas also in Greek and Slavonic).⁵² In this *passio*, Stephen recalls Jewish prophecies about Christ. Among them, there is the 'apocryphal' one attributed to Nathan (in Greek and Slavonic, but to Joshua in Georgian), concerning Jesus's virginal birth. It is also quoted in *Prophecy of Solomon (The Words of the Holy Prophets)*, which is one of the macroforms preserving the text of our *Inscription*. The direct source of this quotation is the Greek recension BHG 1649d.⁵³

The middle Byzantine tradition that has preserved both this prophecy of 'Nathan' and our inscription must ultimately go back to the Jerusalem traditions under John II.

49 According to *Vita Constantini*, 13, the text of our inscription was in Hebrew and Samaritan.

50 Cf. M. van Esbroeck, "Jean II de Jérusalem et les cultes de S. Étienne, de la Sainte-Sion et de la Croix," *AB*, 102 (1984), pp. 99-134. For an exhausting list of the hagiographical documents related to Stephen see F. Bovon, "The Dossier on Stephen, the First Martyr," *HTR*, 96 (2003), pp. 279-315.

51 Critical edition of the Latin text: S. Vanderlinden, "*Revelatio Sancti Stephani* (BHL 7850-6)," *RÉB*, 4 (1946), pp. 178-217.

52 See, for more details, my forthcoming study "Some Pseudepigraphic Prophecies in Slavonic."

53 I failed to notice this fact in Lourié, "Slavonic Texts," pp. 383-384, but the source was already pointed out by S.O. Dolgov: С.О. Долгов, "Откровение Стефана. Revelatio Stephani," in: *Труды XV-го Археологического съезда в Новгороде, 1911* [*The Proceedings of the 15th Archaeological Congress in Novgorod, 1911*], Moscow, 1916, vol. 2, pp. 22-53, at pp. 52-53, and, after him, R. Stichel, "König Salomon," pp. 286-287.

4.4 Conclusions

The Jerusalem milieu of John II, of course, is not the *Sitz im Leben* of both our inscription and the chalice as a liturgical object but simply the place where they were re-actualised. When John's Sion basilica rite was abrogated (already in the fifth century), the chalice's status was found to be sufficiently high for being preserved as a holy object outside liturgical usage.

5 The Ezekielian Liturgical Setting

5.1 *A False Track: "Prince" as "High Priest" or "Bishop"*

Despite many terms and phrases of our text now became clear, its main content remains obscure. Who are the 'prince', 'firstborn', and 'congregation'? What is their liturgical setting? That some liturgical situation is implied, one can see especially from the demonstrative particle ϵ "lo, this is" opening the line [III.1].

The term 'firstborn' could be identified with both 'prince' and 'congregation', but, given that we are dealing with a liturgical text, the second meaning is preferable: the whole congregation is "waking at night" [I.3], and so, the biblical term 'firstborn' applied to Israel as a whole (Ex 4:22 and, closer to milieu, 4 Ez 6:59; cf. Jer 31:9) could be applied as well to our 'congregation'. The real problem remains the function of the 'prince'.

It is tempting to follow the simplest way – to equate this 'prince' with either a Jewish high priest or Christian bishop. We have already a precedent in Acts 23:5, where Paul quotes Exodus 22:27: "Do not speak evil about the prince of your people [in the original context, a secular chieftain. – *B.L.*]" applied to the high priest. There is, moreover, a number early Christian, especially second- and third-century witnesses where such terms as 'prince' ($\alpha\rho\chi\omega\nu$) or 'eparch' ($\epsilon\pi\alpha\rho\chi\omega\nu$) were applied to Christian bishops. Finally, there is rich Qumranic material which, at least, partially could be hypothetically understood in the sense of 'prince = high priest'.⁵⁴ This is why I have earlier decided that 'prince' in our *Inscription* means either a Jewish high priest or Christian bishop. Now I consider this as a *faux pas*. The nature of my error is the same as that of those "many older commentators" of Ezekiel who "had thought that the *nāšī'* of chapters 40-48 was actually the High Priest."⁵⁵

54 See a detailed review of all these data in Lourié, "The Chalice of Solomon," pp. 46-57. Among the Christian authors, the most relevant are Clement of Rome (ca 95 CE) and Pseudo-Hippolytus of Rome (*The Apostolic Tradition*, 3rd cent.). Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the most relevant are those dealing with "the prince of the congregation" (CD vii 19 sqq; IQSb v 20-24).

55 I.M. Duguid, *Ezekiel and the Leaders of Israel* (SupvT, 56), Leiden – New York – Köln, 1994, p. 10, n. 1.

The identification of ‘prince’ with the high priest or bishop would require that, in our text, the person who performs the prayer (whose text our *Inscription* is) is speaking about himself in the third person. It is clear that the text is supposed to be read by the celebrant (or the senior celebrant, if a joint celebration is meant or allowed), that is, by the (high) priest or the bishop. If a prayer about himself is meant, the first-person speech is to be expected, probably in plural if the prayer is on behalf of the congregation.

Our real situation is, however, quite different: the celebrant is praying about some ‘prince’ as a different person from himself.

Such a situation seems to be incompatible with the hierarchical structure of the Christian church, at least, since the second century (about the first Christian century we still know almost nothing).

5.2 “Prince” in the Ezekielian Liturgical Setting: Not the High Priest

The liturgy in the eschatological temple of Ezekiel, where the prince, מֶלֶךְ, ⁵⁶ has a prominent place, is described in chapters 40-48. In the Hebrew Ezekiel, ‘prince’ becomes the standard term for kings of Israel, including the messianic new David in 37:25, whereas the usual term ‘king’ (מֶלֶךְ) is mostly reserved to the pagan rulers (with two exceptions, one of them being the messianic David and the Davidides in 37:22 and 24).⁵⁷ Given that the wording of Ezekiel 37 is that of our *Inscription*, it is reasonable to understand there ‘prince’ and ‘King David’ (*sc.*, *David redivivus*) as the same person. We will see soon that this decision is perfectly fitting the liturgical setting, when there will be only one (and not two) prominent figure beside the (senior) celebrant himself.

In the earliest or, at least, early alternative recension of the Hebrew Ezekiel that is preserved as the Old Greek text of Ezekiel in Papyrus 967,⁵⁸ the order of

56 In Ezek 40-48 LXX, the term ἄρχων is lacking but the new terms ἡγούμενος and ἐφηγούμενος ‘leader’ are used instead. Nevertheless, “... this person [ἡγούμενος] is clearly equivalent to the Davidic ἄρχων ‘ruler’ of 37:24” (J.W. Olley, *Ezekiel. A Commentary Based on Iezekiël in Codex Vaticanus* (Septuagint Commentary Series), Leiden – Boston, 2009, p. 525, *ad* Ezek 44:2-3; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 532-533). These problems of non-uniformity of the Greek translation are with no importance to us, because our *Inscription* was written in Hebrew.

57 D.I. Block, “Bringing Back David: Ezekiel’s Messianic Hope,” in: *idem*, *Beyond the River Chebar: Studies in Kingship and Eschatology in the Book of Ezekiel*, Cambridge, 2014, pp. 74-94, at p. 82. Cf., in much more detail, a study by I.M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, pp. 32-33 *et passim*.

58 As a general introduction to Papyrus 967 see S. Kreuzer, “Papyrus 967: Its Significance for Codex Formation, Textual History, and Canon History,” in: *idem*, *The Bible in Greek: Translation, Transmission, and Theology of the Septuagint* (Septuagint and Cognate Studies, 63), Atlanta, 2015, pp. 255-271 [transl. of “Papyrus 967: Bemerkungen zu seiner buchtechnischen, textgeschichtlichen und kanongeschichtlichen Bedeutung,” in: *Die Septuaginta: Texte, Kontexte, Lebenswelten*, ed. M. Karrer, W. Kraus, and M. Meiser (WUNT, 219),

chapters is 36-38-39-37-40 This means that the resurrection scene in chapter 37 is the opening scene of the following vision of the Temple and the liturgy within it (ch. 40-48).

In the text of our *Inscription*, the only quoted chapter of Ezekiel is 37, but the whole text is liturgical. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the Book of Ezekiel our *Inscription* refers to is the recension where chapter 37 has a liturgical meaning – the recension of Papyrus 967 (in its Hebrew original).

The Ezekielian ‘prince’, who is also named ‘king’ or even ‘King David’, “is not responsible for the administration of cult. Not only he doesn’t participate actively in the ritual; he does not build the temple, design the worship, or appoint the priests; these prerogatives belong to YHWH.”⁵⁹

Within the Book of Ezekiel, the system of leadership in the eschatological congregation could be reconstructed as following. The most prominent figure is the secular one, the prince (who is the messianic king David), “the figure-head of the people in worship,”⁶⁰ but he does not celebrate. The celebrants are the Zadokite priests. There is, most probably, the high priest among them but only as the *primus inter pares*. Even the high priest is not allowed to ingress the Holy of Holies which is reserved to YHWH exclusively.⁶¹

“... the *nāšî’* appears not so much as the head of the people as in their midst, with them when they go into the Temple and with them when they go out (Ezek. 46:10),”⁶² – in perfect accord with the text of our *Inscription*.

We see, in our *Inscription*, the same role of the ‘prince’ as the most prominent person within the congregation but not as a celebrant. The celebrant is another person – the subject of the first person in the phrase “*my chalice*.”

It is sometimes stated that the whole structure of the religious congregation in Ezekiel as well as the liturgy in his temple were imaginary, because Ezekiel’s temple itself was imaginary.⁶³ This is a *non sequitur*. In the Second Temple period, it was not impossible to celebrate liturgies and to offer the sacrifices without access to the Second Temple itself. Some minimal symbols of the presence of the ‘true’ Temple would have been enough. The most known examples are

Tübingen, 2008, pp. 65-81]. For the two different recensions of Ezekiel, see, first of all, Lilly, *Two Books of Ezekiel*.

59 Block, “Bringing back David,” 93.

60 Duguid, *Ezekiel*, p. 52.

61 I follow *ibid.*, pp. 50-55 (prince), 59-64 (high priest), and 80-83, 87 (priests and distribution of duties between them and the prince).

62 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

63 E.g., Duguid, *Ezekiel*, pp. 142-143, who considers the whole book as a utopia created in exile and never became true.

those that continue to exist in our days, those of the Samaritans on Mt Garizim and the Beta Israel of Ethiopia (Falasha).⁶⁴ Moreover, we do know, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, a number of documents testifying to some actualisation(s) of the liturgy of Ezekiel. One of them is *Damascus Document*, whose first copy was found outside Qumran in the Cairo Genizah. In my opinion, the Ezekielian liturgical background of such documents is still understudied.⁶⁵

Our *Inscription's* text is going in the same line as these documents, even though its 'prince of congregation' (to use Qumranic wording) could be not exactly the same as that of *Damascus Document* or *Congregation Rule*.

5.3 "Lord": a Mark of Jewish "Binitarism"

Our *Inscription* uses the term 'lord'. In the Ezekielian language, it has the unique meaning, YHWH. In [I.3] this 'lord' is identified with the firstborn, which would be impossible in the authentic Ezekiel. We have seen that 'firstborn' is the congregation. The messianic figure of the prince who is the David *redivivus* is also the representative of the congregation.⁶⁶

Thus, in our inscription the messianic figure of 'firstborn' and 'King David' is also divine, in the sense of the Jewish 'binitarism', as Daniel Boyarin coined this kind of monotheistic theology that was quite widespread in the Second Temple Judaism.⁶⁷

It is less trivial – at least, at our present level of knowledge of the Second Temple Jewish liturgies – that the divine messianic figure has some representative in the liturgy, which is, moreover, distinct from the celebrant. The Christian liturgical norm is that the divine Christ (Messiah) is both sacrificing and

64 Cf. a discussion on the sacrifices and the sacred space in the Qumran settlement by J. Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature), Grand Rapids – Cambridge, 2002, pp. 119-129.

65 Among the studies most relevant to this Ezekielian background of the liturgies described or implied in these documents, I would refer to B.Z. Wacholder, *The New Damascus Document. The Midrash on the Eschatological Torah of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Reconstruction, Translation and Commentary* (STDJ, 56), Leiden – Boston, 2007, and *Angelic Liturgies: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, ed. J.H. Charlesworth, and C.A. Newsom (The Dead Sea Scrolls. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations, 4B), Tübingen, 1999.

66 See Duguid, *Ezekiel*, pp. 52-53. Cf. "... it is as the representative of the people that the *nāš'* gains his importance, rather than due to a special standing as 'son of God' which seems to have been ascribed to the pre-exilic kings."

67 D. Boyarin, "The Gospel of the *Memra*: Jewish Binitarism and the Prologue of John," *HTR*, 94 (2001), pp. 243-284. Cf. D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion), Philadelphia, 2004.

sacrificed,⁶⁸ whereas we have no representative data for the earliest period of Christianity.

Anyway, there is nothing strange to have in the liturgy a person who is the symbolic representative of the divine Messiah. It looks strange that this person is not the celebrant himself, but with the Ezekielian distribution of liturgical duties, it becomes natural.

It is obvious that the congregation meant in our *Inscription* considered itself to be divine as a whole, as a *communio sanctorum*. Such an attitude was normative for the Second Temple Jewish messianic sects, including the Qumran community and the sect of Jesus of Nazareth.⁶⁹

5.4 “Star”: an Element of a Post-Ezekielian Tradition

The star in [I.2] is another problem that I failed to resolve in my earlier paper. Prophecy from the Chalice is expected during the time when the star is still on the sky [I.1-2], and this time is called ‘night’ and not ‘dawn’ [I.3].

Nothing is said on any star in Ezekiel. The star as a messianic symbol from Numbers 24:17 is normally interpreted as the morning star or, at least, the star of *Testament of Levi* 18:2-4, which is seen at the night but shining as the sun.⁷⁰ Our star, however, is a true star of the night. Its shining does not transform night into day. This is not a usual messianic symbol at all. I do not know any direct parallel in either Jewish or Christian sources.

There is an indirect parallel, however: *Damascus Document*, namely CD VII 18-20, only ms A (with a different text in ms B) with Qumranic fragments 4Q266, fr. 3, iii, and 4Q269, fr. 5⁷¹:

68 Prayer of the Great Entrance of Eastern liturgies: Σὺ γὰρ εἶ ὁ προσφέρων καὶ προσφερόμενος καὶ προσδεχόμενος καὶ διαδιδόμενος, Χριστὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν (“for thou thyself art he that offers and is offered, that accepts and is distributed, O Christ our God”).

69 The monograph by A. Jaubert, *La notion d'Alliance dans le judaïsme aux abords de l'ère chrétienne* (Patristica Sorbonensia, 6), Paris, 1963, still retains its exceptional value as a localisation of the emerging Christianity among these Jewish messianic movements.

70 Lourié, “The Chalice of Solomon,” pp. 31-33. There, I referred to an outdated but useful review of messianic stars by J. Daniélou, *Histoire des doctrines chrétiennes avant Nicée*. T. I. *Théologie du Judéo-Christianisme*. Paris, 1991, pp. 276-284, but see now the most important contribution by J.J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Grand Rapids – Cambridge, 2010, 2nd edn.

71 Manuscripts A and B are from the Cairo Genizah; for the edition and translation of the Qumranic manuscripts, see J.M. Baumgarten, *The Damascus Document (4Q266-273)* (DJD, 18; Qumran Cave 4, 13), Oxford, 1996, pp. 44-45 and 128.

18 <...> And the star is the Interpreter of the Law (19 והכוכב הוא דורש 19 התורה) who comes to Damascus, as it is written: *A star moves out of Jacob and 20 a sceptre arises out of Israel* (Num 24:13). The sceptre is the Prince of the whole Congregation <...>⁷²

This text is extremely difficult, because in another manuscript of the same work (ms B), there is neither quotation of Numbers 24:13 nor its interpretation, whereas in other Qumranic texts this oracle is applied to a unique messiah but not to two different eschatological figures.⁷³

Refraining from any discussion on the meaning of the Qumranic term “the Interpreter of the Law,”⁷⁴ we are rather interested in the link between the interpretation of the Law and the star that shines in the night. It does certainly exist. Even though without an explicit mention of a star, the available documents provide such witnesses.

There is a strong Jewish tradition going back to the Second Temple period that the proper time of studying Torah is night and especially the night of Pentecost.⁷⁵ Even more important in our context is the fact that the “beautiful drunkenness” of Philo’s *therapeutae* mentioned above was resulting from the

72 Text and translation according to F. García Martínez and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 2 vols, Leiden – New York – Köln, 1999, vol. 1, pp. 560/561 (txt/tr.).

73 F. García Martínez, “Balaam in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in: *The Prestige of the Pagan Prophet Balaam in Judaism, Early Christianity and Islam*, ed. G.H. van Kooten, and J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten (Themes in Biblical Narrative, 11), Leiden – Boston, 2008, pp. 69-82, at p. 82. Further on the textological and theological problems of this text see Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, pp. 87-91; G.G. Xeravits, “Précisions sur le texte original et le concept messianique de CD 7:13-8:1 et 19:5-14,” *Revue de Qumrân*, 73 (1999), pp. 47-59; and G.G. Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet: Positive Eschatological Protagonists of the Qumran Library* (STDJ, 47), Leiden – Boston, 2003, pp. 43-47. It seems to be a consensus, among the Qumranic scholars, that this passage is in a direct relation to the doctrine of two Messiahs, the priestly and the secular, where “the Interpreter of the Law” corresponds to the priestly messianic figure.

74 Cf. a review of the available viewpoints in F. García Martínez, “Two Messianic Figures in the Qumran Texts,” in: *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Conference on the Texts from the Judean Desert, Jerusalem, 30 April 1995*, ed. D.W. Parry and S.D. Ricks (STDJ, 20), Leiden, 1996, pp. 14-40. Cf. also Xeravits, *King, Priest, Prophet*, pp. 169-172.

75 For a detailed dossier of the Jewish material see B. Lourié, “The ‘Synoptic Apocalypse’ (Mt 24-25 Par.) and Its Jewish Source,” *Scr*, 11 (2015), pp. 87-108, at 102-105. To our present purpose, its most important parts of this dossier are Philo’s description of the *therapeutae* and the ‘Synoptic Apocalypse’ itself, which I argue to be a Second Temple Jewish work (the parable on the owner of the house and thief, Matt 24:43-44, implies a traditional allegory of studying, viz. ‘recovering’ the meaning of the Torah at the night of Pentecost).

reading of scriptures and the prayers at the all-night vigil of the pentecostal festivals (the feast celebrated at the end of the every seventh week throughout the whole year). Unlike the later Rabbinic Judaism, the *therapeutic* tradition required the nocturnal study of the Torah at the end of each pentecostal period and not only at the festival of the Weeks (Pentecost).

In the case of our *Inscription*, the same “beautiful drunkenness” at the night is explicitly related to some ‘prophecy’, but the parallel with the chalice of the prophet Ezra in *4 Ezra* 14⁷⁶ suggests that we are in presence of a pentecostal rite related to the covenant and the Torah, such as the festival of Weeks and especially the new wine festival (the second pentecostal feast).

The star appearing in our *Inscription* is an evocative of the rite of the nocturnal study of the Torah at a pentecostal festival, most likely the second pentecostal, which was a festival of the chalice in some Jewish and the Jerusalem Christian traditions. A remote echo of the same liturgical tradition is the interpretation of the star of Balaam’s oracle (Num 24:13) in one of the two recensions of *Damascus Document*.

6 The Number: a Fourth-Century Addition?

Without summarising in details four previous studies of the number at the end of the Slavonic version of *Inscription*, including my own,⁷⁷ I will propose below a new hypothesis.

All Slavonic commentaries explain this number, 909, as the number of years between the twelfth year of the reign of Solomon (when the Temple was dedicated) and the nativity of Christ. Such a chronology is completely unknown to the available Byzantine sources. Therefore, all previous scholars considered this number to be corrupted. Ihor Ševčenko (1967, 1991) emended it to 989, but Ivan Dobrev (1976) found an error in his computation from a Byzantine source. Dobrev proposed, instead, an emendation to 1019; he was followed by Mario Capaldo (1990, 1994). Then, I (2005) found a chronology fitting with the emendation by Ševčenko, whereas not in Byzantine but in Ethiopian sources (which

76 According to my reconstruction of the liturgical calendar implied in *4 Ezra*, the scene with the chalice falls on the Pentecost (festival of Weeks): B. Lourié, “The Calendar Implied in *2 Baruch* and *4 Ezra*: Two Modifications of the One Scheme,” in: *Interpreting 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch. International Studies*, ed. G. Boccaccini and J. Zurawski (Library of Second Temple Studies, 87), London, 2014, pp. 124-137.

77 See the full bibliography and a detailed review in Lourié, “The Chalice of Solomon,” pp. 67-70.

would have been of an ultimately Byzantine origin or not). All these hypotheses remain worth of attention for understanding the Christian ‘afterlife’ of our text.

My new hypothesis deals with the very appearance of the number in a relatively early epoch.

In the fourth century, there was a fashion, at the end of the prayer texts, to add the word “amen” written through Greek *isopsephia* with numerals as “99.” This fashion reached the texts in the languages other than Greek – at least, Coptic and Latin.⁷⁸

In Hebrew or Aramaic, the number 99 would have been written as 99. This could be read as “909,” too, according to the widespread Semitic usage of the letter *tsade* for “900” as well. This is the core of my hypothesis: the mysterious number is the Greek *isopsephia* for “amen” written in Hebrew letters; it would have been read as “909” but its intended value was “99.”

There are several problems with this hypothesis, but not as many as would seem. The use of the Hebrew letters as the numerals is first attested to at the coins by the Hasmonean king Alexander Janneus (103-76 BCE). The system of Hebrew alphabetic numerals was patterned after the Greek one and, at the coins, has been used alternatively with the latter.⁷⁹ The *isopsephia* was also borrowed by the Jews from the Greeks (and was renamed among them *gematria*), but it is difficult to decide when – already before c. 200 CE or not (pre- or post-Mishnaic epoch).⁸⁰ Fortunately, the fashion to write “amen” as “99” first appeared in Greek Christian documents in the fourth century. For this period, the existence of *gematria* among the Jews is still unproven strictly but much less controversial. Moreover, there is no necessity of Hebrew *gematria* for allowing to some Jewish Christian people to follow a Greek Christian isopsephic pattern with the letters of their alphabet.

My hypothesis requires existence, in the fourth century, a Jewish community of Christians who did not abrogate the use of the Hebrew language for

78 Select bibliography: K. Wessely, “Die Zahl Neunundneunzig,” *Mitteilungen aus der Sammlung der Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer*, 1 (1887), pp. 113-116; P. Perdrizet, “Isopséphié,” *Revue des études grecques*, 17 (1904), pp. 350-360; L. Robert, “Pas de date 109, mais le chiffre 99, isopséphié de Amen,” *Hellenica*, 11 (1960), pp. 310-311; S. Verhelst, “L’isopséphié ‘réduite’ à ‘Ain Fattir et l’Hérodion (Église-Nord): une hypothèse vérifiée,” *Revue biblique*, 104 (1997), pp. 223-236; and A. Luijendijk, “Papyri from the Great Persecution: Roman and Christian Perspectives,” *J ECS*, 16 (2008), pp. 341-369, at pp. 358-360.

79 S. Chrisomalis, *Numerical Notation: A Comparative History*, Cambridge, 2010, p. 157-158.

80 Cf., for post-200 dating: S.B. Hoenig, “Qumran Fantasies: A Rejoinder to Dr. Driver’s ‘Mythology of Qumran,’” *JQR*, 63 (1973), pp. 292-316, at pp. 292-295; for an early dating (no later than the first century CE): H.D. Zacharias, *Matthew’s Presentation of the Son of David: Davidic Tradition and Typology in the Gospel of Matthew* (T&T Clark Biblical Studies), London, 2017, pp. 47-52.

their liturgical and other sacral purposes, whereas living in a close daily contact with Greek-speaking Christians. Indeed, we do know such community in Jerusalem under Patriarch John II and earlier.⁸¹

The fourth century seems to me the most likely date of appearance of the number in our *Inscription*. It is sufficiently late for allowing the Hebrew text without the number to be translated into Greek and, from Greek, into Latin. It is likely that *Inscription* was translated into Greek several times, with and without the number.

7 Conclusions

Inscription on the Chalice of Solomon does not contain any specific Christian features. Even if the ‘chalice of Solomon’ was the same chalice on which was focused the liturgy of the Sion basilica under John II of Jerusalem, there is no reason to see the *Sitz im Leben* of our text in any post second-century Christian church.

The liturgical setting implied in the text is post-Ezekielian, still preserving the Ezekielian prevailing status of the prince over that of the high priest. The text of *Inscription* elaborates on Ezekielian topics similarly to some Qumranic documents, including the (non-Qumranic by origin) *Damascus Document*. Nevertheless, our text shares no some very specific features with the Dead Sea Scrolls, either.

The text of *Inscription* could be roughly dated to the late Second Temple period.

Its liturgical setting is one of the Second Temple period Jewish feasts, such as the Pentecost (Weeks) or, most likely, the new wine festival (the latter was preserved in the Christian Jerusalem calendar as the feast of the Invention of the Chalice on 3 July). Judging from the parallels with the Sion liturgy under John II of Jerusalem, our Chalice’s *liturgical* place is ‘Zion’, whatever it would have meant in the physical space for the corresponding Jewish sect (for example, the present-day Zion hill, the localisation of the Christian Sion, which was inherited by the Christians from some Jewish sect, “the Jewish matrix of Christianity”).⁸²

81 See especially van Esbroeck, “Jean II de Jérusalem.”

82 I would like to express my gratitude to those who have helped me in this study, especially to Elena Chepel, Kirill Khrustalev, Elena Ludilova, Keiko Mitani, Sergius Temčinas, Zinaida Uzdenskaya, and especially to Rainer Stichel for his help and inspiration for this study from 1996 until now.