

## Studies in the Book of Wisdom

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# Studies in the Book of Wisdom

*Edited by*

Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér



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## CONTENTS

Preface .....	vii
Abbreviations .....	ix
<i>Matthew Goff</i>	
Adam, the Angels and Eternal Life: Genesis 1-3 in the Wisdom of Solomon and 4QInstruction .....	1
<i>Michael Kolarcik, S.J.</i>	
Sapiential Values and Apocalyptic Imagery in the Wisdom of Solomon .....	23
<i>Luca Mazzinghi</i>	
Law of Nature and Light of the Law in the Book of Wisdom (Wis 18:4c) .....	37
<i>Moyna McGlynn</i>	
Solomon, Wisdom and the Philosopher-Kings .....	61
<i>Tobias Nicklas</i>	
“Food of Angels” (Wis 16:20) .....	83
<i>Angelo Passaro</i>	
Cosmology and Music Wis 19:18 and the Concept of Creation in the Book of Wisdom .....	101
<i>Friedrich V. Reiterer</i>	
Philosophische Lehre und deren Wirkung aus der Sicht eines Weisheitslehrers. Untersuchung von Weish 1:1-15 .....	125
<i>Greg Schmidt Goering</i>	
Election and Knowledge in the Wisdom of Solomon.....	163
<i>Stefan Schorch</i>	
Jacob’s Ladder and Aaron’s Vestments Traces of Mystical and Magical Traditions in the Book of Wisdom.....	183
<i>József Zsengellér</i>	
“The Taste of Paradise” Interpretation of Exodus and Manna in the Book of Wisdom .....	197
Index of authors .....	217
Index of passages .....	222



## PREFACE

The present volume contains papers read at the Fourth International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, organised by the Shime'on Centre for the Study of Hellenistic and Roman Age Judaism and Christianity of the Reformed Theological Academy, Pápa, Hungary. The topic of the conference was the Book of Wisdom or the Wisdom of Solomon.

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Budapest, Hungary  
10. February 2010

*the editors*

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AGAJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
ALGHJ	Arbeitem zur Literatur und Geschichte des hellenistischen Judentums
AnBib	Analecta Biblica
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
BBB	Bonner Biblischer Beiträge
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des Antiken Judentums
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BiLe</i>	<i>Bibel und Leben</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BThSt	Biblich-theologische Studien
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad novum testamentum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
<i>DBS</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de la Bible Suppléments</i>
DCLY	Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
<i>DSD</i>	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FoSub	Fontes et Subsidia ad Bibliam pertinentes
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testament
GAP	Guides to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
GCS	Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
<i>Interp</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JBTH	Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism</i>
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements

JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplements
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplements
<i>JSP</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplements
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal for Theological Studies</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LeDiv	Lectio Divina
NEB	Neue Echter Bibel
NEB.AT	Neue Echter Bibel. Altes Testament
NETS	The New English Translation of the Septuagint
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
<i>NRT</i>	<i>Nouvelle revue théologique</i>
NSK.AT	Neue Stuttgarter Kommentar. Altes Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (ed. J.H. Charlesworth)
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamentae Graecae
<i>RAC</i>	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des études grecques</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumrân</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RivBibS	Rivista Biblica Supplementi
<i>Sal</i>	<i>Salamanticensis</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers</i>
SBLSymposium	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SKK	Stuttgarter kleiner Kommentar
SPB	Studia Post-Biblica
<i>SPsA</i>	<i>Studia Philonica Annual</i>
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
StUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVF	Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta
SVTP	Studia Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
<i>ThLZ</i>	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum
<i>TWNT</i>	<i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>



JACOB'S LADDER AND AARON'S VESTMENTS  
TRACES OF MYSTICAL AND MAGICAL TRADITIONS  
IN THE BOOK OF WISDOM

Stefan Schorch  
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The general character of *Sapientia Salomonis* and the different influences which shaped it are a matter of dispute. The present paper seeks to contribute to this discussion, as it investigates some points of encounter between the Book of Wisdom and traditions known from ancient Jewish mystical and magical texts. Its special focus is on Wisdom's retelling of Jacob's dream in Wisdom 10:10 and the function attributed to the High priest Aaron and his robe in Wisdom 18:21-25. Before entering the discussion of these particular texts, however, a general remark seems in place.

The Book of Wisdom is traditionally ascribed to Solomon, as its Greek title demonstrates: *Σοφία Σαλωμώνος*, or *Σοφία Σαλωμώντος*. This claim of Solomonic authorship is supported by the book itself, even though the name of King Solomon does not appear throughout the whole text, thanks to several clear references, especially in chapter 9:<sup>1</sup>

You preferred me as king of your people and judge of your sons and daughters; you said that I should build a shrine on your holy mountain, an altar in the city of your encamping, a copy of the holy tent that you prepared beforehand from the beginning [...] Then my deeds will be acceptable, and I will judge your people justly and be worthy of the throne of my father.  
(Wisdom 9:7-8.12)

Thus, it is Solomon who is speaking in the first person in chapter 7 as follows:

<sup>1</sup> In general, the English translation of passages from the Greek bible is quoted from NETS (*A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under that Title* [eds. A. Pietersma and B.G. Wright, New York and Oxford: OUP 2007]). Where my understanding of the Greek text differs from that of NETS in a detail important to my approach to the text, I adapted the translation accordingly.

May God grant me to speak with judgment, and to think thoughts worthy of what has been given to me; because he himself is the guide even of wisdom and the corrector of the wise. For both we and our words are in his hand, both all understanding and skill in crafts. For he himself gave me an unerring knowledge of the things that exist, to know the constitution of the world and the activity of the elements; the beginning and end and middle of times, the alterations of the solstices and the changes of the seasons, the cycles of the year and the constellations of the stars, the natures of animals and the tempers of wild animals, the violent forces of spirits and the thoughts of human beings, the varieties of plants and the powers of roots; and all things, both what is secret and what is manifest [ὅσα τέ ἐστὶν κρυπτὰ καὶ ἐμφανῆ ἐγνων], I learned, for she that is the fashioner of all things taught me, namely wisdom. [...]. (Wisdom 7:15-22)

Clearly, the latter passage presents Solomon as endowed with very special knowledge and powers, picturing him as a hermetic sage and exorcist.<sup>2</sup> This characterization, absent from the Biblical image of Solomon, is part of an ongoing transformation of Solomon, underway since the late Second temple period, into a figure esoteric and magic traditions are closely attached to.<sup>3</sup> Traces of this transformation appear for the first time in the Old Greek translation of 1 Kings (= LXX 3 Kingdoms),<sup>4</sup> which was carried out in the 2nd century BCE.<sup>5</sup>

Since the Book of Wisdom is therefore one of the earliest witnesses for the esoteric reception of Solomon, it seems not surprising that the book incorporates traditions, which later re-appear in Jewish magical and mystical texts, demonstrating at the same time that the joint transmission of magical and mystical traditions is present already at a very early stage of the history of Jewish literature.<sup>6</sup>

#### JACOB'S DREAM (WISDOM 10:10)

In chapter 10, the Book of Wisdom a retelling of Jacob's dream in Bethel from Gen 28:12-13. The text reads as follows:

When a righteous man fled from his brother's anger, she [i.e. wisdom] guided him on straight paths; she showed him a divine kingdom [ἐδείξεν

<sup>2</sup> See P.A. Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King: From King to Magus, Development of a Tradition* (JSJSup 73, Leiden: Brill 2002) 90-95.

<sup>3</sup> See Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King*, 225-30 and *passim*.

<sup>4</sup> See Torijano, *Solomon the Esoteric King*, 27-33 and 225-30.

<sup>5</sup> See P.D. McLean, "The Kaige Texts of Reigns: To the Reader," in *NETS*, 271-76, 271.

<sup>6</sup> Compare G. Scholem, *Die jüdische Mystik in ihren Hauptströmungen* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 330, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1993) 54-55.

αὐτῷ βασιλείαν θεοῦ], and gave him knowledge of holy ones [καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ γνῶσιν ἁγίων]. (Wisdom 10:10)

Obviously, the “righteous man” to whom this verse and its continuation refer is Jacob, but the connection of the last two sentences of this cited passage “she [i.e. wisdom] showed him a divine kingdom and gave him knowledge of holy ones” to the story told in Gen 28 seems less clear. Some scholars suggested instead Jacob’s legacy in Gen 48-49 as the Biblical point of departure for the Wisdom 10:10, i.e. the story about Jacob’s blessing of Joseph’s sons Ephraim and Manasseh and Jacob’s blessing of his sons.<sup>7</sup> However, this seems rather improbable, mainly on account of the observation that the passage in question is preceded by a reference to Jacob’s flight from Esau (Gen 27:41-45), and is immediately followed by references to Jacob’s stay with Laban (Gen 29-30), his successful departing from Laban (Gen 31) and finally his wrestling by the Jabbok (Gen 32). Since the retelling of the Book of Genesis in Wisdom 10 generally follows the sequence of events as told in the book of Genesis, we should infer that this is here the case as well, and that, therefore, 10:10 refers indeed to Jacob’s dream. Differently from the Biblical text, the Book of Wisdom regards wisdom (σοφία) as the driving force behind the scene, not only regarding Jacob’s dream but throughout the whole retelling of the Book of Genesis in chapter 10. Therefore, it is σοφία which makes Jacob’s dream happen.

Regarding the content of the dream, the meaning of “divine kingdom” (βασιλεία θεοῦ) and “knowledge of holy ones” (γνῶσις ἁγίων) certainly needs clarification. No literal parallels of this retelling of Gen 28 seem to exist, neither in Hebrew or Aramaic, nor in Greek sources of Jewish background. We may consider whether the saying that Jacob saw a divine kingdom could be connected to the tradition that Jacob/Israel was seeing God, attested in the text entitled “Prayer of Joseph” and, most prominently, in Philo’s writings.<sup>8</sup> However, this latter tradition is based on Gen 32:31 (“I have seen God face to face”) and on the (pseudo-) etymological explanation of the name “Israel” as “a man who saw God” (= אִישׁ רָאָה אֱלֹהִים),<sup>9</sup> and it is thus not at all connected to Jacob’s dream in Bethel. Moreover, due to the links with the Biblical story of the wrestling by the Jabbok, this tradition hardly implies that Jacob saw a “divine kingdom,” as Wisdom 10:10 has it.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., see A. Schmitt, *Weisheit* (NEB, Würzburg: Echter 1989) 51-52.

<sup>8</sup> See J.Z. Smith, “The Prayer of Joseph,” in *Religions in Antiquity. Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough* (ed. J. Neusner, Leiden: Brill 1968) 253-94, 265-66 and K.P. Sullivan, *Wrestling with Angels: A Study of the Relationship between Angels and Humans in Ancient Jewish Literature and the New Testament* (AGAJU 55, Leiden: Brill 2004) 98-101.

<sup>9</sup> Seder Eliyahu Rabbah 27, compare Smith, “The Prayer of Joseph,” 267.

Another exegetical tradition which should be taken into consideration as the possible background of Wisdom 10:10 is attested in Numbers Rabbah:

*And he [i.e., Jacob] dreamed and behold a ladder etc., and behold, the Lord stood above it etc. [Gen 28:10-13]. — Happy the mortal, said R. Hoshaya, who beheld such a thing! The (divine) king and His attendants standing beside him and guarding him [ותרו ומשמרים אותו] שלו נצבים עליו ומשמרים אותו! (Numbers Rabbah 4.1)<sup>10</sup>*

According to this tradition, Jacob saw God in the appearance of a king with angels as his attendants.<sup>11</sup> However, the description of the vision in Numbers Rabbah seems to lack the more general and abstract connotation of the term βασιλεία, although the use of this word in Wisdom 10:10 certainly implies God's ruling as a king. This observation brings us to favor a further explanation, which seems to correspond best to the whole range of associations connected with the expression in question: Most probably, Wisdom 10:10 refers to Jacob's ascent to heaven.

Although Jacob, unlike Enoch or Elijah, is not generally connected to a heavenly journey in Jewish tradition, a number of sources attest at least that a discussion on this issue was going on. Most evidently, some texts explicitly deny that Jacob indeed ascended to heaven, as for instance the following passage from Leviticus Rabbah:

*And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth etc. and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it [Gen 28:12]. — These angels, explained R. Samuel b. Nahman, were the guardian Princes of the nations of the world. [...] R. Berekiah and R. Helbo, and R. Simeon b. Yohai in the name of R. Meir said: It teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed Jacob the Prince of Babylon ascending and descending, of Media ascending and descending, of Greece ascending and descending, and of Edom ascending and descending. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Jacob: "You also ascend." Thereupon our father Jacob was afraid, and thought: Perhaps, heaven forefend, in the same way as these are to come down, so also am I? Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to him: "Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant [Jer 30:10].*

<sup>10</sup> The translation is quoted from: Midrash Rabbah: Numbers, translated by J.J. Slotki. A parallel version is contained in Tanhuma *BeMidbar* 19.

<sup>11</sup> For the use of פמליא as "angels" see P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelsvorstellung* (Studia Judaica 8, Berlin: de Gruyter 1975) 41.

Once you ascend there will be no descent for you!" He would not believe, and did not ascend. (Leviticus Rabbah 29.2)<sup>12</sup>

Besides this midrash and its parallel versions,<sup>13</sup> the motif of Jacob being asked by God to ascend the ladder into heaven, but fearfully denying this request reappears in a number of further midrashim.<sup>14</sup>

A further source which should be regarded in the context of the question, whether Jacob ascended to heaven, is preserved in Tanhuma Buber:

What is the difference between the dreams of the righteous and the dreams of the wicked? The dreams of the wicked are not in heaven and not on earth as is written: *Pharaoh had a dream; and behold, he stood on the river* [Gen 41:1]. [...] But the dreams of the righteous are in heaven and on earth, since you find that Joseph said to his brothers: *There we were, binding sheaves in the field* [Gen 37:7]. — This is on the earth. And why in heaven? Since it is written: *And behold, the sun, the moon, and eleven stars bowed down to me* [Gen 37:9]. Accordingly, this is the case regarding our father Jacob: *Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder [was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven]* [Gen 28:11]. (Tanhuma Buber, *Wayyetze* 6)

According to this passage, Jacob indeed was in heaven: While Pharaoh, during his dream, was standing on the river, i.e. he was neither in heaven nor on earth, Joseph was during his dream both on earth, binding sheaves with his brothers, and in heaven, being greeted by the heavenly lights. Like the latter, Jacob was in heaven and on earth, as hinted by the ladder he saw during his dream.

While the quoted midrash seems to have at least a metaphoric undertone, the following passage from *Midrash Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* leaves no doubt that Jacob's heavenly journey was a real one, and it thus provides an even closer parallel to Wisdom 10:10:

The Holy one, blessed be He, will show Israel the hidden things above and the realms of the heaven. Rabbi Jacob said: Learn this from Jacob, to whom He said: *Arise, go up to Bethel and live there* [Gen 35:1]. This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him one ascend above another and showed him the celestial realms. (Shir ha-Shirim Zuta 1.4)

<sup>12</sup> The translation is quoted from: Midrash Rabbah: Leviticus, translated by J. Israelstam and J.J. Slotki.

<sup>13</sup> See the references in J. Kugel, "The Ladder of Jacob?" *HTR* 88 (1995) 209-27, 213 n. 13.

<sup>14</sup> See Smith, "The Prayer of Joseph," 287 n. 1. An analysis of the "Ladder of Jacob" is provided by Kugel, "The Ladder of Jacob."

The quoted passage refers to Bethel as the place of Jacob's dream and to the ladder Jacob saw, as is demonstrated by the expression "one ascent above another" (עליה למעלה מעליה). Being the closest parallel to Wisdom 10:10, this passage introduces an element which is absent from the sources analyzed so far: According to *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta*, Jacob's ascent was step-wise. This finally brings us to a further literary corpus, the *Hekhalot* literature.

The step-wise ascent of the mystic to heaven is a typical feature of these texts. However, the *Hekhalot* literature does not explicitly refer to Jacob in this context, but rather draws on traditions connected with Enoch or Ezekiel's visions of the *merkava*. Nevertheless, the motif of Jacob's ladder holds an important place in it. That this motif is deduced from Gen 28:12 was demonstrated in detail by Bill Rebiger.<sup>15</sup> Most prominently, Jacob's ladder appears in *Hekhalot Rabbati* as the *axis mundi* (שפוד שמים וארץ, "the axis of heaven and earth") which connects the whole cosmos:

I will tell them the secrets, which are hidden and concealed [...] and the axis of heaven and earth, to which all ends of the earth and of the world [...] are being knotted, stitched, tied and attached [...] and the way of the ladder [...] the foot of which stands on the earth and the top of which reaches the right foot of the throne of the majesty. (SHL §201)<sup>16</sup>

Apart from being the axis connecting the whole cosmos, the ladder (סולם) is referred to as a way (נתיב), which in the context of *Hekhalot* means the way of the mystic, the יורד מרכבה.<sup>17</sup> Thus, although Jacob's name does not appear, the story of Jacob's dream obviously was one of the key texts of early Jewish mysticism. At the same time, the mystical exegesis of Gen 28:12 seems to be the closest parallel to the tradition preserved in Wisdom 10:10.

The observation of a mystical background may help to illuminate yet another expression which appears in the Book of Wisdom's retelling of Gen 28:12, namely that Jacob in and by his dream gained γνῶσις ἁγίων. This latter expression has often been understood as "knowledge of holy things." Thus Winston, following Burrows, considered γνῶσις ἁγίων as a possible reference to a tradition found in the Testamentum Levi,

<sup>15</sup> See B. Rebiger, "Das Leitermotiv in der Hekhalot-Literatur," in *Jewish Studies between the Disciplines – Judaistik zwischen den Disziplinen. Papers in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday* (eds. K. Herrmann et al., Leiden: Brill 2003) 226-42, *passim*.

<sup>16</sup> A German translation can be found in *Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur* (Teil 2: §§ 81–334, eds. P. Schäfer et al., TSAJ 17, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1987).

<sup>17</sup> Rebiger, „Das Leitermotiv," 235.

according to which Jacob's dream in Bethel consisted of a vision of the heavenly temple:<sup>18</sup>

And when we came to Bethel, my father Jacob saw in a vision concerning me [i.e., Levi] that I should be a priest for them to God. (TL 9:3)<sup>19</sup>

Additionally, one may refer to a Rabbinic midrash on Gen 28:12-13, contained in Genesis Rabbah, which is even more explicit in this direction:

Bar Qappara taught: No dream is without its interpretation. *And behold a ladder* [Gen 28:12] symbolizes the stairway [of the temple]; *Set up on the earth*—the altar, as it says, *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me* [Ex 20:21]; *And the top of it reached to heaven*—the sacrifices, the odor of which ascended to heaven; *And behold the angels of God*—the High priests; *Ascending and descending on it*—ascending and descending the stairway. *And behold the Lord stood beside him* [Gen 28:13]—*I saw the Lord standing beside the altar* [Am 9:1]. (Genesis Rabbah 68.12)<sup>20</sup>

The quoted passages demonstrate the existence of a tradition, according to which Jacob's dream was about the heavenly temple. However, and although the Book of Wisdom in 9:8 does indeed mention the heavenly temple, it seems very problematic to identify ἄγιοι in Wisdom 10:10 as a reference to this tradition, especially due to the following observations, which clarify the meaning of γνώσις ἁγίων:

- In Wisdom 10:10, γνώσις ἁγίων stands in a synonym parallelism with βασιλεία θεοῦ. Being the counterpart to θεός, ἄγιοι seems to refer to divine beings, i.e. "angels."
- In a similar way, ἄγιοι is paralleled with υἱοί θεοῦ in Wisdom 5:5.<sup>21</sup>
- Prov 9:10 and 30:3 suggest that γνώσις ἁγίων as well as its Hebrew equivalent קדושים is not an occasionally phrased expression, but a *terminus technicus* of Jewish wisdom literature. Prov 30:3 parallels the wisdom (σοφία) originating in God with the knowledge owned by the holy ones: θεός δεδίδαχέν με σοφίαν καὶ γνώσιν ἁγίων ἔγνωνκα, "God

<sup>18</sup> D. Winston, *The Wisdom of Solomon* (AB 43, New York: Doubleday 1979) 217.

<sup>19</sup> The translation is quoted from: H.W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (SVTP 8, Leiden: Brill 1985) 155.

<sup>20</sup> The translation is quoted from: *Midrash Rabbah, Translated into English with Notes, Glossary and Indices* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., eds. H. Freedman and M. Simon, London: The Soncino Press 1961), Genesis II, translated by H. Freedman. For an analysis of this text see M. Niehoff, "A Dream which is not Interpreted is Like a Letter which is not Read," *JJS* 43 (1992) 58-84, 72-73.

<sup>21</sup> See M. Neher, *Wesen und Wirken der Weisheit in der Sapientia Salomonis* (BZAW 333, Berlin: de Gruyter 2004) 144.

has taught me wisdom, and I have gained knowledge of holy ones." Similarly, the Greek translation of Prov 9:10 דעת קדושים בינה as βουλή ἁγίων σύνεσις ("counsel of the saints is understanding") shows that the translator understood דעת קדושים as a *genitivus subjectivus*, i.e. knowledge owned by the saints.

In light of these observations we should conclude that the passage καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ γνῶσιν ἁγίων can not be translated "and gave him knowledge of holy things," but has to be understood as "and gave him knowledge of holy ones." As a consequence, according to this passage Jacob obtained "participation in the knowledge of the angels" during and due to his dream.<sup>22</sup>

That Jacob got aware of knowledge originally destined and restricted to the angels is voiced by further texts as well, especially the "Prayer of Joseph," a Greek text of Jewish origin.<sup>23</sup> According to the "Prayer of Joseph," Jacob read in the tablets of heaven.<sup>24</sup> He could do so because he himself was an angel who had descended to earth:

I, Jacob, who am speaking to you, am also Israel, an angel of God and a ruling spirit.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, following the "Prayer of Joseph," Jacob is the earthly name of a person whose angelic name is Israel. It is this tradition, which finds its continuation in one of the *Hekhalot* texts, according to which Israel is an angel standing in the center of heaven and leading the heavenly choir.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, this concept is absent from the Book of Wisdom, since it contains no hint that Jacob was thought of as an angel, and although he was given knowledge of the angels, the Book of Wisdom most obviously perceives him as a man.

If we try to receive a conclusion out of the comparison of the traditions analyzed so far, showing significant joint features as well as important differences, the following picture emerges:

- According to Wisdom 10:10 and *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta* 1:4, Jacob is a man who in his dream received heavenly knowledge.

<sup>22</sup> "Partizipation an der Gnosis der Engel," D. Georgi, "Weisheit Salomos," in *Unterweisung in lehrhafter Form* (JSHRZ 3, Gütersloh: Mohn 1980) 391-478, 438.

<sup>23</sup> Only a few lines of this text are preserved, thanks to their quotation in Origen's writings.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, "The Prayer of Joseph," 258.

<sup>25</sup> Smith, "The Prayer of Joseph," 256.

<sup>26</sup> Scholem, *Die jüdische Mystik*, 67, and cf. Smith, "The Prayer of Joseph," 264.

- In the “Prayer of Joseph,” Jacob/Israel, being an angel, *per se* owns heavenly knowledge.
- The *Hekhalot* texts combine both traditions: Israel is an angel, and the ladder seen by Jacob in his dream is a paradigm for the ascent through which the mystic gains heavenly knowledge.

Thus, on the one hand, Wisdom 10:10 is the earliest witness for a mystical reception of Gen 28:12, and one of the few attestations that Jacob made a heavenly journey,<sup>27</sup> demonstrating that the mystical reception of this Biblical verse was not an innovation of the *Hekhalot* texts, but relies on earlier traditions. On the other hand, there is no direct continuation from the mystical exegesis embedded in the Book of Wisdom to *Hekhalot* mysticism.

Regarding *Shir ha-Shirim Zuta*, a midrashic composition which apparently was redacted at a relatively late date (10<sup>th</sup> century), the tradition contained in Wisdom 10:10 is a further indication that this composition made use of ancient sources.

#### THE PRIESTLY VESTMENTS (WISDOM 18:20-25)

In chapter 18:20-25, the Book of Wisdom retells the Biblical story of the revolt of the Israelites against Moses and Aaron, originally known from Num 17:6-15. According to the text in Numbers, the Lord himself reacted and started to attack the rebellious Israelites by means of a plague. Aaron, on the other hand, with the help of incense, made atonement for the people and thus stopped the plague. Although usually presenting rather brief summaries of the biblical stories, at this very point the Book of Wisdom is much more detailed than Numbers: According to Wisdom 18:21, Aaron used “the weapon of his own ministry, prayer and propitiation by incense,” the following verse says that Aaron “by his word [...] subdued the chastiser, calling to mind the oaths and covenants given to the fathers” (Wisdom 18:22). Verses 23-25, however, seem to present an additional and different version of how Aaron stopped the plague, depicted in this texts in a personalized form<sup>28</sup> as “bitter anger” (κολάζων, v. 22) and “destroyer” (ὀλεθρεύων, v. 25):

For when the dead had already fallen on one another in heaps, he intervened, held back the anger, and cut off its way to the living. For on his full-length robe the whole world [ὅλος ὁ κόσμος] was depicted, and the glories of the

<sup>27</sup> Thus, Segal does not even list Jacob among the “ascending heroes” of Hellenistic Judaism, see A.F. Segal, “Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment,” in *ANRW* 2.23.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter 1980) 1333-94, 1354.

<sup>28</sup> This personalization has its biblical point of departure in Exod 12:23; see Schmitt, *Weisheit*, 78.

fathers were engraved on the four rows of stones, and your majesty was represented on the diadem on his head. From these the destroyer withdrew, these he feared; for merely the experience of anger was enough. (Wisdom 18:23-25)

While in the first version of the story, contained in verses 20-22, it is the “typical sapiential” feature of “the intercessory power of the just man which can effectively turn away the destructive powers of divine punishment,”<sup>29</sup> it is the vestments of the high priest by means of which the “destroyer” is repelled, according to the second version of the story in verses 23-25.<sup>30</sup> From the parts of Aaron’s vestments which are listed in the Hebrew text of Exod 28 as well as in the description of the garments of the High priest in m. Yoma 7:5<sup>31</sup> the following are mentioned in the passage under discussion: The full-length robe (ποδήρους ἐνδύματος, MT לְעֵינַיִם), the four rows of stones (τετραστίχος λίθοι) on the breastpiece (MT וְשֵׁה), and the frontlet (διάδημα κεφαλῆς, MT רִיזָה), upon which the words יהוה שְׁמֵךְ were engraved, according to Exod 28:36, or solely the Tetragrammaton, according to Late Second Temple sources.<sup>32</sup> Regarding the content of this inscription, Wisdom 18:24 speaks of μεγαλωσύνη σου “your greatness.” In any case, due to the apotropaic function of these vestments, the destroyer is unable to pass Aaron the High priest. Thus, according to Wisdom 18, the priestly vestments in themselves own an effective magical force, independent from the ritual carried out.

That the priestly vestments are perceived of as having an effective force is not a feature unique to the current text, but it is attested in sources from the corpus of rabbinical literature as well. The latter, however, usually relate the effective force of the vestments to the

<sup>29</sup> L.G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Cult: A Critical Analysis of the Views of Cult in the Wisdom Literatures of Israel and the Ancient Near East* (SBLDS 30, Missoula: Scholars Press 1977) 224.

<sup>30</sup> It has been suggested by Schwenk-Bressler that the formulation “by his word [λόγῳ] he [i.e. Aaron] subdued the chastiser...” (Wisdom 18:22) alludes to the priestly *logeion* (U. Schwenk-Bressler, *Sapientia Salomonis als ein Beispiel frühjüdischer Textauslegung: die Auslegung des Buches Genesis, Exodus 1-15 und Teilen der Wüstentradition in Sap 10-19* [BEATAJ 32, Frankfurt: Lang 1993] 290), and that, as the consequence of this, the priestly vestments are referred to already in verse 22. In light of the continuation in the second part of verse 22, however, which explains Aaron’s use of the word as “...calling to mind [ὑπομνήσας] the oaths and covenants given to the fathers” and was obviously meant to involve a speech act, this seems rather improbable.

<sup>31</sup> See M.D. Swartz, “The Semiotics of the Priestly Vestments in Ancient Judaism,” in *Sacrifice in Religious Experience* (ed. A.I. Baumgarten, Leiden: Brill 2002) 57-80, 61-63.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Josephus, *Antiquitates* III vii 6; Philo, *Vita Mosis* 2:115; 2:132.

function of atonement,<sup>33</sup> and not to apotropaic magic, as can be seen in the following passage from the Babylonian Talmud:

R. Anani bar Sasson said: Why is the passage about the sacrifices [i.e. Lev 7] placed next to the passage about the priestly vestments? To tell you that just as the sacrifices atone so do the vestments atone. (b. Zebah. 88b)

Other sources, Jewish hellenistic as well as rabbinic, illustrate that the priestly vestments were explained in a symbolic way. Most prominently, this is the case in both Josephus' and Philo's writings.<sup>34</sup> According to Philo's *Life of Moses*, the robe of the High priest is an image of the air, while the pomegranates on the robe represent earth and water respectively, and the bells are symbols of the harmony between the two. Similarly, links connect the ephod with the heaven, and the twelve stones on the breastpiece with the signs of the zodiac.<sup>35</sup>

Most obviously, this symbolic element is already contained in the way, in which Wisdom 18 perceives the priestly vestments,<sup>36</sup> telling that on the High priest's full-length robe "the whole world" (ὅλος ὁ κόσμος) was depicted. However, this element is not the central focus of the interpretation in the Book of Wisdom, and it serves only as the basis for the effective magical forces the vestments own. This marks a clear difference between Josephus' and Philo's perception of the priestly garments on the one hand, and the concept which stands behind Wisdom 18, on the other.

Further sources which ascribe a magic function to the priestly vestments do not seem to have been identified so far. In this regard, however, the *Sefer ha-Malbush* ("The Book of the Garment") should be

<sup>33</sup> Compare the instrumental dimension is ascribed to the priestly vestments in the Avodah piyyutim, see Swartz, "The Semiotics of the Priestly Vestments," 72-76.

<sup>34</sup> Josephus, *Antiquitates* III vii 7; Philo, *Vita Mosis* 2:109-135; *Spec. Leg.* 1:84-97; compare B. Ponizy, "High-Priestly Ministration of Aaron according to the Book of Wisdom," in *Goldene Äpfel in silbernen Schalen; Collected Communications to the XIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Leuven, 1989* (eds. K.-D. Schunck and M. Augustin, Frankfurt: Lang 1992) 135-46, 143-44 and Swartz, "The Semiotics of the Priestly Vestments," 68-69. For a comprehensive analysis of Philo's cosmological interpretation of the Temple see U. Früchtel, *Die kosmologischen Vorstellungen bei Philo von Alexandrien: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Genesisexegese* (ALGHJ 2, Leiden: Brill 1968) 69-112. On the basis of both Josephus' and Philo's writings, St. Jerome developed his own symbolic explanation of the vestments, see R. Hayward, "St. Jerome and the Meaning of the High-Priestly Vestments," in *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben-Yehuda* (ed. W. Horbury, Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1999) 90-105.

<sup>35</sup> See Philo, *Vita Mosis* 2:117-124.

<sup>36</sup> "Der kosmologische Symbolismus in Sap 18 ist deutlich älter als die allegorische Auslegung Philos, aber doch auch eindeutig verwandt," Georgi, "Weisheit Salomos," 467.

mentioned, a Jewish mystical-magical composition in Hebrew language, dated by Scholem to the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>37</sup>

The main focus of *Sefer ha-Malbush* is the magical-mystical ritual of “putting on the name” (לְבִישׁת הַשֵּׁם), basically consisting of putting on a robe made from the skin of a gazelle and a frontlet from metal, both inscribed with magical names. Thanks to these vestments, the magician gains the magical power he seeks for. Judging from both the context as well as the expressions used in the relevant passages it is entirely clear, that the vestments referred to in *Sefer ha-Malbush* are thought of as actual realizations of the High priest’s vestments which are described in Exodus and in the Mishna. Thus, *Sefer ha-Malbush* provides a clear attestation for the magical interpretation of the vestments of the High priest and suggests that the account in Wisdom 18:23-25 should be seen as part of an broader stream of interpretation and re-interpretation.

Moreover, the observation that Wisdom 18:23-25 preserves a magical interpretation of the high-priestly vestments is not only important for the understanding of this piece of Wisdom literature, but it also provides valuable information regarding the origins of Jewish magic: It has been suggested that magical rituals were regarded, at least to some extent, as “substitutes” of rituals originally bound to the temple of Jerusalem,<sup>38</sup> attesting a “transition from Temple to magical ritual.”<sup>39</sup> Wisdom 18:23-25, written at a time, when the temple of Jerusalem was still functioning with the ministry of the High priest still taking place in it, leads to a somewhat different picture. The passage demonstrates that the magical interpretation of the High priestly ritual was already in existence before the destruction of the Temple and its cult.

#### CONCLUSION

Looking at the traditions regarding Jacob’s dream and the vestments of the High priest, which surface in the Book of Wisdom, we have to realize

<sup>37</sup> See G. Scholem, Article “Kabbalah,” in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (CD-ROM edition 1997), “beginning of the geonic era”. The oldest manuscripts of this composition date to the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. Although the high importance of this composition was noted since long ago, it was edited for the first time only recently by Irina Wandrey, “Das Buch des Gewandes” und “Das Buch des Aufrechten:” *Dokumente eines magischen spätantiken Rituals, ediert, kommentiert und übersetzt* (TSAJ 96, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2004).

<sup>38</sup> M.D. Swartz, “Sacrificial Themes in Jewish Magic,” in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World* (eds. P. Mirecki and M. Meyer, RGRW 141, Leiden: Brill 2002) 303-15, 307-15. A very detailed and well balanced analysis of the interpretation of the cultic tradition of the Jerusalem temple in Jewish magic is provided by D. Salzer, *Biblia magica: Der Gebrauch biblischer Anspielungen in den magischen Texten der Kairoer Geniza* (Dissertation, Freie Universität Berlin 2008) 335-64.

<sup>39</sup> Swartz, “Sacrificial Themes,” 315.

that this composition has some strong links with the mystical and magical tradition of Judaism. Thus, on the one hand side, the Jewish magical and mystical literature may provide important insides into some passages in the Book of Wisdom. On the other hand, however, the Book of Wisdom contributes some important information to the question, how and where we may find the background out of which these traditions developed.