

LINGUISTIC, CULTURAL AND THEOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF SERAPHIM

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ЛИНГВИСТИЧНИ, КУЛТУРОЛОГИЧНИ И ТЕОЛОГИЧНИ АСПЕКТИ НА СЕРАФИМИТЕ

Abstract. The paper is focused on seraphim. Seraphim are archangels. Angels and archangels are not beings of the material world. They are God’s servants, and some of them relinquish this function and become fallen angels. The qualities and peculiarities of the archangels are subject to mystical speculation but remain unclear to the laity. The logical and linguistic connection of the seraphim with fire, burning, and the red cobra is clear in Hebrew. In the Indo-European languages, such connections are missing due to specific worldviews of languages. The holistic approach includes the treatment of colors as a sign system, the distinction regarding the verbal and visual colors, the different words-terms for color, color as a cultural unit, the inner form

of the word. The paper decodes the phenomenon by studying the Hebrew original and Indo-European translations, as well as theological, visual, humanitarian, and cultural reflexes in Christianity.

Keywords: Seraphim, red, fire, color terms, Isaiah, Origen, transcendence

Резюме. Статията е фокусирана върху серафимите. Серафимите са архангели. Ангелите и архангелите не са същества от материалния свят. Те са Божии служители и някои от тях се отказват от тази функция и стават паднали ангели. Качествата и особеностите на архангелите са обект на мистични спекулации, но остават неясни за миряните. Логическата и езикова връзка на серафимите с *огън, изгаряне и червената кобра* е ясна на иврит. В индоевропейските езици такива връзки липсват поради специфичните ези-

кови картини на света. Откритията на учените за някои характеристики на серафимите е ценно. Семиотиката на цвета в холистична версия е инструментът, който разкрива културните, цветовите и езиковите аспекти на серафимите. Оригиначните термини на Хумболт езикова картина на света (*Weltansicht*, виж Underhill 2009) и вътрешната форма на думата са ключови за обяснението на международното именуване на даден цвят. Холистичният подход включва третирането на цветовете като знакова система, разграничението на словесни и визуални цветове, различните думи-термини за цвят, цветът като културна единица. Статията декодира явлениято „серафими“ чрез изучаване на оригиналните ивритски значения и индоевропейските преводи, както и чрез теологични, визуални, хуманитарни и културни рефлексии в християнството.

Ключови думи: Серафими, червено, огън, да изгоря, Исаия, Ориген, трансценден-талност

1. Introduction

From my experience with academic publications, I have found that without the methodology the analyzes are not comprehensible. Mega Color unites numerous aspects:

- Four types of color tokens: Basic color terms (BCT, white, black, red, blue, etc.), Prototype Terms (PT, light, darkness, sky, sea, blood, fire, all plants), Rival Terms for Prototypes (RT, linen, raven, ruby, grass, tree), and Basic Features of the Prototypes Terms (BFPT, pure for light, hot, burn for blood and fire, fresh for plants, etc.).
- Color as a cultural unit, data on word-associations of color, the symbolism of biblical symbols.
- Theory of prototypes of colors.
- Statistic data as sign.
- The original terms *worldview* and *inner* form of the word (*Weltansicht*) of Humboldt (1836 [1971; 1936 [1999]) (see Underhill, 2009).
- Color and God's transcendence.
- Hebrew and Indo-European languages worldviews.

For details, see Anonymous 2017a, and 2017b.

By color language, the I mean the possibility of colors to signify love, hate, health, rage, anger, righteousness, sinfulness, spiritual purity, spiritual fall, sorrow, joy, and many others.

The seraphim are archangels subjected to many mystical meditations (starting from the book of Enoch, and the texts of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite), important religious commentators (starting with translator's solutions in Septuagint, Philo, and Origen) in Judaism and Christianity, as well as numerous academic scholar speculations by believers and atheists.

Scholars agree that the archangels are members of the heavenly court and the divine council, they can serve as patrols who report their findings to the heavenly

council, and they are God's military servants who execute His commands. Another term for archangels is „sons of God“ (Job 1:6).

Hebrew noun Seraphim שֶׁרָפִים [serafim] is a plural form of the common noun שָׂרָף [saràf]. The word Seraphim became a proper name in many Christian cultures – for humans, companies, and art groups.

The term [serafim] is missing in the New Testament, and it emerges only once in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 6. These creatures are not found anywhere else, named שֶׁרָפִים [serafim], and considered archangels, in Bible appearance.

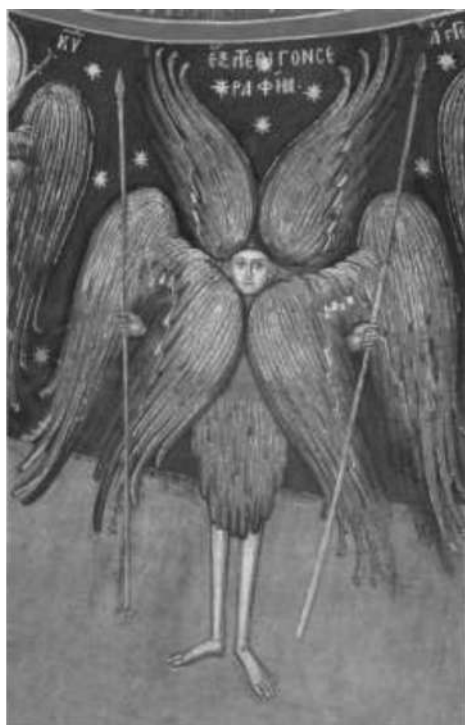
The Seraphim are a mega-red, because they are word-bound with the words *fire* שָׂרָף [sarpàf], *burn* (by fire) שָׂרָף [sarpàf], *baking, burning, fire burning, combustion* מְשַׂרְפָּה [masrefà], and *fiery serpent* שָׂרָף [sarpàf].

These words are derivatives of the Sin-Reish-Fe root. They were used in the first five books of the Old Testament, which is a sign that the root is a normative element of the Archaic Biblical Hebrew.

Each שָׂרָף [saràf] had six wings: two to cover the face, two to cover the feet and with two to fly. The seraphim speak, and they brought redemption to Isaiah:

Isaiah 6:1–10

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: „Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.“ At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. „Woe to me!“ I cried. „I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.“ Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. With it he touched my mouth and said, „See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.“ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, „Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?“ And I said, „Here am I. Send me!“ He said, „Go and tell this people: „’Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.“ (NIV)



Picture 1. Six-winged Seraphim.
Fresco at the Dionysiou Monastery
Catholicon, cupola detail (c. 1545),
Holy Mount of Athos, Greece

Besides the single occurrence in the Bible of Seraphim, Isaiah 6:1–13 is marked by a few more extreme circumstances. First of all, the two beings, called seraphim, are named with a normative plural of שָׂרָף [saràf]. The form is not a Hebrew dual-number of Saraf. This means there are still many seraphim because the dual number refers to entities that come in pairs, *hands* [ydàim], *legs* [reglàim], *trousers* [mihnàsaim], etc.

Another important circumstance is the vocation of Isaiah. Generally, the prophets are called to urge and lead the Jewish people, and they usually criticize the behavior of leaders or ordinary people. While Isaiah received his prophetic commission to confront God's people, to speak words of challenge in his community as a member of the community. Isaiah is purified by fire, not by water. The term *train of His robe* (ASV), *hem of His robe* (NRS) is in the context of the appearance of the Seraphim, which is very rich and extreme phenomena.

2. Words, meaning, sense, and contexts

Inner form, extended root semantics, and context are basic tools of analysis.

The first use of the root is in Genesis 11:3 in the description of the construction of the Tower of Babel. The narration prefers the use of the verb *to bake bricks* בָּנִיּוֹת בְּרִיקָה

[nisrefà] and the *fire* identified by the word שָׂרָפָה [srefà]. *To bake bricks* [nisrefà] is a form of NIFAL conjugation.

English translations call נִשְׂרָפָה [nisrefà] *to burn them thoroughly*, which gives an idea of the power of the fiery things related to the root Sin-Reish-Fe, and miss the word *fire* שָׂרָפָה [srefà] available in Hebrew: „And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.“ (Genesis 11:3 KJV).

The Seraphim, however, are associated with a word, that is different from *to destroy by fire* and *fire*, derived from the same root – Sin-Reish-Fe – a *poisonous snake* referred to a *fiery serpent* or *poisonous serpent* [sarpàf]. Bulgarian translations use the noun phrase *fiery serpent* (зорителна змия) or *poisonous serpent* (омповна змия) just as English translations usually do. Septuagint and Vulgate avoid *fiery* or *poisonous* and used the ὄφις, *Lat. serpens* (“snake“, „serpent“).

In Numbers 21:6–8 during the harrowing exodus from Egypt, God sent *fiery serpents* שָׂרָפִים [sarpàf] to punish the Jews because „the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way“. In direct connection with this punishment of the Jews is an instruction of God to Moses on how to save the bitten by the poisonous snakes – by creating an idol, a copper image of a serpent called Nehushtan. The people admitted they were weak and asked Moses to intercede with God. Moses loved his people and he prayed, and Yahweh instructed him to make a copper statue of the שָׂרָפִים-snake, *Nehushtan* נְהוֹשֶׁת [nehushtàn], a derivate from *copper* נְחֹשֶׁת

[nehòshet]. The special term for this idol is not mentioned in Numbers 21:8 nor the word for copper, but only the term שָׂרָפִים [sarpàf], which is translated by default as in verse 6 as a *fiery snake*. The copper/bronze snake is a healing amulet, in fact, a statue of a snake made of copper. Originally, it is expressed in Hebrew, as in Bulgarian, with the noun phrase *copper snake* or *snake of copper* שָׂרָפִים נְחֹשֶׁת [sarpàf nehòshet]. For the first time, the phrase was used not in the instruction given by the God of Moses but in the description of the construction of the amulet. This is in the verse 9 of Numbers, 21:9: „And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.“ (NAS). Further, this snake idol made of copper acquires the proper name *Nehushtan*. The sons of Israel continue *to incense* [mekatrìm] with *incense* [ktòret] on the copper snake. The incense intended only for God (see Anonymous 2005). About four centuries after Moses, the righteous king (Hezekiah, 8th century BC) shatters into pieces *Nehushtan* alongside polytheistic altars and idols. The destruction of *Nehushtan* is described in 2Kings 18:4 where the noun phrase *copper snake/bronze serpent* [sarpàf nehòshet] but also the proper name *Nehushtan* are kept: „He removed the high places and broke down the *sacred* pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan.“ (2Kings 18:4)

Upon their appearance in the text, the Seraphim [serafim] are used only twice and always in the plural.

The fact that the appearance of Seraphim occurs within the First Temple makes them comparable to the Cherubim, which are sculptured by gold and are on the Ark of the Covenant which are painted on the walls.

Last but not the least, a few questions arise:

What is special in the serpent, called Saraf, so it is preferred to other snakes for a common noun referring archangels?

Why the prophet Isaiah was vocated by such archangels, namely Saraph, but not by other archangels – cherub, ophanim or Michael, Raphael?

2.1. Seraphim and the serpents

Biblical Hebrew offers a wide range of names of poisonous snakes.

Besides נָחָשׁ [nahàsh] and שָׂרָף [saràf], there are eight more terms for several venomous snakes in the Old Testament: אֶפֶסֶה [efèh], אֶפֶר [afàf], פֶּתֶן [pèten], שְׁפִיפֹן [shfifòn], צִפְעוֹנִי [tzifoni], קִפּוֹז [kipòz] (hapax, Isa 34:15), עֶכְשׁוּב [ahshùv] (hapax, Ps 140:3), *serpent, dragon, whale, sea monster*, δράκων, *draconum* תַּן [tan]. They vary in different translations: an *asp*, a *cobra*, a *viper*, a *horned snake*, an *adder*, an *owl*, a *great owl*, a *dart-snake*, a *tree snake*, a *cockatrice*, a *basilisk*, a *dragon*, *dragon*, *sea monster*.

There are also noun phrases with a constituent of the generic term for snakes נָחָשׁ [nahàsh] and a specifier, such as [nahàsh tzifòn], [nahashim serafim] in plural or in singular *fiery flying serpent* שָׂרָף מְעוֹפֵף [saràf meofèf], which also differs in translations.

Then, why the snake of type-[saràf], receives such positive symbolism as an archangels, the seraphim? Nehushtan is a copper snake, type-[saràf]. Nehushtan, becomes a healing idol, built by the command of God.

The Seraphim [serafim] have no negative semantization despite their frightening, fiery appearance, and the linguistic code as a cobra serpent.

Given all that, with a view to the primordial sin we face the fact that the Bible involves the serpent with meanings as temptress, deceiver, bearer of evil. The role of temptress and deceiver signified by the generic term for a serpent, [nahàsh]. „The origin of the word may be onomatopoeic, derived from the hissing sound of a snake.“ (Hendel 1999: 744).

The word נָחָשׁ [nahàsh] is the first to be used in the Bible for any snake in the paradise narration of Genesis 3. Septuagint uses the Greek word for *snake* ὄφις [òfis] for Genesis 3. From the beginning, the serpent is loaded with symbolism and it is the usual practice in all cultures, especially in the Middle East (Murison 1905). Despite the emergence of the snake in universal myths and rituals around the world, Biblical symbolism of the paradise serpent is original in its meaning.

If we consider the New Testament only, the equalization between the *serpent* ὄφις [ōfis] (נָחָשׁ [nahàsh]) with the proper name Satan is clear, explicit and unambiguous: „the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan“ (Rev 12:9), and „He captured the dragon, that ancient serpent, also known as the devil and Satan, and tied him up for a thousand years“. (Rev 20:2). For the Hebrew proper name Satan [satàn], Greek Bible uses the word διάβολος [diàvolos] „devil“ ‘accuser’, ‘slanderer’ (1Chronicles 21:1; Job 1; 2; Zec 3), but not a transliteration of Hebrew word [satàn]. This happens in the New Testament Σατανα/Satana (Matt 4:10 ff.).

There is a wide discussion when the serpent becomes a symbol of deceit, evil among the scholars. Researchers take into account a wide range of significant objects – text, mythology, language, historical facts, and cultural interferences.

The Hebrew root Sin-Tet-Nun produces nouns and verbs. The nouns are common and proper, where the context commands whether it is a common noun or a proper name.

be an adversary, to resist; to oppose, to withstand, to stand against; to accuse Numbers 22:32; 1Sam 29:4; Ps.108[109]:4, etc.	διαβάλλειν [diaballein]	שָׂטָן [satàn]
1. adversary, one who withstands, accuser, enemy, opponent, slander; insinuation, accusation; 2. Satan, Devil	διάβολος [diàvolos]	שָׂטָן [satàn]
enmity, accusation Ezra 4:6, etc.		שִׂטְנָה [sitnà]

Table 1. The Hebrew root Sin-Tet-Nun

In Hebrew, the proper noun cannot receive a definite article. Scholars are divided into treatment in the cases wherein we have the noun [satàn] with the definite article – whether it is a common or a proper name. The definite article in Hebrew is prepositional. A basic position in linguistics is that the category of definiteness is referred to in three ways: 1. by a proper name; 2. through definite article; 3. through pronoun. Thus, the cases when we have [ha-satàn] present a common noun with a definite article, „the adversary“. In addition, in the Hebrew alphabet, there are no capital letters. In the books of Job (1; 2) and Zechariah (3), the noun is with definite article [ha-satàn] (διάβολος, „the devil“), and these forms are translated with a proper name Satan. On the one hand, this is odd because a Hebrew common name is translated with Indo-European proper name. On the other hand, this is a semantic translation that allows for such a transformation. The motivation is that as a member of the heavenly council of „the sons of God“, he should be referred to the grammar category of Specificity, „which is a kind of definiteness indicating that the speaker presumably knows the identity of the referent(s).“ (SIL Glossary of Linguistic Terms). The definite article to *satan* is a sign for two things: 1. The Indo-European translations are right, because they transform a common Hebrew noun to a proper noun by the translation of the grammar category of Specificity, and also

by the logic „the members of one board are single entities“; 2. The common noun *satan* equates its reference with the idea contained in the common nouns of other archangels, „sons of a god“ like cherubim, seraphim, ophanim. In Hebrew there is one *herub*, one *seraf*, actually, *seraphim* is Hebrew plural form from *saraf*. In the Bible, we have *cherub* and *cherubim*, but in the Bulgarian language, just as in English, we say for one *cherub* – *cherubim* (херувим) which is the Hebrew plural form of one *cherub*, correspondingly *ophanim* – one *ophan*. This means that there are many *Satans* as a group of homogeneous creatures united in an army.

For Job 1:6–10, all translations of [ha-satàn] use the proper name *Satan*, including the Modern Greek translation Vamvas (nineteenth century). By this feature [ha-satàn], the leader of evil powers and fallen angels, „sons of God“, corresponds to the archangels like seraphim, cherubim, ophanim, which are common nouns, and differs from another type of archangels who have proper names: Michael, Uriel, Raphael, etc.

In the book of Job (1; 2) we find crucial revelation that Satan is one of „the sons of God“ who joined the meeting of the sons of God with God: „the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them“ (Job 1:6). Septuagint explicitly called the Hebrew word *Satan* [satàn] διάβολος [diàbolos] „devil“ in Job 1:6–10 and further on in Job. Actually, the English term *devil* is cognate of the Greek word, just as the Bulgarian term дявол [diàvol]. Vulgate and many other translations, in many languages, prefer the transliteration *Satan*, *Сатан* for Job 1:6–10.

It should be accepted that in the depth of Judaism „the satan“/“the devil“/“ο διάβολος“ is the leader of the fallen angels. Zechariah 3:1–2 reaffirms the status of Satan/διάβολος (“the Devil“) as a celestial creature standing at Joshua’s right side to accuse him. The verse contains the noun with the definite article, and the verb: „Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him“ (Zechariah 3:1).

The cases of the noun without definite article [satàn]/διάβολος consider human persons as adversaries of Solomon: 1Kings 11:14 – Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom; 1Kings 11:23; 25 – Rezon son of Eliada, from Zobah, and David. In 2Sam 19:17–24, „the term ‘satan’ is also used to indicate a human adversary“, see Wray and Mobley 2005: 53 the enemy is David’s own son, the rebellious Absalom.

The noun is not with the definite article in a case where it is clear from the context that Satan is one of the angelic beings from the heavenly attendants. This is an example of theology development inside Judaism because the books of Chronicles are rewritten version of the older books of Kings and Samuel. Chronicles are dated after sixth century BC, at the post-exile period, while the books of Samuel and the books of Kings are earlier, dated before the exile in Babylon, i.e. the monarchic period. The story from 1Chronicles 21:1 is actually the same in 2Sam 24: „And again the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against

them, saying, Go, number Israel and Judah.“ (2Sam 24:1); „And Satan stood up against Israel, and moved David to number Israel.“ (1Chronicles 21:1).

Wray and Mobley (2005: 66) point out the difference between 2Samuel 24 and 1Chronicles 21. 2Samuel 11 describes the reason for God's anger over David – the „David's exploitation of Bathsheba“ (the mother of Solomon), while the 1Chronicles omits the story and replace God with Satan who incited David to number the people.

Actually, the sexual appetites of David and Solomon kindled God's anger but the object in both cases has been the members of the Jewish tribes who died in thousands because of the deeds of their famous kings. Also, in earlier times of the adversary, one who withstands, the accuser is God himself.

Wray and Mobley (2005) use the term intertestamental period for the post-prophetic era, starting from 200 BC For these authors this period covers the years between 200 BC and 200 AD. Also, they accept the view „the identification of the serpent in Genesis 3 with the Devil has no foundation in the original story“, and such an identification „emerged in the final centuries before the common era“, and „the Devil in all his macabre glory appears in Jewish and Christian literature between 200 BC and 200 CE“

The account in Genesis 3 about the serpent in Eden, written in the Iron Age (anywhere from 300 to 700 years before the Intertestamental Period) assumes that the serpent was one of the wild animals and that the serpent was ultimately subservient to the LORD God, since God made it: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. (Gen 3:1). (Wray and Mobley 2005: 69)

According to Wray and Mobley „Nowhere in the Hebrew Bible there is any identification made between the serpent and the Devil/Satan“ (2005: 69). They suspect that the serpent „in the role of tempter in the Garden of Eden story is probably influenced by creation stories from other cultures. For instance, in the Gilgamesh epic, a Babylonian narrative poem'. (Wray and Mobley 2005: 69). For them, the identification of Satan with the serpent occurs explicitly in the Jewish and Christian literature of the intertestamental period (Wray and Mobley 2005: 70). The New Testament is the clearest and most explicit demonstration of such an identification, Rev 12:9; 20:2. (Wray and Mobley 2005: 70).

The authors point out that in the First Temple biblical literature (between X and VI centuries BC) „the term 'satan' can refer to an agent of obstruction or of punishment, either divine or human, sent by God. [...] 'satan' refers to a category, those angels and persons sent by God on missions of opposition“. (Wray and Mobley 2005: 72).

The approach of Wray and Mobley is congruent to the point of view of Efrid (1996: 974–975), including the term intertestamental period, and that „the

serpent“ of Genesis 3 is never identified as Satan in the OT. The same is about the development of this identification – it happened „during the late postexilic period and in the intertestamental literature“ and assumed in the NT.

The linguistic data of MT of the Old Testament confirm such an approach presuming the influence of the neighbors of Hebrews. Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Egyptian, Persian and Greek ideologies and mythologies elements of which have been adopted in the Hebrew culture. Thus, the development of the notion for Satan as equal to the serpent and Devil as a leader of the evil army appeared in prophetic, wisdom, and poetic texts. Jewish religious reasoning previously named couple of legitimate names of pioneers of the evil armies malicious to God: Belial, Mastemah, attested in Dead Sea Scrolls, Sammael as a chief of satans, Asmodeus (Tobit 3:8), Beelzebub („lord of the flies“ and a deity worshipped by the Philistines, 2Kings 1:2–3; 6; 16). Sammael has a special place in the Talmud and Kabbala, e.g. Satan is the accuser, Samael is considered to be his proper name, in Kabbalah Samael created with Lilith, Adam’s wife before Eve, a host of demon children, but it was further the development of Jewish lore and mysticism.

It is true that in 1Chronicles 21:1 the word Satan is without definite article in Hebrew, i.e. it is a proper name: ‘Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel (1Chronicles 21:1). Chronicles overwrite earlier texts from 1–2Samuel, and 1-2Kings being composed after the Exile. This is the first place where Satan is without a definite article.

Not by chance, Wray and Mobley (2005) devoted a subchapter on *ha-satan* „the adversary“, „the opponent“ (: 58 – 64). They are right that „*Hassatan* is clearly one of the divine beings, and not human. This figure remains part of the heavenly entourage and has the job of testing humans and reporting back to God about their righteousness.“ (: 72)

If we learn from Job 1:6 that Satan is a „son of God“ who can meet God as the other sons of God regardless of the punishment received in Genesis 3: „So the LORD God said to the serpent, Because you have done this, Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life“ (Genesis 3:14).

The monotheistic speculations decode the Biblical narratives in a way connected to archangels. For instance, there is a hypothesis that before the God’s punishment to the paradise serpent, as one of the sons of God that assisted Him in the process of Creation, i.e. it had been a vertical creature before the punishment, to crawl on serpent’s belly. Even more, from Isaiah (14:12) and Ezekiel (28:12–16), we learn the name of the fallen Babylonian king Hillel, translated properly as Lucifer or Day Star, „the shining one“. Although there is no mention in Isaiah’s text either or the archangel, or for an angel but for the king of Babylon, the son of the morning is perceived as a metaphor for the leader of Nephilim, the fallen „sons of God“ from Genesis 6:4. The term Nephilim is a transliteration from Hebrew term *fallen* [nefilim] for those of the sons of God who „went to the daughters of men and had

children by them“. (The Septuagint is followed by Vulgate when translated [nefilim] as *gigantes* „giants“). This understanding of the verse from Isaiah is influenced by the interpretations based on the linguistic facts: in the sentence, there is "fallen from the heavens" and it is supposed that every son of God radiate light.

Such a speculation is fueled by two other qualities of the „archaic serpent“ from Genesis 3 – its ability to speak (Gen 3:1 ff) tempting Eve to disobey God, and that it (actually in Hebrew it is masculine gender) is defined as „more crafty than any of the wild animals“ (Gen 3:1).

The evaluation that the serpent is „craftier than any of the wild animals“ does not meet the abilities of the mammals, as higher beings in nature. This means that it is a tale which we should assume as highly symbolic. Its/his ability to speak, except as a highly symbolic tale, raises the question of the language of the paradise garden in Eden. The language of paradise is a theme that has excited people over the centuries. Olender (2008 [1992]) traces different views over the centuries, which include patriotic elevation of different natural languages as the language of paradise – from Hebrew to Finnish, French, and so on. In an article of mine (Anonymous 2003), I proposed the hypothesis that the language of the paradise is not a natural language, but is the light, the visual, and the colors. My hypothesis is influenced by Jewish comments on the homonymy *light* ([or] – *skin* [or]).

Schorsch and Abramovitz (2005) review the commentaries in Judaism on the subject of Adam and Eve's clothing. Both authors work at the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), Schorsch is chancellor emeritus of JTS and Rabbi Abramovitz is a Professor of Jewish History. They examine one rationalist and two mystic interpretations on the relations between the homonyms. The words for *light* and *skin* are homonyms, both pronounced [or] but spelled differently, *light* with an *Alef* א and *skin* with an *Ayin* ע. „Before Adam and Eve are expelled from the Garden of Eden for having eaten the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, God provided them with clothing“. „And the Lord God made garments of *skin* ([or] with an *Ayin* ע) for Adam and his wife and clothed them“ (Gen 3:21)

The first comment is by Abraham Ibn Ezra (XII c.), „a major Spanish biblical commentator of a decidedly rationalistic bent“. The second one is „from the classic work of Jewish mysticism, the *Zohar*“ (XIII c.). „That linguistic kinship enabled the *Zohar* to soar: by sinning, Adam and Eve had their garments of celestial light replaced by garments of skin, which merely protected but no longer illuminated.“ Also, „The sanctity of the site determined the ethereal nature of the garb.“ (*Zohar*, II, 229a-b) (Schorsch and Abramovitz 2005).

The third comment is by another kabbalist, Isaiah Horowitz (Seventeenth-Century, *Shenei Luhot Ha-brit, Israel* 1997, *Pesachim* 348–355). He made a „distinction between garments of light and garments of skin the linchpin of his mystical worldview“.

Our garments are our cognitive limitations. Bereft of the light of Eden, we no longer see the interconnectedness of heaven and earth or spirit and matter. Even the perfection of the Torah eludes us. In Eden, for instance, we would have instantaneously recognized the Oral Law (the Talmud et al.) to be an integral part of the Written Law, and never needed to extract it through painstaking study and interpretation or to preserve it in written form. The expulsion made everything so much more obscure and impenetrable. (Schorsch and Abramovitz 2005)

The New Testament attaches the meaning ‘wise’, ‘shrewd’ to the symbol of the snake by a call of Christ to the apostles: ‘I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.’ (Matthew 10:16 NIV); „Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.“ (Matthew 10:16 KJV); ‘wise’ φρόνιμοι [frònimoι].

Anyway, the New Testament explicitly binds the symbol of „archaic snake“ to Satan, the devil. All terms for serpents used in the Old Testament refer to poisonous snakes. The „archaic snake“ also is loaded with negative senses.

The Hebrew word [efèh] „in principle [...] might just have meant venomous snake in general but also cobra“ (Provençal 2005: 373; 377). It is usually assumed that the name is onomatopoeic for the sound emitted by this poisonous snake. This word, however, may also be relevant to the verb *envelop*, *encompass*, *surround*, *encircle*, *circumvent* [afàf] which reminds of snake’s way of the move.

Deuteronomy 32:33 presents the prophetic practice to use more than one term for serpent in a single verse: *serpent*, *dragon*, δράκων [dràkon], *draconum* iú [tan] and *asp*, *cobra*, ἀσπίδων [aspìdon], *aspidium* [pèten]: „Their wine is the poison of **serpents**, And the cruel venom of **asps**.“ (ASV); „Their wine is the venom of **serpents**, the deadly poison of **cobras**.“ (NIV); „Their wine *is* the poison of **dragons**, and the cruel venom of **asps**.“ (RWB)

In Genesis 49:17 there are also two words for serpents, as a definition of the Dan tribe: the already known נָחָשׁ [nahàsh] and [shfifòn]. Obviously, [shfifòn] is onomatopoeic. The first is translated as a *serpent*, and the second as a *viper*, a *horned snake* or an *adder*:

Genesis 49:17

Dan will be a **serpent**¹ by the roadside, a **viper** along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider tumbles backward. (NIV)

“Dan shall be a **serpent** in the way, A **horned snake** in the path, That bites the horse’s heels, So that his rider falls backward. (NAS)

Dan shall be a **serpent** by the way, an **adder** in the path, that biteth the horse-heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. (WEB)

¹ The bold words and phrases are mine in the verses of the Bible.

Septuagint missed the second serpent and used only once ὄφις „serpent“. Vulgate calls the first *coluber* and the second *cerastes*.

In Isaiah 34:15 there is only one use (hapax legomena) of the word [kipòz] in the Old Testament. This word was translated into the Bulgarian Protestant version (BUL1) as a *snake archer*, and BUL2 (the Synodic translation) called it *flying serpent*. In Bulgarian, the term refers to a *snake* that makes a knot from the end of its body and chases the prey by hitting it with this knot. The Hebrew root from which the name is derived seems to be related to an Arabic root meaning „jump“ or „leap“. English translations oscillate between an *owl*, *great owl*, *dart-snake* and *tree snake* but sometimes it is considered an *arrow snake* (*eryx jaculus*). It is an emphasis that Edom became an abandoned territory that turned a dwelling place on the arrow-snake:

Isaiah 34:15

There shall **the great owl** make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate. (KJV)

There shall **the dart-snake** make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shade; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, every one with her mate. (ASV)

The **tree snake** will make its nest and lay *eggs* there, And it will hatch and gather *them* under its protection. Yes, the hawks will be gathered there, Every one with its kind. (NAU)

There shall **the owl** nest and lay and hatch and gather her young in her shadow; yea, there shall the kites be gathered, each one with her mate. (RSV)

Isaiah 11:8 describes the incredible picture when the Messiah will come. Here is the word [pèten] (*asp*, *cobra*) and the unknown so far [tzifòn] translated as *cockatrice*, *adder*, *viper* or *basilisk*.

Isaiah 11:8

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the **asp**, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the **cockatrice'** den. (KJV)

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the **asp**, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the **adder's** den. (ASV)

The infant will play near the hole of the **cobra**, and the young child put his hand into the **viper's** nest. (NIV)

Isaiah 11:8 And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the **asp**, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the den of the **basilisk**. (WEB)

Septuagint used one word for both ἀσπίδων [aspìdon]. Vulgate used an expression of repetition the term *aspidum*, a transliteration of the Greek term ἀσπίδῃ [aspide], but not two terms for the serpents.

The word [tzifonì] is available in Jeremiah, 8:17, but it is in a combination of the generic term for snakes [nahàsh], sometimes in plural [nehashìm tzifonìm], and a specifier [tzifonì], translated as *serpents*, *cockatrices* (KJV, RWB, WEB), *serpents*, *adders* (RSV, ASV, NAS, NAU, NRS), as *serpents*, *vipers* (NKJ), while NIV and NIB use *venomous snakes*, *vipers*. Bulgarian translations preferred for [tzifòn] *basilisk* (василиск), following the Greek term Βασιλίσκος, i.e. etymologically, it is a „king“ type of venomous serpent. Βασιλίσκος corresponds to the Latin term corresponds to the Latin term *regulus*.

In Isaiah 30:6, along with the serpent- one of the most dangerous inhabitants of the Negev desert is mentioned – [efèh].

Translations clearly distinguish the *viper* [efèh] from noun phrase of two words [saràf meofèf] „flying saràf“.

Translators keep *to viper* for [efèh]. This is natural because it is not a noun phrase, but one word.

The Hebrew noun phrase of two words translated with noun phrases of three or two words: the *flying fiery snake*; the *flying dragon*. Some of the translations prefer to explain the Hebrew noun phrase of three words *fiery flying serpent* (KJV, ASV, BUL1, BUL3) others prefer not to use the *fiery* feature of the *flying serpent* (NAU, RSV, NRS, RST, BTP, BUL2).

Isaiah 30:6

The burden of the beasts of the South. Through the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the lioness and the lion, the **viper** and **fiery flying serpent**, they carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the humps of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. (ASV)

In Isaiah 14:29 is another term for a serpent נָחָשׁ [tzefà]. This word is accompanied by the generic term for *serpent* [nahàsh] (steadily translated with *serpent* or *snake*). The generic term for a serpent [nahàsh] is used for *out of the serpent's root* [mi-sòresh nahàsh]. English versions are unanimous for a [saràf meofèf] as *flying serpent* or *fiery flying serpent*. NAB puts accent through translation-interpretation, which calls the flying serpent *flying saraph*, and it is not clear whether it is transliteration or a flying archangel saraph.

The whole verse is translated in a variety of terms with regard to the word [tzefà] – *cockatrice*, *adder* or *viper*.

Isaiah 14:29

Do not rejoice, all you Philistines, that the rod that struck you is broken, for **from the root of the snake** will come forth an **adder**, and its fruit will be a **flying fiery serpent**. (NRS)

Rejoice not, O Philistia, all of thee, because the rod that smote thee is broken; for **out of the serpent's root** shall come forth an **adder**, and his fruit shall be a **fiery flying serpent**. (KJV)

mh. euvfrankei,hte pa,ntej oi' avllo,fuloi sunetri,bh ga.r o' zugo.j tou/ pai,ontoj u'ma/j evk ga.r spe,rmatoj **o;fewn** evxeleu,setai e;kgona **avspi,dwn** kai. ta. e;kgona aurtv/n evxeleu,sontai **o;feij peto,menoi** (LXX)

The Russian synodic translation called the [saràf meofèf] *летучий дракон* „flying dragon“ as the Bulgarian Orthodox translation (BUL2) (*хвъркат змей*) while the Protestant versions (BUL2, BUL3) favors a „flying fiery serpent“ (*горителна хвърката змия*).

Diversity is great for the term [tzeḞà]. The Bulgarian versions call this animal *аснида* (“asp” – an anglicization of Greek *aspis* that means several venomous snakes) or *ехидна* (“adder”). Both have mythological presentations in Greek mythology.

WEB translates [tzeḞà] with *basilisk* in two different verses (Isaiah 11:8; 14:29) and presents the same Hebrew word with another English word, an *adder* Prov 23:32.

Jeremiah uses the word [tzifonì] in a noun phrase in plural [nehashim tzifonim]. LXX translates the noun phrase as ὄφεις θανατουῦτας (*deadly snakes*). Bulgarian protestant and synodic versions, together with the Russian synodic translation call [tzeḞà] *базилиск* (“basilisk”). This term means „the serpent king“ from the Greek word *basileus* (“king”). It is a small very poisonous snake but we witness that on the one hand, one Hebrew word is translated differently, and on the other, different Hebrew words are translated with one and the same word, and finally – there is no system in both cases:

Jeremiah 8:17

“For behold, I am sending **serpents** against you, **Adders**, for which there is no charm, And they will bite you“, declares the LORD. (NAU)

dio,ti ivdou. evgw. evxaposte,llw eivj u'ma/j **o;feij qanatou/ntaj** oi-j ouvke;stin evpa/sai kai. dh,xontai u'ma/j (LXX)

2.2. Seraphim as a serpent

The accumulated literature contains verifiable facts and their individual interpretations. All these articles, studies, books or individual comments and opinions is called seraphimology. This rich literature can neither be overlooked nor plagiarized. Quotations from seraphimology treated linguistic, religious and

cross-cultural studies: What kind of snakes are called שָׂרָפִים [sarṣāf]; the seraphim are original Hebrew phenomenon or borrowed from the surrounding cultures; religious, mythological and cultural aspects of Seraphim; similarities and differences between seraphim and cherubim; angels or archangels are the seraphim; the various images of Seraphim in Christianity and others.

Keel (1992: §161) and Day (1979: 149–151] prefer the meaning of *cobra* for שָׂרָפִים [sarṣāf].

As mentioned above, in Hebrew there are eight words referring to poisonous snakes, each of which is tied to a different root, i.e. each term has a different inner motivation, different logical associations.

Provençal (2005) compares the information found in „the textual witnesses in the Hebrew Bible with archaeological, historical and zoological data“ (p. 371) for [sarṣāf]. His goal is to systematize the equivocal information from the text. His conclusion is that שָׂרָפִים [sarṣāf] is the red spitting cobra (*Naja pallida*): „The red spitting cobra (*Naja pallida*) apparently may reach a length of 3 m, at least in captivity, but in the field it is reported to be usually not longer than half this length. It is basically found in two colour variants: a handsome deep red phase (though specimens may also be pinkish, pinky-grey or red brown), or a more sober grey or greyish colour.“ (: 375)

Provençal discovers that „it was natural for people of the Northwest Semitic region to envisage that a deity could be surrounded by servants represented by lower deities in the shape of serpents or dragons.“ (: 373).

The author focuses on the mythological and theological aspects of [sarṣāf] type of snakes. He traces the strange symbol of the copper snake Nehushtan, carved by Moses in God's command, with similar motives in the culture of other Middle Eastern peoples.

After a detailed examination of zoology of the Middle East, Provençal (2005) reviews the views of various researchers on the mythological aspects of seraphim. For Mettinger the mythological basis of [sarṣāf] is *Uraeus-serpent* placed on the crown of Ra, the god of the sun, and rays fire against Ra's enemies. *Uraeus-serpent* is an independent Egyptian deity. The Uraeus-serpent is also a fixed part of the pharaoh's regalia, depicted as a cobra with a raised head and a swollen hood. This is the posture that the cobra takes when attacking and the spitting cobra – before pulverizing the poison into the eyes of the aggressor or victim. (Mettinger 1995: 1402–1404).

Provençal points at the images of the cobra, decorating the Egyptian crown, the cobra is in this opposing, attacking pose, and that the hunting cobra does not spit out its poison unless it is threatened or excited during a hunt. As most snakes do, the cobra pursues its prey without blowing its hood and with a head that is not so high. Spitting poison and raising the head occurs with self-defense. Provençal (2005) reminds that serpents with wings are often depicted in Egyptian iconography. They can be conceived as cobras, stylized to some extent. Uraeus-serpent is often

portrayed with wings in Ancient Egypt. In other words, the snakes with wings can be understood as mythological guardians, such as the cobra, whose extended hood is depicted as wings. This is important, as it corresponds well with the winged seraphim, which we find in the books of Isaiah the prophet. For Provençal (2005) this is a meaning, which corresponds well with the winged seraphim, which we find in Isaiah. The image of the sacred serpent as a symbol of the power of Egyptian pharaohs (from the Levant and from both motifs with two-winged and four-winged Uraeus) is well-dated in the 10th–8th centuries BC.

There is nothing to add to the link between zoology and mythology made by Provençal. For me, the problem is that this author sees the connection of biblical seraphim only as a monotheistic reflex of the Egyptian culture. The same is true of Joines (1967; 1968; 1974). After the perfect identification of the zoological features of the Cobras in the Middle East, Joines' thoughts and data should also be respected. She is a frequently cited author because some of her arguments seem profound and convincing, especially in terms of cultural, mythological and linguistic data. Although deserving of respect, this author has some dubious conclusions on the biblical text.

Joines is quite certain that there are enough satisfactory linguistic and archaeological evidence to identify Seraphim as winged snakes, which are Egyptian symbols of sacred and royal supreme power (1967: 410–411). Joines (1967: 410–411) claims that only in Isaiah 6 the word is in the plural, but the review of the serpent names in the Old Testament proves that this statement is false: „And the LORD sent fiery serpents [ha-nahashim ha-serafim] among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died“ (Num 21:6 NAS).

In a footnote to Linguistic Associations between Snakes and Seraphim (Joines 1967: 410–415), a fairly detailed and fully convinced account of the connection of the Seraphim of Isaiah with the pharaonic regalia follows. The analysis is based on many sources and authors. The conclusion of Joines (1967).

I admit that the last conclusion seems to be the most valuable because Joines admits that a complex religious symbol, characteristic of the whole of the Middle East, has been modified by the Prophet Isaiah which has been brought into a new and different doctrine.

2.3. The Seraphim are fiery creatures

The biblical words formed by the root of Sin-Reish-Fe are *burning with fire, a burning of spices, conflagration* [srefâ] (feminine), *to burn up, to consume with fire; to burn (wood; garments, stubble, a sacrifice, children in honor of an idol), to bake bricks* [sarâf], *burning, fiery; then poisonous, venomous, deadly, as an attribute of a serpent, from the burning inflammation caused by its bite* [sarâf], *burning fiery, fire burning, poisonous and fiery for snakes* [massirfâ], *to be burned, e.g. in punishment, to roast* [nisrefâ].



Picture 2. God surrounded by seraphim. Limbourg brothers, from the Petites Heures de Jean de Berry, between 1375 and 1390.

The fiery paradigm of the Sin-Reish-Fe is fully preserved in modern Hebrew. It is important to note that the root does not form any words with the Shin variant. This means that the possibilities of interpretation are limited in regard to the game of Shin and Sin in different word forms.

There is an additional challenge with regard to the sound reference of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The sound [s] is the only referent to the letter Sameh.

The lexeme [masrefò] ("he that burneth him"), being a semantic derivative of Sin-Reish-Fe, is written with Sameh ם instead of the letter Sin ש in Amos, 6:10:

Amos 6:10

And when a man's uncle shall take him up, even **he that burneth him**, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is in the innermost parts of the house, Is there yet any with thee? and he shall say, No; then shall he say, Hold thy peace; for we may not make mention of the name of Jehovah. (ASV)

And if a **relative who is to burn the bodies** comes to carry them out of the house and asks anyone still hiding there, 'Is anyone with you?' and he says, "No," then he will say, 'Hush! We must not mention the name of the LORD'. (NIV)

In order to see how much importance is given in the commentary of the word [masrèf] from Amos 6:10, translated in different ways. The problem is who exposes the bones from the house and for what purpose. The first word means „uncle“, but some prefer the broader meaning of „relative“ (Targum, BUL1, BUL2, RSV, NIV, NJPS, Andersen and Friedman 1989).

The translation that Hadjiev (2003: 272–274) prefers for Amos 10:6 „the uncle of the dead who will bury him“ but it seems to that Finley (1990: 272) and Paul (1991: 215–216) are closer to the Hebrew meaning. This could be confirmed by Gesenius (1996: 735) equalizing [saràf] with the meanings *to burn*, *to consume with fire*. He pointed out that [masrèf] is „burner of the dead, he who kindled the funeral pile“ Amos 6:10. This was usually done by the nearest of blood, comp. Gen 25:9; 35:29; Judg 16:31“ (Gesenius 1996: 735), and by this clarified the meaning of the word and the verse.

I find it hard to guess that Amos and Masoretes are illiterate to write the word with Sameh. Assuming that both Amos and the Masoretes have deliberately done so, it would have led us to turn ourselves in other directions. The Massoretic canonical version of the Old Testament was introduced in order to avoid variations, the diacritics were used to indicate the vocal sounds or the points allowing the correct reading of the letters for some consonants, e.g. as Shin or Sin; as Vet or Bet, etc. Thus, the spelling of the sound *s* with Sameh or with Sin; of the sound with Kuf or with Kaf; of the sound *v* – with Vet or with Vav, etc. is crucial to the correct reading of the text.

3. The Seraphim are heavenly servants, guardians of the heavenly throne, and accompany of the God

That the seraphim do not die in the presence of God is evident from Isaiah 6. There can be no doubt about the fiery nature of the seraphim. In this sense, they are considered to be escorts, servants, the Lord's guard. The word [saràf] means *burning*, but there are also seven uses as a *red cobra* (*Naja pallida*), possessing lethal venom (Num 21:6, 8; Deut 8:15; Isa 6:2, 6; 14:29; 30:6), usually translated into different languages as a *fiery serpent* but sometimes as *venomous snakes*, e.g. most of English translations prefer for Numbers 21:6 *fiery serpents* but some of the English translations use *venomous snakes* for the same verse (NIV, NIB, NRS).

Karen Joines (1967; 1968; 1974) is an author who consistently defends the Egyptian or some other origin of a number of symbols, themes, and ideas in the Old Testament. She offers a completely different interpretation of this copper/bronze idol. She believes that Nehushtan has no connection with the copper snake made by Moses except according to folk tradition. It sounds a bit odd as a conclusion, but the Joines (1968) goes on like this:

Rowley believes that Zadok was a Jebusite priest at Jerusalem, that the bronze serpent represented his god, and that David adopted them both into his cult. See

Rowley, H.H. „Zadok and Nehushtan“. *Journal of Biblical Literature* 1939, (2): 254). Nehushtan is unrelated to Moses' bronze serpent except by popular tradition. There is a reason to believe that Moses carried a bronze serpent, but as a means of sympathetic magic to repel serpents, a motif he received from the Egyptians. Nehushtan was a fertility symbol of Canaanite and Mesopotamian background adopted by the Israelite cult to depict the fecundating power of Yahweh. (: 256)

Provençal (2005: 373) points out that in Isaiah 14:29; 30:6 the serpent type-[sarāf] is defined in Hebrew as [meofēf], which means *flying*, and that such a designation does not occur in the Pentateuch. Provençal does not accept Koehler and Baumgartner's (1996) cognate of [sarāf meofēf] as „flying serpent“. He argues that „flying serpent“ (*Chrysopelea*) inhabit India and Southeast Asia but not the Middle East. Provençal reminds that Isaiah presents three mythological uses of the fiery flying serpents but he includes in the „mythology“ uses the Seraphim from Isaiah 6:2; 6 (Provençal 2005: 373), which from point of view is not a correct understanding.

Contrary to Provençal, Joines (1967: 410) has attracted a statement by Herodotus, who argues that flying snakes also exist in the Middle East.

Actually, the „mythological“ use is a curse to Philistia (Isaiah 14:29) and, there is one more negative opinion of Isaiah, this time for Edom, as a ruined and deserted place, where many types of Desert creatures, wild goats, night creatures, and demonic creatures, including the *Lilith*, conquered the land of Edom/Idumea (Isaiah 34:14–15)

Provençal (2005: 373) includes implicitly a contrast/comparison between Seraph and the Cherub in order to demonstrate that biblical God's ride on cherub is influenced by polytheistic images and notions as Gryphons, the dogs of Zeus. Gryphons are mythical beings described as monstrous birds with the head of an eagle and a lion's body. They are also harnessed in the chariot of Nemesis, the goddess of revenge, and symbolize the rapid retribution that would have plagued anyone who committed a crime.

Let us recall the emergence of the seraphim that cause so different opinions:

Isaiah 6:2–7

Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, „Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory“. And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, „Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts“. Then one of the seraphim flew to me, with a burning coal in his hand which he had taken from the altar with tongs. And he touched my mouth *with it* and said, „Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven“.

The most common thing for neighboring peoples is to have common sectors of their semiospheres, in all the insights of this concept of Lotman. Here, it is more important to outline the color code for an immense innovation of Isaiah. This is the same prophet who uses the red color as a sign of weakness and sinfulness: „Come now, let us reason together“, says the LORD. „Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.“ This symbolism of the red color is easy to remember because of the opposition with the white color. In the vision described by Isaiah in chapter 6, the red color is a multileveled sign. Once the Prototype Term (PT), the fire, at the temple, expresses it. Secondly, the Prototype, the fire, bears purification. Actually, this is a universal tool for purification, just as the water is. At the third place, linguistically and mythologically, Isaiah chose for these archangels a derivate term from the noun *fire* and the verb *to burn*, to *destroy by fire* from the root Sin-Reish-Fe. Next level is the cobra, named ‘red spitting cobra’ (*Naja pallida*), translated in many languages as a *fiery snake*, or a *fierce snake* and this not only because it is an allusion with the effect of the venom in the eyes. It is also because of the red/reddish color of the serpent, as Provençal (2005) proved. Thus, Isaiah uses and introduce a multi-leveled mega-red cultural unit.

This multi-leveled mega-red cultural unit is an object of comments ascribing the symbol of the Seraphim as a symbol borrowed from the treasure of the semiosphere of the Middle East, In spite of the innovations Isaiah has done.

There are authors who comment on the existence of the main ideas and themes of the Old Testament as the influence of the civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Phenicia, Syria, and Canaan. Mettinger keeps direction in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (DDDB) focusing on iconographic representations (on scarabs and seals) as an instrument to clarify the background and meaning of the seraphim. He pointed at tow group of scholars. For the first one the seven thunders of Baal and his lightning is in parallel to seraphims. The other group prefers the Egyptian uraeus serpent to is ‘the original source of the seraphim motif’ (Joines 1974; De Savignac 1972, Keel (1977: 70–124). He is accurate when attests that two-winged and four winged cobra „is well-attested motif on seals, while six-winged uraei do not seem to occur“ in Judea. For this group of authors the fiery nature of seraphim is also borrowed fro Egyption culture by „the cobra figure worn on the forehead of Egyptian gods and kings, whom the cobra protects by means of her ‘fire’ (poison). Among the Egyptian designations for the *uraeus* one finds the word *zht* ‘flame’.” (Mettinger 1999 [1995]: 743)

Gressmann (1926) traces the influence of Egypt on the institution of prophecy and the notion of a prophet at the Promised Land. Half of the study is engaged to various ancient Egyptian ideas adapted to Judaism: the birth of the sons of God; the idea of the king-messiah in the various ancient Egyptian dynasties and its adaptation to the dynasty of David; if the king is prosperous, he is pure and righteous, and if not – he does not observe the law, etc. The second half of the article traces the impact of

the Babylonians (prosperity depends on Astarte/Ishtar or Arabella) and the Assyrian prophecies on the Israeli prophesy as well as the myths on biblical prophecy.

The parallels conducted on behalf of the subject of seraphim trace Phoenician version of Kronos mixed with possible influence of Mesopotamia. Honorably, the author situates all the analogies in the form of a hypothesis (at least because of his statement that even if some motives are occupied by the Middle East cultures), they are conceived in the way of thinking of the monotheistic Israel prophets. Gressmann recalls Kronos with six wings „exactly like Isaiah’s Seraph“ as he is depicted on coins of Byblos (Gressmann 1926: 241–251). Finally, he makes a strange link between the verb *saraph* verb – *burn*, „which is used to indicate the offerings of men and children made to Melek-Kronos-Marduk following Baudissin (Moloch PRE. xiii 374 ff. Gressmann 1926: 252).

Gressmann has very careful, hypothetical attitude. Further, the author stops Babylon’s influence on Ezekiel, Zacharias, and Daniel, claiming that the seraphim are replaced by cherubs. This is a thesis to which I will be forced to go further because it is also discussed by other authors. I find it worthwhile to recall that Isaiah lived in the eighth century BC, and Ezekiel, Zacharias and Daniel – in/after the sixth century BC.

Gressmann ends very correctly his study with the following thought for the status Yhweh: „To Isaiah he was the heavenly king who reigns over the whole world, not lower but greater than Marduk.“ (: 254)

More importantly, Gressmann’s idea of a Phoenician and Babylonian influence on Isaiah, rather than an Egyptian, is being conceived. It is important that the view of Gressmann is based on archaeological discovery, but so is with Joines and Provençal, who also take into account archeological artifacts in the direction of Egyptian influence.

If Gressmann finds a hypothetical influence of Kronos-Marduk, Day (1979) believes that Seraphim is crucially borrowed from the characteristics of Baal. Day seeks the influence of the mythology of the Canaan god Baal on Isaiah and the essence of seraphim. The title of his article speaks of its content: *Echoes of Baal’s Seven Thunders and Lightnings in Psalm 29 and Habakkuk 3:9 and the Identity of the Seraphim in Isaiah 6*.

The conclusion of Day is: „[...] Baal’s lightnings could be personified as his servants and that this or some similar conception in part lies behind the idea of the seraphim in Isa 6.“ (: 151)

In the course of the arguments, Day made some interesting observations. On the one hand, he is convinced that:

[...] the case of the Seraphim presents an indisputable origin, or in any case a close connection, with the seven Baal servants – the lightning and the thunder. This is supported by the fact that when the seraphim called out the foundations of the thresholds shook and the Temple was filled with smoke (v. 4), which

suggests that they had thunder-like voices and a fiery nature, as even their name indicates (*lit.* ‘burning ones’). (Day 1979: 149)

On the other hand, actually he states that Isaiah made a mixture between Egypt and Canaan symbols combining them into one symbol: „However, while Seraphim functions can be considered to be personification of the Canaanic lightning, similar to the Baal servants of lightning, it can be assumed in form that they are, as many scholars offer (Pedersen 1940; Joines, 1967; 1974), winged snakes (*uraei*) of undisputed Egyptian origin.“ (Day 1979: 150)

Day (:150) is convinced that archangels Seraphim have a snake body because *saraph* is one of Hebrew terms for a venomous serpent, and „supposedly Seraphim have a snake body, they have a human head, legs, hands, and wings. In this, seraphims resemble the Egyptian cobra (*uraei*), which are both symbolic of both human and divine status“.

For Day (: 149) Psalm 104:4 „Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire“ supports his point of view because it is a declaration that the (arch) angels are made by God as a flame of fire.

Finally, Day points out the view of Ward (1968) who „finds the closest analogy to the seraphim of Isa 6 in a Neo-Hittite six-winged ‘genie’ from Tell Halaf (ancient Gozan)“, following the suggestion of M. Fr. von Oppenheim’s *Der Tell Halaf eine neue Kultur im ältesten Mesopotamien*. Leipzig 1931: 152, cf. plate 32b“.

Thus a new origin of the seraphim rose – a Neo-Hittite.

For me, it is clear that the semiospheres of neighboring people meet each other and the borrowings are normal process. A striking instance is the first translation of the Pentateuch – the Septuagint. It is a result of communication between two semiospheres – the Hellenistic culture and the monotheistic Jewish culture. This happen in the fertile environment of cultural and economic exchange in Alexandria. The result – the Septuagint – to this day is a difficulty with missing and added parts to the canonical Masoretic text, which, albeit much later, presents one of the semiospheres. Besides, the prototype of the red color – the fire – lies at the heart of these close symbols for many people.

Otherwise, we would think that Isaiah, who lived in the eighth century BC, has international education in Egypt, Canaan, Phoenician, Assyrian, Neo-Hittite, and Babylonian cultures and mythologies, so in the Old Testament, we have the appearance of the seraphim in Isaiah 6.

Still, there is a need to consider some caution in the conclusions of some of the cited authors. This caution is justified because it is a sacred text and a prophet who, like any prophet, has unusual abilities. According to the Jewish tradition, the prophet transmits the word of God as words and even as a spelling. As the Apostle Peter testifies: But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. (2Peter 1:20–21)

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE), though very carefully, marks the link of Seraphim to Mesopotamia.

A Babylonian name for the fire-god, Nergal, was Sharrapu. In Egypt there have been found eagle-lion-shaped figures guarding a grave, to which is applied the name seref. The equivalent English term is 'griffin'. [...] It is probable enough that popular mythology connected fire with the attendants of the deity in various ways among different people, and that burning lies at the base of the idea in all these suggested etymologies.

ISBE yet recognizes the originality of Isaiah and the Jewish rankings of archangels with names of nouns:

It remains, however, that in Isaiah's use, there is nothing of the popular legend or superstition. These seraphim are august beings whose forms are not at all fully described. [...] Seraphim are in Jewish theology connected with cherubim and ophanim as the three highest orders of attendants on Yahweh, which are superior to the angels who are messengers sent on various errands. As the cherubim in popular fancy were represented by the storm-clouds, so the seraphim were by the serpentine flashes of the lightning; but none of this appears in Isaiah's vision. In the New Testament the only possible equivalent is in 'the living ones' ('beasts' of the King James Version) in Re 4:1–11; 5:1–14, etc. Here, as in Isaiah, they appear nearest Yahweh's throne, supreme in praise of His holiness. (William Carver, Seraphim, ISBE)

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* (JE) also presents different opinions on the origin of Seraphim. In the article Seraphim, the JE emphasizes the common service and origin of seraphim and cherubim. Very valuable is the information about the lion-eagle of Ancient Egypt called „seref“ and the obvious disharmony, in terms of features and appearance, between this mythical creature and the biblical seraphim. JE points out the striking similarity between seraphim and cherubim. JE summarizes the opinions that attributed to seraphim various regional influences, and clearly states that the seraphim having striking similarity are archangels who are different from angels who are messengers of God.

Seraphim appear to the greatest among the great prophets – Isaiah. He is known for his hard criticism of the Jews, which is stronger than the critique of the Apostles of the New Testament. It is very educational given the numerous issues focused on Jews in the time of Christianity. In Isaiah's vision of the seraphim in the Temple, there is an important legal element of faith, which was also misunderstood in Christianity – the fear of God. In Isaiah, this is the fear of being unclean compared to the Lord. In fact, the fear of the Lord should be natural because man is very small compared to the Lord's love for man. As much as he can force the human being,

he cannot respond with the same amount and quality of love to God, just as an ant cannot pick up a tree, as the elephant does with his hoobot. This crude metaphor gives an idea of why one should be afraid of the Lord and why the Man's Love passes through his fear of the Lord.

The fear of God is a basic characteristic of the Messiah, as the same prophet Isaiah, describes the Messiah in chapter 11:1–3:

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; (NAU)

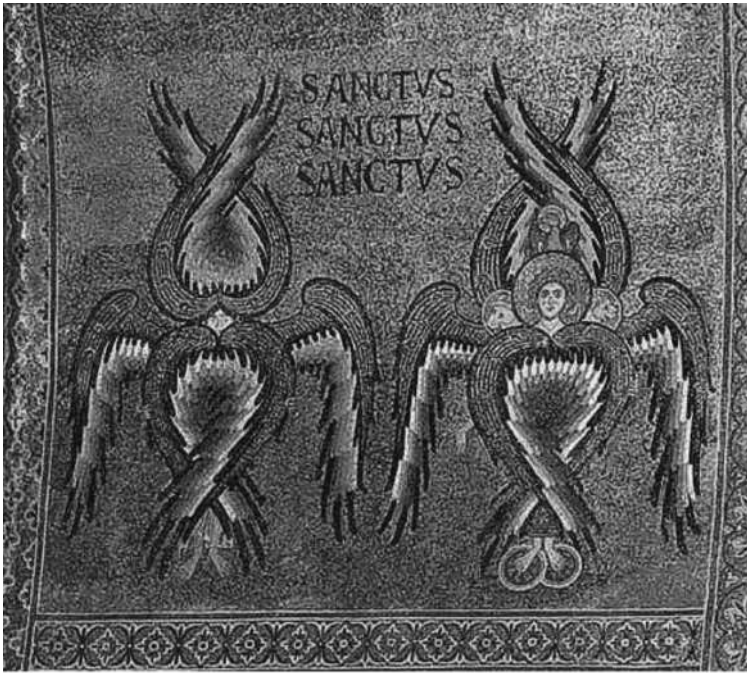
The basic in Isaiah 6 is the fear of God bound with fire and fiery seraphim.

For these reasons, seraphim are of great interest to various thinkers and researchers. There are many comments, different classifications, and rankings of the archangels and angels – both in Judaism and in Christianity. Certainly, seraphim are present in all biblical dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Origen assumes that Christ is part of the angel hierarchy and perceives Jesus Christ as his guardian angel. Origen binds the threefold glorification of God from the seraphim with the Trinity. (Origen *De Principiis*, chap. III. 5. On the Holy Spirit). See Pictures 3 and 4.



Picture 3. Monreale Cathedral (1172–1267), center apse, Throne of the Second Coming, Italy, Sicily



Picture 4. Detail from Monreale Cathedral (1172–1267), center apse, Throne of the Second Coming, Italy, Sicily

Seraphim are often integrated with cherubim, ofnaim, and four sacred beings (Ezekiel 1:10). Individual images contain blue and brown-black. Picture 4 shows that one of the figures unites the four sacred beings, the ofnaim (Hebrew „wheels“) of Ezekiel 1 and 10. It is no coincidence that blue, white and black appear. These colors are related to the sapphire under the Throne of God, black for Glory of Good, and the four sacred beings – eagle, bull, lamb and man. A similar mixture is present in Hagia Sophia Istanbul (Constantinople) with the four seraphim, pictures 5. Blue surrounds the fiery seraphim at Picture 2 in similar logic.

After the fall of Constantinople under the Ottoman rule in 1453, Hagia Sophia was turned into a mosque. Turkish invaders have adopted these images for talismans, so they have preserved them when they turned the basilica into a mosque. They confined themselves to concealing seraphim faces with metal masks.



Picture 5a. One of the four seraphim mosaic in Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (Constantinople)

The Ottoman decision is understandable because the concept of this image is special. The four seraphim communicate with the visitor through the perfect knowledge of the Old Testament, because the vision includes a blue color marking the pavement under the Throne of the Lord (Ex 24:10) and „a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne“ (Eze 10:1). There are neither hands nor legs nor attempt to preserve the fiery nature of the seraphim through red and yellow. Pendentives of the Great dome with the four seraphim, preserved by the Ottomans. Before the Muslims changed the decorating the dome was located Christ Pantocrator.

The blue pavement under of the Throne of God, just like the Limbourg's image, shows the knowledge of the broad context of the Old Testament. Unlike the Limbourg brothers' illustration, there is no imitation and representation of objects here, except for the fact that the whole image represents a creature with feathers. Another difference is the important place in the black color or black feathers. They obviously represent retransmission of the description of the smoke of God's Glory that filled the Temple in Isaiah 6.

The image is almost abstract and includes the biblical context and the whole concept of an archangel: the blue of the pavement of the Throne of the Lord (not mentioned by Isaiah but in Ezekiel 1; 10); the black as a symbol of the smoke of God's Glory, spreading over Sinai and the First Temple; the ability of seraphim to

fly (through the feathers); the upstanding of the seraphim, reminder their standing position beside the throne of the Lord; the idea of the six wings. Missing legs, hands, or pincers that are present on other images of seraphim, e.g. picture 1. In both images is collected synthetically the biblical text for the fiery seraphim and blue pavement under the Throne of God. In Hagia Sofia, the synthetic mixing/gathering is richer. The original images include the four-faced sacred creatures of Ezekiel 1; 10. (human, lion, beast, eagle). In Ezekiel 1, they are not connected with the cherub and in chapter 10 they are linked to the well-known term in the tradition, a cherub. One more difference – everywhere the cherub has two wings while in Ezekiel 10:14 the cherub is four-winged. That is why the four-faced sacred creatures are linked to the wheels, ophanim. in Ezekiel's descriptions, the „living creatures“ appear to consist of cherubs and wheels united by the Spirit.

The Ottomans plastered all the images except the four seraphim. The only change in seraphim is that they hide the four faces. There are two hypotheses about what is under the golden lids. One hypothesis is that there are four different faces – human, lion, eagle, and bull – behind the golden lids. And this is inwoven into the mosaic of what was said in Ezekiel 1. In Chapter 10, Ezekiel replaced the „bull's face“ with a „cherubic face“ (man, cherub, eagle, lamb). Today only one of these faces has been revealed – the human one – due to the status of a museum of the basilica.



Picture 5b. The only one face revealed due to the status of a museum of the basilica Hagia Sophia, Istanbul (Constantinople)

The second hypothesis is that the four seraphim have human faces. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish government secularized the building in 1934 and from the next year, it functions as a museum. Although it is usually called „Hagia Sophia“, the church is not dedicated to the Roman martyr Sophia but

is the Temple of the Holy God's Wisdom, the divine side of Jesus Christ, which is also one of the hypostases of the Holy Trinity.

In Christianity, no picture presents the link of seraphim with the snake called red cobra.

4. Seraphim, the copper idol Nehushtan, and the problem of (re) presenting the Transcendence

None of the authors draws attention to an obvious and very interesting fact. In four of the five uses of the word *sarâf* as a snake, it is always a component of a noun phrase: with the generic name of a snake [nahâsh], e.g. "fiery snake" (Numbers 21:6) or with the quality of „flying“ (*flying serpent* Isaiah 30:6).

Only in Numbers 21:8 the word [sarâph] ("red cobra") is used alone, not in a noun phrase. On the one hand, in the context of verse 6 of the same chapter, where the term *fiery snakes* ha-nehashim ha-serafim], the independent use in verse 8 seems to be an ellipse of the term from verse 6. On the other hand, this independent use of the word in verse 8 is in the instruction given by God to Moses. It is only in the next verse that Moses makes a snake of copper [nehâsh nehôshet]. The color of the well-preserved copper can be compared to fiery brownish-red. The English translations prefer *bronze*, which makes the color language different – the bronze has a yellow color. The color of newly mastered copper is better suited than bronze to express the fiery nature of Nehushtan by means of iconicity, while bronze is more suitable for the cherubim, which are golden in the temple.

The idol of Nehushtan is candor deviation from commandment „You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.“ (Exodus 20:4 NIV). Nehushtan is a cure-idol but not a (re)-presentation of God Himself. God is invisible and any image cannot represent Him. Moreover, the semiosis of the process of how polytheistic gods enter the idol explained by Leone (2014) is not applicable to Nehushtan. Neither the light (in Mesopotamian practices) nor the darkness (in Egyptian temples) as a mandatory visual context is available at Nehushtan. Neither Nehushtan was considered the body of God, nor did the One demands „to be sufficiently attracted by the beauty and appropriateness of the construction materials used (e.g. silver for bones, gold for flesh, *lapis lazuli* for hair) so as to enter the statue which plays the role of „Door of heaven“. *Nehushtan* does not need „rituals of purification, consecration, and vivification“.

God's transcendence is „an obvious oxymoronic tension in every religious representation“ Volli (2014), and „the most important essence“ of God „is beyond human experience“ (Volli 2014: 23).

From one viewpoint, Nehushtan seems to be an imitation of Egyptian practices. Then again, in any case, this image has little to do with them because it is aimed at the mnemonic habits of Israeli society.

This idol serves to make the Israelites remember: 1. The rebellion against God's chosen way is a subject to a terrible punishment; 2. Nehushtan is the sign-icon of the instrument of punishment sent by God; 3. There is no God in Nehushtan but historical and political essence 'Remember: I punish, I heal'; 4. 'If you cry about the good life in Egypt – take your beloved Egypt and your slavery back'.

When Isaiah enters the temple, he „saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with **the train of His robe filling the temple.**“ (Isaiah 6:1)

The term *train* is preferred by most of the English translations. Only in NRS, it is replaced by the word *hem*. The Hebrew term for *skirt/hem* is יָצַף [shul]. Actually, there is no Hebrew word for *robe* in the verse.

The word translated as a *train/hem* is [shul] which means *skirt, the skirt of a garment, the skirts of a wide top garment, the skirt of a robe, a hem; the end of the garment*. The root is Shin-Vav-Lamed. BW gives only *skirt* (of robe), e.g. Nah 3:5; Jer 13:26, for [shul].

There is no word corresponding to Hebrew [shul] in Septuagint. LXX avoids the translation of [shul] and presents the *Glory of God* or *God Himself* as *shining/brilliant* δόξης αὐτοῦ.

Instead of the *train of His robe*, the Septuagint presents a picture of *glory, power brightness, brilliance; the revealed presence of God, God himself; heaven* referred by the word δόξα [dòxa] and the word αὐτοῦ [autù] meaning *self, of oneself, even, very*.

kai. evge,neto tou/ evniautou/ ou- avpe,qanen Oziaj o` basileu,j ei=don to.n ku,rion kaqh,menon evpi. qro,nou u`yhlou/ kai. evphrme,nou kai. plh,rhj o` oi=koj th/j **do,xhj auvtou/** (LXX Isaiah 6:1)

On the occasion of the word יָצַף [shul] there is another opinion – that it is the Glory of the Lord, which encompasses the whole world where the Temple is a model of the world. The opinion is Alec Motyer's: „The spread skirts of his garment symbolize the place where the transcendental God touches the earth.“ (Motyer 2002: 88 transl. from Bulgarian ed.).

Volli (2014) „follows the motif of cherubim in the biblical and post-biblical literature“ as far as „Jewish tradition is in general strongly anti-iconic and especially forbids any representation of divinity“ (: 23). At the same time, „the book of Exodus prescribes the presence of two statues of ‘cherubim’, which are identified with a class of angels: (: 23). Comparing the (statues of) cherubims with the vision of „live“ seraphims and the „live“ ophanims (Ezekiel 1; 10) is unavoidable: they have wings and are considered of highest type angels in the hierarchy of angels. As Volli notes on transcendence „how to make (again) present something that by definition is not (empirically) present“. For me, there is a strong difference between the artefact of a statue of cherub and seraphim and ophanim from the vivid visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel – in the visions of both major prophets, the seraphim and ophanim are „live“ creatures but not artifacts.

Cherubim are only relational signs, marking the communication between transcendence and Jewish people. With a sword at the border of Eden, after Adam and Eve expulsion, they allude to the removal of the direct link with God; with wings and wheels in Ezekiel, they hint to the distance from the Divinity; looking to where the „Voice“ speaks, they witness the possibility of hearing God’s will from different points of view and underline with their materiality, the unworldliness and immateriality; approaching each other to a love act they show a possible condition of harmony and fertility in the relations inside the Jewish people and between the people and God; looking away from each other, they signal the opposite state of disagreement and segregation. As every angel is in Jewish thought, they are conceived as communication devices: they do not re-present transcendence but present, as a sort of indexical/iconic signs, the modality of the relation with it. This is a very intimate and actually secret presentation, which is very fragile when exposed to an outsider glance, because it works also as a sort of mirror, reflecting the human condition and its weakness in front of God. Cherubim are not transcendence signs, but a metasign of its possibility. That is why an aniconic culture such as the Jewish tradition hides it in the very center of its symbolic system. (Volli 2014: 47).

By definition, it has indeed to re-present (whose core etymological meaning entails making something present – again), not a simple daily life object but a transcendent one, that is, something that is not (only) present in the world, not really included in it, whose most important essence is beyond human experience. (Volli 2014: 23)

As Volli notes on transcendence „how to make (again) present something that by definition is not (empirically) present“.

It is not possible to see, *ergo* to represent the One God because He is above human senses and communicative sign systems.

There is a need to remind the traditional Jewish doctrine of the symbolism of various artifacts, such as the doctrine in the Old Testament is.

To think that Isaiah saw Lord’s sexual organs in the temple is inappropriate. The start was given by Driver (1971: 89–90). Inspired by this suggestion, Elsinger (1995) proceeds to her own research to develop the Driver’s idea. The thesis of Elsinger is a bit ridiculous and unacceptable for several reasons. If Isaiah saw the penis of the One God, what should be the curse or the punishment? Instead, seraphims are sent to purify Isaiah’s lips and transmit the message of the transcendental God. Next reason is the status of the prophet. The prophet is not an ordinary person, and the Bible has numerous examples of how the prophet differs. Starting from Moses who was attacked by the people a few times during the exodus. To say that the prophet is a profane is not a correct term. Elzinger builds a schematization where the role of the seraphim is evaluated as „another instance of the normal function of cultic barriers and divisions, the purpose of which is to isolate the sacred deity from his profane covenantal partner“. Here ‘the covenantal partner’ is Isaiah. Isaiah’s statement „Woe to me! I cried. I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I

live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty“ at verse 5 should not be taken literally but as the enlightenment of the levels between men and God.

In the Bible, the role of the prophet is to communicate the messages of God to the people, and the role of the angels is to communicate with the prophets rather than divide them. In this sense, even the seraphim, standing by the highest place, by the Throne of the Lord, come to Isaiah, not to distract him from the Lord's Throne, but to tell him that he is vocated/called to a be prophet with a specific function. The next reason consists of biblical narrative facts and their interpretative treatment. LXX avoids the translation of [shul] and presents the *Glory of God* or *God Himself* as *shining/brilliant* δόξης αὐτοῦ. If accept Septuagint made the right decision, it is good to recall how Gregory of Nyssa comments Moses climbing the Mount Sinai and presented the so-called Theology of darkness based on the fact that Moses enters the dark cloud above Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:21). At third place, despite the excited narrative of Isaiah, he did not accidentally enter the temple, but because he was vocated/called. Even in our non-prophetic lives, we interpret some circumstances as non-random coincidences.

In the case of the transcendence of the Jewish God, He is not representable in a straight way/form. The ways of knowing/ascending God are through apophatic (without word or image) and cataphatic when it happens with word and image. These theological terms are coined long ago.

As Volli marks: „[...] *agalmata* ‘representations’ were made possible because gods had appearances, or *eidola* ‘presentations’, as Christian *eikona* were possible because of the Incarnation“ (2014: 25).

In this vein, the proposition of Elsinger (1995) and others that Isaiah saw the penis (יְהוָה [shul]) of God is not merely atheistic, but a sign of a complete misunderstanding of the idea of God, religion, temple, prophet, culture.

5. Conclusions: Cultural unit red in Isaiah

Cultural unit red in my treatment includes Basic color terms (*red*), Prototype terms (*fire* and *blood*), Basic features of the prototype terms (to burn, to blaze), Rival terms of the prototypes (cherry, ruby). For color as cultural unit see Eco 1996 [1985] and Anonymous 2017b.

Isaiah built an extraordinary cultural unit red. There is a rich use of the prototypes *fire* (with many different roots and standard Biblical semantizations) and *blood*. Isaiah actively uses the mega-red specificity of equalization the prototype *fire* with Basic features of the prototype terms (*to burn*, *to blaze*). Three of Isaiah's innovations remain significant. The prophet introduces the opposition red-white. In Isaiah 1:18, red explicitly indicates sin (“sins be as scarlet“, „they be red like crimson“), and the mega red is expressed by Basic Color Terms. This semantization became popular. Isaiah also introduced the name of the fiery archangels six-winged

Seraphim in monotheism. Seraphim is a derivate of the Prototype Term *fire* [saràf], and Basic features of the prototype terms *to burn* [saraf]. Moreover, Biblical Hebrew worldview unites *fire* [saràf] and Seraphim with one of the most venomous snakes – the *red cobra* [saràf]. In the case of fire (root Sin-Reish-Fe) and its derivatives, the semantization is completely positive – fire and fiery creatures are an instrument for the vocation on Isaiah, which is ultimately positive, although his task is to testify to the weaknesses of the Jews. The third mega- red innovation is the description of the Saviour with dyed/scarlet but actually fermented red [hamutz] garments coming from the red Edom/Idumea (“the Red“ Isaiah 63:1–3). The blood [dam] of people who did not support the Saviour (“the nations no one was with me“) stained his garments because he „trampled the nations in my anger“ and wrath. The hapax use of fermented red [hamutz] is for the dried blood of the nations. The wine-press in this mega-red unit has subconscious presence of red color and conscious presence of ‘punishment’. Isaiah 63:1–7 corresponds to Jesus as Judge and the punishment on nations in Revelation 19:13 „He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God“.

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List of Abbreviations

General Abbreviations

adj. – adjective

An – Author's note

c. – circa

chap. – chapter

cf. – compare

fem. – feminine

ff. – and the following (pages, paragraphs)

i.q. – the same as

i.e. – that is

i.e. – in other words

i.q. – the same as

lit. – literary

masc. – masculine

Na – authors note

NT – New Testament

obsol. – obsolete (root)

OT – Old Testament

pl. – plural

v. – verse

Color

B&K – Berlin, Brent & Paul Kay sequence/tradition

Biblical Hebrew

ABH – Archaic Biblical Hebrew

EBH† – Early Biblical Hebrew (Classical Biblical Hebrew or Standard Biblical Hebrew)

LBH – Late Biblical Hebrew

SBH/CBH – Standard or Classical Biblical Hebrew

NIFAL – one of the seven major verb stems called [binyanim] „constructions“, „buildings“

Bibles, Translations

Cyrillic

BUL1 Bulgarian Protestant Version 1940, 1995, 2005†

BUL2 Bulgarian Orthodox Version 1925, 1991†

BUL3 Protestant „Veren“ edition, 2000†

RST Russian Synodal Text of the Bible†1917 [1996]

English

ASV American Standard Version 1901 †

KJV King James 1611/1769 †[1988–1997]

King James 2000 Bible

NAB The New American Bible 2011 [1970; 1991]

NAS (NASB) New American Standard Bible 1977 †

NAU New American Standard Bible 1995†

NIB New International Version UK 1983†

NIV New International Version 1984 (US)†

NKJ New King James Version 1982†

NRS New Revised Standard Version 1989†

RSV Revised Standard Version 1952/1971†

RWB Revised Webster †1833/1995†

WEB The Webster Bible 1833†

Greek †

LXX Septuagint. Retrieved from <http://biblehub.com/interlinear/>†

VM (MGK) Vamvas Modern Greek Bible †1850 [1966, †1968, 1975]

Hebrew

Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia 1990†

Latin

VUL Latin Vulgate

Polish

BTP The Polish Millennium Bible 1984, 4th Ed.

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