

Pregledni znanstveni članek/Article (1.02)

Bogoslovni vestnik/Theological Quarterly 79 (2019) 4, 1027—1038

Besedilo prejeto/Received:09/2019; sprejeto/Accepted:10/2019

UDK/UDC: 811.411.16'02

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34291/BV2019/04/Petrovic>

Predrag Petrović

The Christological Aspects of Hebrew Ideograms

Kristološki vidiki hebrejskih ideogramov

Abstract: The linguistic form of the Hebrew Old Testament retained its ancient ideogram values included in the mystical directions and meanings originating from the divine way of addressing people. As such, the Old Hebrew alphabet has remained a true lexical treasure of the God-established mysteries of the ecclesiological way of existence. The ideographic meanings of the Old Hebrew language represent the form of a mystagogy through which God spoke to the Old Testament fathers about the mysteries of the divine creation, maintenance, and future re-creation of the world. Thus, the importance of the ideogram is reflected not only in the recognition of the Christological elements embedded in the very structure of the Old Testament narrative, but also in the ever-present working structure of the existence of the world initiated by the divine economy of salvation. In this way both the Old Testament and the New Testament Israelites testify to the historicizing character of the divine will by which the world was created and by which God in an ecclesiological way is changing and re-creating the world.

Keywords: Old Testament, old Hebrew language, ideograms, mystagogy, Word of God, God (the Father), Holy Spirit, Christology, ecclesiology, Gospel, Revelation

Povzeteke: Jezikovna oblika hebrejske Stare Zaveze je obdržala svoje starodavne ideogramske vrednote, vključene v mistagoške smeri in pomene, nastale iz božjega načina nagovarjanja ljudi. Staro hebrejsko Sveto pismo je kot takšno do danes ostalo prava besedna zakladnica od Boga utemeljenih skrivnosti eklesiološkega načina bivanja. Ideogramski pomeni starega hebrejskega jezika so oblike mistagogije, s katero je Bog govoril starozaveznim očakom o skrivnostih božanskega ustvarjanja, ohranjanja in prihodnjega novega stvarjenja sveta. Zato se pomembnost ideogramov odraža ne samo v prepoznavanju kristoloških prvin, vgrajenih v samo strukturo pripovedovanja Stare Zaveze, temveč v vselej prisotni delujoči strukturi obstajanja sveta, ki jo spodbuja božja skrb za odrešenje. Na ta način Izraelci iz Stare in iz Nove Zaveze pričajo o zgodovinskem značaju božje volje, po kateri je bil ustvarjen svet in s katero na eklesiološki način svet spreminja in preoblikuje.

Ključne besede: stara hebrejščina, ideogrami, mistagogija, kristologija, eklesiologija, evangelij, Razodetje

1. Introduction

Authors who deal with Christian tradition in the context of the meaning of (Old) Hebrew expressions of biblical scriptures originate mainly from those Jewish circles¹ who accepted Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah. We consider, however, that the methodology of researching the Messianic idea remains insufficient in those hermeneutic dimensions in which the personality of the Son of God as the Messiah remains for the reader closed within the boundaries of the correct meaning of the text, while the concrete way of existence is somehow independent or separated from this, so to say, »textocratic« perspective of the Messianic issue. One gets the impression that the promised arrival of the Messiah does not imply the need for an appropriate ecclesiological way of existence, since the ecclesiological order of the world implies a hierarchy as a synonym for the God established order of the created beings. Indeed, even the Old Testament anticipation of the Messiah cannot be closed to the real existence of the world, or indifferent to the Christological way of the existence of the Church. The insufficient textual, or better, *textocratic* recognition of the coming of the Son of God is based exclusively on the differentiation from »the son of man« whose arrival the Jews expected as a kind of political coming, which God initiates entirely for the sake of the Jews². In this sense, in order to avoid superficiality or even sensationalism in approach to the issue of Old Testament Messianism, it is necessary to point out to the appropriate ecclesiological way of existence as to an innate content of the Messianic themes of the Old Testament.

2. The hidden meanings of the biblical narrative

One of the common features of ancient languages is the similarity of the form and the way of writing. Such an ancient language was also used by the Canaanites (Phoenicians) who spoke in the North-Semitic dialect, and Jewish authors start with the conviction about the similarities between Phoenician and Old Hebrew languages (Kutscher 1982, 1). However, it cannot be compared to today's Hebrew alphabet, but not concerning the difference between the ancient and newer appearance of certain symbols or ideograms, but first of all by using them in writing the God-inspired ecclesiological visions of the world. The mystery of the Hebrew language has its origins in the religious symbols of the divine economy of salvation that the Lord assigned to Israel, because of all the nations, only Israel was named after the way of knowing God as He is. In other words, Israel freely accepted the way of existence which is in harmony with the actions of the divine economy of salvation keeping it through history, so that the Lord through Moses created a

¹ In their internet presentations, the authors in question act mainly as preachers of some Protestant confessions. We would set apart from them Rabbi Zeev Porat whose ancestors of several generations were rabbis, as well as those authors who give their presentations on internet portals, such as Willy Sandford, at <https://www.youtube.com/user/whsanford/videos>, (23.08.2019. 09:30).

² See more about this topic: Hyman 2002, 27–50; Levy 1997, 517.

mystical way of recording divine messages acceptable to ways of existence of actual persons³.

The historical appearance of the Old Hebrew alphabet (*alephbeth*) some contemporary authors search in inscriptions dated in the seventeenth (Albright 1969, 10–11)⁴ or nineteenth century BC (Colless 2014, 73). According to this view, Hebrew alephbeth is an *innovation* from originally proto-sinaitic inscriptions in the area of Wadi el-Hol (Moran and Kelly 1969, 3) and Serabith el-Khadem that took place around 1840 BC (Colless 2014, 73–75; Lamer 2008, 44).⁵ When we compare the version of Hebrew ideograms with the ideograms of other geographic areas, we find common characteristics of writing, i.e. word carving. This does not in any way mean that the writing systems of other nations, i.e. of other languages, have no significance, but that the writings of other languages are as mystical as they are able to transmit historical messages of genuinely God-working divine wills. In this sense, the Hebrew language of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, besides the »external« mysterious meanings, contains many secrets of existence woven into the inner meanings of relations between ideographic symbols and words.⁶ However, if we carefully approach the New Testament problem of divinity, we will see that the Lord Jesus Christ, and later the apostles, reveals deeper meanings of the God-inspired Old Testament messages.

3. Christology in Gen 1:1

Our first intention is »to overcome scholastic controversies or differences of opinion /... / that divided theologians among themselves« (Fitzmyer 1985, 409). That is why we are focusing on the Old and New Testament words, trying to approach to the real, but hidden literal meaning of the Mystery of Christ from Judeo-Christian perspective. The book of Genesis begins with the words, »In the beginning

³ Although the dictionaries »know« over eight thousand words of the Old Testament Jewish text, it is a miracle to claim that there are actually about five hundred thousand old Hebrew words, of which more than thirty-one thousand are found in the text only once! The specificity of the Hebrew text is reflected in the fact that the main word with some added ideogram already creates a different meaning, so the mentioned numbers speak of the great hermeneutical possibilities provided by such a structure of the original text.

⁴ In his trying to find the roots of innovation of the Hebrew alphabet, Albright is following the Nubian traces of ancient Semitic miners probably from Canaan (1969, 12).

⁵ Some scholars disagree on this issue. See open letters on: https://www.academia.edu/30545786/_2016_The_First_Alphabet_is_Hebrew_Not_Canaanite_An_Open_Response_to_Christopher_Rollstons_Rebuttal_of_10_December_2016?email_work_card=title (06. 10. 2019. 19:50). See also: https://www.academia.edu/30121150/The_Early_History_of_the_Alphabet_and_the_Recent_Claim_that_the_Northwest_Semitic_Inscriptions_from_Serabit_el-Khadm_and_Wadi_el-Hol_are_Hebrew_Spoiler_Alert_They_re_Not 06. 1(0. 2019. 19:50.)

⁶ Pictograms allow different languages to communicate at the level of the same concepts or ideas. On the other hand, modern languages must first phonetically »create« conceptual meanings and »subsequently« interpret them, bearing in mind the appropriate linguistic perspective of other speaking areas.

God⁷ created the heavens and the earth« (Gen 1: 1). It means that God *ex nihilo* created »completeness of what has been created« (Okyere 2011, 82), and also, that the world is »continuous and not split up into a heaven and an earth« (Van Wolde 2016, 142). In order to understand the meaning of the first sentence of the Book of Genesis, we must bear in mind one of the dimensions of the interpretation of this place from the powerful hermeneutic perspective of the Gospel of John the Apostle, who begins with the words »In the beginning was the Word« (דבר, *davar* בְּרֵאשִׁית הָיָה הַדְּבָר, *bareshit haya hadavar*). Facing the Jewish problem of the knowledge of God in the Flesh, apostle, prophet, and evangelist John begins his writings right from the Christological perspective. For this reason, John, like the writer of Genesis, begins not only his Gospel with »In the beginning« (Jn 1: 1), but also in the first letter he says: »That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.« In the first chapter of the Revelation, Apostle John also testifies to God's words: »I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.« (1: 8) Why did the Word, and not some other term, have a special significance for John? We are not prone to the interpretation by which John Christianized this significant achievement of the so-called Hellenistic thought. The Word of God for the Jews never had the meaning of superficial or inadequate human testimony, or the principle of existence, but the actual divine power of creation and re-creation of things and beings. When a man speaks, his word does not have to be binding, but when God speaks, He either creates or re-creates something. The Word of God cannot be compared to the human word except by its iconically invisible echoes. In the Hebrew text the Word of God has the attributes of Eternity, since He who utters it is the Everlasting God. In other words, from the Old Testament perspective, it does not suit the Eternal God to speak like mortal men. This is one of the reasons why John states that »It was in the beginning with God«. Since the apostles were sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the question arises: Are these John's words expressed distinctively in the hidden context over which the Pharisees could not pass without accepting the Lord Jesus Christ?

When we try to have Jewish hermeneutic manner in our approaching to the text of the Old Testament, it is clear that the hidden definition of the meaning of the first line of the Book of Genesis depends solely on John's words: »In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.« However, in the second verse John also repeats that »the Word was in the beginning with God« (Jn 1: 2). Why, then, in this place does he emphatically repeat what he has just said in the previous verse?

In the Old Hebrew text of the Book of Genesis, we first find the ideograms הארץ הראשית ברא אלהים את השמים וארץ, with the meaning »In the beginning, God created

⁷ The literal translation would be »gods« because the word »God« in the Hebrew language is written as a noun in the plural – *Elohim*.

the heavens and the earth» (Gen 1: 1). In this sense, the very first word we encounter is בְּרֵאשִׁית, which is read as *bəreshit*, and is translated into the old Serbian language »In the beginning«, or »в нача́лье« (»initially«), which would correspond only to the Old Greek translation of the word of Septuagint, »Ἐν ἀρχῇ«, and not to much more complex meaning of the first group of Hebrew ideograms (בְּרֵאשִׁית). Namely, we notice that the Book of Genesis begins with second ideographic sign of the Hebrew *alephbeth* (the first ideogram is א *aleph* and the second ב *beth*). Ideogram *bet* means a house, a home with an entrance corridor (Saas 1988, 111), like, for example, in the name of the city בֵּית לֶחֶם, *Beth-lehem* which means the house of bread. The letter was similar to the Egyptian sign for the house (111). In older versions of this ideogram, *beth* had the meaning of a tent, tabernacle. The secondary meaning of this letter is also the preposition »in«. The next ideogram is ר (*resh*) and it is in the older versions of the writing system represented in the form of a »man s head in profile« (131) and bears exactly that name (הסר רש – head). Bearing in mind the corresponding verse of the Greek Septuagint, the literal translation of these three ideograms into the English language would be »In the header«. However, the ideograms of the Hebrew *alephbeth* also form their own internal or interdependent meanings and relationships. Thus, the first two ideograms, *beth* and *resh* (in the word *bar*, בַּר) have the meaning a son. There is another term for the son, and that is *ben* (בֵּן), a word used in the sense in which the *son* implies a natural genealogy. Van Wolde states that the Hebrew words *bne elohim* or *bne elim* have meaning sons of God in divine sense of the angels as the created beings (2016, 132), and we point out that the term *bar* is used in the Old Testament to signify the name for the son in the divine sense of the word, as לִבְר אֱלֹהִים (*lābar elohim*, Dan 3: 25) and כֶּבֶד אֱנוֹשׁ (*kābar enash*, »like son of man« in Daniel s vision; Dan 7: 13). This leads us to the certainty of the son-like meaning of the »beginning«, i.e. the certainty of some kind of a son-like action of God or of a son-like God-working. This is also the first written symbol which leads us to the conclusion that the creation of the world is inseparable from the meaning of the word son. There still remains a demand for an ideographic indication to the divine origin of the son, which we find in the third ideogram.

The third ideogram of the first word of the Book of Genesis is א (*aleph*), which is, as we have said, the first »letter« of the Hebrew *alephbeth*. *Aleph* does not represent here a letter in the strict meaning of that word, because it does not have its own sound. It is also the first silent letter that indirectly receives its sound values. In view of the fact that this is the first letter of the Hebrew *alephbeth*, this points to the divine character of the language in which all the subsequent sounds have their beginning in the sequence in the silent א (*aleph*). In the further creative projection of the Silent, there are formed the symbols-sounds, as of the One who is above all sounds and above all spoken and unspoken, and above everything that can be heard. On the other side, א (*aleph*) is not just letter in the word as, for instance, a letter »a« in our languages. *Aleph* in its original version⁸ was presented

⁸ Former ideograms from which the Hebrew letter was created (א ב ג ד ה ו ז ח ט י כ ל מ נ ס ע פ צ ק ר ש ת) have their own order or the direction of writing and reading from right to left, which most

in the form of a rounded (or elliptic) head of the ox (𐤀; Wilson-Wright, 2016, 257; Saas 1988, 108-109), and later this rounder head was presented in a more square form (𐤁; Goldwasser 2007, 127; 137).⁹ The closest ancient (rounded) form of this ideogram would correspond to the Old Slavic Cyrillic letter »а« (*az*, that means »а«). Due to the fact that ideographic or even more ancient pictorial writing systems by nature were conceptual, and not phonetic, we cannot say that the original version of the latter Hebrew letter *aleph* (א) had its phonetic content as well. It is important to note that *aleph* (אֵלֶּף) contains in itself the divine name *la* (לֵא, *El*, where the associated ל (*lamed*) has the meaning of a link, attachment, yoke (a pair), but also of learning, and this character in the ancient version had the appearance of a shepherd's crook (Saas 1988, 123). The first letter (ideogram) is found on divine context, when God naming Himself with, »אֵהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֵהְיֶה« (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*)« (Ex 3: 14). The translation would be »I am that I am«, what we see from the messianic context in which God speaks to Moses in the words: »I will be with you (אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ – *ehyeh immak*).« (Ex 3: 12). Moses then asks the Lord for His Name, and the Lord replies in the future tense: »I will be who I will be (אֲנִי אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֵהְיֶה).« In the Serbian version these terms are translated from the ancient Greek »Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν«, as »I am the one who I am«. In any case, the form of the present as well as of the future tense does not change God's self-naming through the initial ideogram א (*aleph*). In this ideogram, some authors have seen the meaning of the origin, and in the ideogram *beth*, the meaning of the beginning, so that in some way, through the meaning of the ideogram *beth* the meaning of the ideogram *aleph* is hidden, i.e. revealed (Cohen and Magid 2002, 138).

We also note that Adam's name in the Hebrew language is composed of three ideograms אדם (*aleph-dalet-mem*), and it denotes that the human being is made up of earth. Adam's name can also be interpreted from the ideogram group in the word דם (*dam*), which is translated as blood and the »divine« א (*aleph*), which among other meanings also speaks of the similarity that the first man has with God. The א (*aleph*) ideogram has not only the meaning of the ox, but also the meaning of power, strength, leadership, supremacy or primacy (Saas 1988, 109), which in fact points to divine attributes. With the added previous ideograms בר (*bar-sin*) in the word בְּרֵאשִׁית (*bereshit*), א (*aleph*) points to the divine origin of the Son with whom, or in whom, the Unknown God (the Father) creates the world. That is why we do not share an opinion that this word (*bereshit*) in Bible appears »predominantly /... / in the construct state« (Lyon 2019, 273); *beth* is not just »definite article« (273), that refer to a specific, »absolute beginning« (Holmstedt 2008, 58). Our intention is not to deal only with grammar and semantics (57), but with the internal sense of biblical letters and words. In this place, the question arises: Does John, because of the clarification of the textual meaning of these

likely stems from the ancient way of writing, i.e. carving of the ideograms in stone. The left-handed held a chisel with the left hand, and with the right hand they with some tool hammered the chisel slanted to the right side. On the appearance and meaning of ancient and modern Hebrew letters see: Matis 2014, 881–882.

⁹ See also, Albright, 1969, 9. This we find as the alphabetic reproductions in Caanan. See, Saas 1988, 150.

words, emphatically repeat that »the Word was in the beginning with God« (1: 2)? If we understand such a hermeneutic context, then John would actually speak to the Pharisees about the Son of God as the Word of God, in which case we could reconstruct John's message as »look (you Pharisees), there at the very beginning of the mystical text of the Law of Moses, which you consider the basis for the existence of the world, is precisely the truth that in the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God«. This would mean that even in the initial verse of the text of the Mosaic Law, John sees the revelation of the Mystery of the Word, i.e. the Mystery of the Son of God.

The ideogram *resh* also points to the revelation of the spirit of God, who is in the immediate pre-eternal, but also in the economic¹⁰ relationship with the Son of the Father, who is again revealed by mutual relations of the first three ideograms of the first word of the Book of Genesis. In this respect, we can answer to the question »where did the Spirit of God go?« (Berković 2007, 171), saying, that although the Spirit of God was »hovering over the waters« (Gen 1, 2), His name is also present literally in the very first word of Genesis. Namely, if the Father begins the creation through the Son, which can be seen from the first two ideograms with the mutual meaning of the son בר (*bar*), and if the Father, as the Silent speaks, reveals, and even creates through the Son, then He Who enables the realization of God-working is the Spirit of God. The Spirit (רוח, *Ruach*)¹¹ of God (from בראשית) is inseparable in the beginning from the Son, so that in the world as in the premeditated house of the Son (רב) built by *Ruach*, the *Spirit* of God (רוח אלהים, *ruach elohim*, Gen 1: 2), God the Father interrupts his silence and becomes cognitive through the creative God-working of the Son and the Spirit.

If we continue the hermeneutics of the initiated ideogram line (בראשית), we will come to ideograms ש (*shin*), י (*yodh, yud, yod, jod, or jodh*), and ת (*tav*). The original shape of the ideogram *shin* was like the Cyrillic letter *w* (in the ancient variant ѡ), and it signified the teeth, but also sharpness, pressure, destruction, and depletion. *Yodh* was portrayed as a hand (י),¹² and signified work, action, throwing, but also worship, while the ideogram *tav* was depicted as the upright or horizontal cross (+; Saas 1988, 133) and signified a sign, signal, but also covenant, testament, testimony. Although in the first chapter of the Gospel, John does not explicitly refer to the mystery of these ideograms of the Beginning, their meanings nevertheless point to the Lord's economy of salvation.

»In the beginning« (בראשית) is also the first mystical group of ideograms, which speaks also of the divine sign of the cross (*tav* ת, +) and of the destruction (*shin* ש) of »something« that is not marked with any ideogram. This destruction is represented ideographically as a (divine) working (*yodh*, י, י) that ends on the cross, which

¹⁰ Economic derived here from the Old Greek *οικονομία* (τοῦ Θεοῦ), namely, God's work (for our salvation). The word is synthesis of the words: ὁ οἶκος (home), and νόμος (law). In the Slavic languagee the word is translated as »(božanski) domostroј«.

¹¹ The word רוח (*ruach*) can also means wind or smell or air.

¹² The root of this letter is for sure Egyptian sign for the hand (Saas 1988, 121).

points us to what God intended to destroy on the cross, and that which he will destroy does not have its own being, because it is not represented in any ideogram in the word בראשית. Therefore, it leads us to conclusion that the first written group of ideograms of the book of the Word, i.e. of the book of Gospel, is made up of the mystical realities that the Father intends to work through the Son in the forthcoming process of the realization of the divine economy of salvation, whose end is the Eternal Unity of the Son of God with the created world. There is one interesting hermeneutical point of Feinberg who states that three very first words (*bereshith bara Elohim*) showing separation and continuity. The second word of the first verse of the book of Genesis is translated with the word create (ברא – *bara*), which in fact repeats three ideograms of the first word of the Genesis, i.e. three ideograms in the words »In the beginning« – בראשית. However, Feinberg states that between the first word *Bereshith* and second *bara* there is some kind of inner separation, but between the second *bara* and the third word *Elohim* there is continuity. This is more clearly when we suppose that »Tipp'cha« is under the *shin*, »and suggests an approaching stop sign« (Feinberg 2007, 2a). Also, »»Tipp'cha offers a slight pause just before the big ending« (3c). Besides, there is a *moonnach* under the *resh*. This mark »sustains« (7a) to look further. It means that pair *bara-Elohim* are closer to each other than words *bara* and *bereshit*, and in our opinion this is very important. *Bereshith* is the first emphatic ideogram group, which again speaks of the Christological, or, more precisely, the *Son-Spirit* activity of the divine act of creation. Pointing to this obviousness of the Hebrew text, evangelist John says that »Through him (the Word) all things were made; without him nothing was made (from everything) that has been made« (1: 3). It is, moreover, compatible with another meaning of the word ברא – *bara*; in van Wolde's hypothesis *bara* designates »to separate«, namely, separation, division, setting apart (2016, 143), and, moreover, »nowhere is (*bara*) used of human production, nowhere is it found with an accusative of the matter« (Delitzsch 1888, 74). If we separate *beth* as proposition from *bereshith*, there will be difficult to translate the word *reshith* because »it does not mean the beginning of an event but the first part of anything« (75). So, we can try to find the more accurate meaning of the word *bereshith*, only if we identify it, not simple with some kind of God's name (i.e. personal noun), but also with God's matter-creating event through the Person of His Son, and with the force of His Holy Spirit. It means that this »synthetic« word (*bereshith*) may have a hidden meaning of the beginning of creation and economy (i.e. ἡ οἰκονομία) of God's Holy and Powerful Name. Somehow Rashi in similar direction suggests such hermeneutic possibility but from the Jewish religious point of view. (Rashi 1946, 2)

4. Christology of the ideogram אַת (aleph-tav)

The אַת (*aleph-tav*) ideograms appear in a large number of verses in Old Testament text (Matis 2014, XIX).¹³ Although translated in various ways, they can be neither

¹³ It is a total of 9590 repetitions of these two ideograms separately, but also with the addition of the

prepositions, nor conjuncts, nor articles in ancient Hebrew writing system, which was then closer to pictography than to today's ideograms. Ideograms אה (*aleph-tav*) are found in all those places of the Old Testament text that testify about the covenant people, persons, places, things, i.e. whenever it comes to the exclusive actions of God (the Father) and the Son of God (XIX). We first find them in the first verse of the Book of Genesis in two places: בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ. *Aleph* and *tav* are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and they are important because of the ideographic indication of the divine meaning spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he states (in Hebrew text): »Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his (Israelites) redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last.« (Is 44: 6)¹⁴ Besides, we also have in mind the words of Isaiah: »All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone (from the Lord) to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him (אה) the iniquity of us all.« (Is 53: 6) Taking into account both Isaiah's verses, we conclude that the ideograms אה (*aleph-tav*), such as the aforementioned pair בר (*bet-resh*), indicate the God-working approach within visible realities, which some authors described as the so-called incarnational theology which differentiates Christians from the Jews since they develop their theology on the event of the Incarnation of the Son of God, while the Jews see the embodiment of God in Israelites, in God's name, in Torah and in other concepts (Hamori 2010, 162). Of course, in the context of such a perspective, we must bear in mind the theological differentiation of the meanings of the Old Testament events as shadows, from those events that occur in the New Testament (Brakke 2001, 453–457).

We have mentioned that apostle John in the first chapter of the Book of Revelation testifies to God's words: »I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.« (1: 8) There is a bit different testimony at the end of the Book of Revelation, where it says: »I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.« (Rev 22: 13) Since John the Apostle writes in Greek the divine revelation, as well as the Gospel, it is clear that the Word of God reveals Himself with the letter of the Greek alphabet (*Alpha* and *Omega*). The meaning of the divine names of *Alpha* and *Omega* in the Jewish heritage would correspond to the first and last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, so the divine words would say: »I am א (*Aleph*) and ת (*Tav*), the First and Last.«

However, if before the ideograms *aleph-tav* are added *yodh* and *resh*, we get the word *fear* (אחיר) which implies the connection of the ideogram *aleph-tav* with those of the hand (י *yodh*) and the head (ר *resh*). Since the Christian meaning of the hand and the head of the body is Christ Himself, the Son of God, in that sense fear relates to the sanctity and God's covenant. This means that in this way fear would mean the fear of God; however, if י (*yodh*) and ר (*resh*) were between the

ideogram of *vav* (וה).

¹⁴ In the corresponding verse of the Septuagint we find the words: »I am the first, and I am hereafter (ἐγὼ πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα).« (Is. 44, 6)

ideograms *tav* and *aleph* (תֵּיּוֹא), this fear would have the meaning of fear from man, and such a fear would imply the breaking of man's covenant connection with God, i.e. of the connection אֵת (*aleph-tav*). Further on, this would point to the divine command that we should not give up to the fear of men, so as not to break the covenant connection with God, which is why the Lord uses the paradigm of the unjust judge »who neither feared God, nor cared what people thought« (Lk 18: 2).

5. Conclusion

The reason why the Hebrew alephbeth has a great mystical power is the divine revelation, since the will of God the Creator is revealed to the Old Testament prophets who, in the God-appropriate manner, conveyed to us the truths about divine creation, divine maintenance, and the salvation of the world from death and sin. The Lord Jesus Christ leads the apostles according to such a wealth of their God-inspired tradition, which now has in view the personality of the Son of God in whom is, at the same time, the Creator and the Interpreter of the original divine acts described in the Old Testament writings.

Finally, the arrival of the Messiah into the world cannot be read differently than as the Second Coming of the Lord and Savior of the world, of Jesus Christ, who comes to re-create the world, i.e. to take the Church into the promised Heavenly Kingdom. In this direction, we will turn our synoptic approach to the corresponding verses of the Old and New Testaments.

We think that we would not be mistaken if we would interpret the meaning of the pre-eternal mystery of salvation expressed in the first ideogram group from the perspective of the New Testament words: »In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him (the Word), and without him was not any thing made that was made.« (Jn 1: 1-3). Then, »Receive the Holy Spirit« (Jn 20: 22), and then »I will not say much more to you, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold over me.« (Jn 14: 30) In this context, the gospel messages of Apostle John are clearer, which we see to correspond to the first divine messages with which the Book of Genesis begins.

What is of utmost importance to us is the way of the historical hypostatizing of the Word of God, i.e. the Son of God. This time, it is John's verse: »And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.« (1: 14) The phrase »dwelt among us« (ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν) would correspond to the Hebrew version of the same verse, וישכן בתוכנו (*vayishkon betokenu*, in the Hebrew translation of the words in Jn 1: 14), in which the word שכן, with the meaning of dwelling, sanctuary, tabernacle, tent corresponds to the Old Testament expression ושכנתי בתוכם (*veshachanti bethokam*, in Ex 25: 8), with the meaning of God's dwelling in them (in Ex 25: 8), i.e. the divine dwelling in us (in Jn 1: 14), which in its basic form implies the paradigm of the dwelling or tabernacle (תבנית המשכן - *tabnit hamiskykan*) that God shows Moses on the mountain (Ex 25: 9).

From this perspective, Apostle John points to the Word that is with God »In the beginning«, and which is literally symbolically represented as the unity of the first pair of ideograms (בראשית), having the meaning of the House of the Son, i.e. the Tent of the Son, or rather, of the Son of God, who is the divine Tent of our future eternal existence. At the same time, »dwelt among us« as John's emphatic synonym for reality embedded in the expression »the Word became flesh«, speaks in fact about the nature of the coming into the world of the Son of God. His historical presence does not represent an objective view of historical events that took place two thousand years ago, given the fact that these events did not occur in order to end historically at that time. The New Testament should be considered as the New even in the time in which we live today and still write down its events. The patristic writings testify exactly to such ecclesiological projection of the New Testament realities. The Lord not only took on human nature, but also left behind Him some kind of »substitute« for Himself in the liturgical way of existence of the Church, in which He Himself accomplishes the divine economy of salvation. The ecclesiological way of existence implies a hierarchy as a synonym for the God-established order of beings as an ontological feature of both inanimate and animate levels of existence.

If there was a possibility to compare ourselves and our »civilization« with that of the time of the Lord's Earthly Liturgy, we would find ourselves in the same dilemma: What kind of Messiah should he be that we accept him as the Messiah? We feel free to argue that if the Lord, in the likeness of a servant, appeared again among us, even today, when we think that we know Who He is and why he came into the world at that time, we believe that it would not be easy for us to recognize in Him the Son of God. He would have to reveal himself again today, through the curtains or mysteries of the Old and New Covenant of the Kingdom of Heaven. In this case, we should have as a model the established hierarchical ways of existence in order to be able to more clearly, but never fully, comprehend His Mystery of existence. In other words, the Lord would have to reveal to us again who He is and why he created the world.

Due to the previously mentioned conclusions, it is important to bear in mind that it is not enough just to realize the Christological, i.e. the Messianic meanings of the biblical text (in this case, the first sentence of the book of Genesis). This could perhaps be only an initial starting point which would point out to Jews from Judaism to a different breathing of the letter of the Law, from the Kabbalistic (Petrović 2010, 21). On the other hand, the recognition of the Christological dimension of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments does not constitute an autonomous theological discipline. The ever-present actuality of the ecclesiological tradition of biblical writings speaks in fact of the deepest need of the human being to gain the lasting consolation of the Holy Spirit in this life, since every single joy of this world ends with grief and death. The only consolation that a man can find is not in a confessional approach to biblical scriptures, but in the way of existence that allows him to be in union with God. In this sense, the Christology of biblical writings does not begin in them, but the biblical scriptures testify to the Christological ways of existence both in the Old and in the New Testament.

References

- Abright, William, Foxwell.** 1969. *The Protosinaitic Inscriptions and Their Decipherment*. Harvard Theological Studies 22. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Berković, Danijel.** 2007. »Merahefet« (Genesis 1:2): The Dynamics of the Spirit in the Old Testament«. *Evangelical Journal of Theology* (Zagreb; English ed. Kairos) 1, No. 2:171–184.
- Brakke, David.** 2001. Jewish Flesh and Christian Spirit in Athanasius of Alexandria. *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9, No. 4:453–481.
- Cohen, Aryeh, and Shaul Magid.** 2002. *Beginning/Again (Toward a Hermeneutics of Jewish Texts)*. New York: Seven Bridges Press.
- Colless, Brian, E.** 2014. The Origin of the Alphabet: An Examination of the Goldwasser Hypothesis. *Antiquo Oriente: Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente* 12:71–104.
- Delitzsch, Franz.** 1888. *New Commentary of Genesis*. Transl. Sophia Taylor. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
- Feinberg, Jeff, Pat Feinberg, and Avi Feinberg.** 2007. *Sing the Sidra: Introducing Cantillation Through the Weekly Torah Portions*. Lake Forest, IL: Foundation for Leadership and Messianic Education (FLAME).
- Fitzmyer, Joseph, A.** 1985. The Biblical Comission and Christology. *Theological Studies* 46:407–479.
- Goldwasser, Orly.** 2007. Canaanites Reading Hieroglyphs: Part I – Horus is Hathor?; Part II – The Invention of the Alphabet in Sinai. *Ägypten und Levante* 16:121–160.
- Hamori, Eshter. J.** 2010. Divine Embodiment in the Hebrew Bible and some implications for Jewish and Christian Incarnational Theologies. *Bodies, Embodiment, and Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, 161–183. The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 465. New York: T & T Clark International.
- Holmstedt, Robert, D.** 2008. The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis 1. *Vetus Testamentum* 58, Fasc. 1:56–67.
- Hyman, Arthur.** 2002. *Eschatological Themes in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.
- Kutscher, Edward Yechezkel.** 1982. *A History of the Hebrew Language*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University.
- Lamer, André.** 2008. The Spread of Alphabetic Scripts (c. 1700–500 BCE). *Diogenes* 218:44–57.
- Levy, Zeev.** 1997. The nature of modern Jewish philosophy. In: Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman, eds. *History of Jewish Philosophy*, 515–525. In: *Routledge History of World Philosophy*. Vol. 2. London: Routledge.
- Lyon, Jeremy, D.** 2019. Genesis 1:1–3 and the Literary Boundary of Day One. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 62, No. 2:269–285.
- MATIS (Mesaianic Aleph Tav Interlinear Scriptures).** 2014. Vol. 1, *Torah (with Strong's Numbering and Hebrew Dictionary)*. Compiled by William H. Sanford. British Columbia: CCB Publishing.
- Moran, Hugh A., and David H. Kelley.** 1969 [First printed 1953]. *The Alphabet and the Ancient Calendar Signs*. Palo Alto: Daily Press.
- Okyere, Kojo.** 2011. Bible, Ecology and Sustainable Development: A Reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4A. *Ilorin Journal of Biblic Studies* 1, No. 2:81–96.
- Petrović, Predrag.** 2010. *Simvol i spasenje (Savremeni egzistencijalni odrazi sotirioloških načela drevne Crkve)*. Beograd: PBF, Institut za teološka istraživanja.
- Rashi, Solomon ben Isaac.** 1946. Genesis. In: *Pentateuch: With Targum Onkelos, Haphtorah and Prayers for Sabbath and Rashi's Commentary*. Vol. 1. Trans. M. Rosenbaum and A. M. Silbermann. London: Shapiro.
- Saas, Benjamin.** 1988. *The Genesis of the Alphabet and its Development in the Second Millenium B.C.* Ägypten und Altes Testament 13. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz.
- Van Wolde, Ellen.** 2016. Chance in the Hebrew Bible: Views in Job and Genesis 1. In: *The Challenge of Chance*, 131–150. Eds. Klaas Landsman and Ellen van Wolde. Heidelberg: Springer.
- Wilson-Wright, A. M.** 2016. Sinai 357: A Northwest Semitic Votive Inscription to Teššob. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 136, No. 2:247–263.

Website

- Petrovich, Douglas N.** 2016. The First Alphabet is Hebrew, Not Canaanite: An Open Response to Christopher Rollston's Rebuttal of 10 December 2016. 20 December. https://www.academia.edu/30545786/_2016_The_First_Alphabet_is_Hebrew_Not_Canaanite_An_Open_Response_to_Christopher_Rollstons_Rebuttal_of_10_December_2016 (accessed June 2019).
- Rollston, Christopher.** 2016. The Early History of the Alphabet and the Recent Claim that the Northwest Semitic Inscriptions from Serabit el-Khadm and Wadi el-Hol are Hebrew. https://www.academia.edu/30121150/The_Early_History_of_the_Alphabet_and_the_Recent_Claim_that_the_Northwest_Semitic_Inscriptions_from_Serabit_el-Khadm_and_Wadi_el-Hol_are_Hebrew_Spoiler_Alert_They_re_Not (accessed June 2019).
- Sandford, William.** 2018. The Uniqueness of Biblical Hebrew. February 22. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3NDh_KH-9Og (accessed June 2019).