Biblical Pseudepigrapha in Slavonic Tradition

Alexander Kulik and Sergey Minov
The Ladder of Jacob

INTRODUCTION

Contents

1. Paraphrase of the biblical account:
   1a. Jacob's dream
   1b. The ladder of faces
   1c. God's voice and promise
   2. Jacob's response
   2a. The Prayer of Jacob
   3. The interpreting angel
   4. The change of Jacob's name
   5. The interpretation of the vision, first part
      5a. The kings of the nations
      5b. The destruction of the Temple
      5c. The evil king
      5d. Exile
   6. The interpretation of the vision, second part
      6a. The righteous king
      6b. The punishment of the nations

1. The work begins with the mention of Jacob going to visit his uncle Laban. On his journey the patriarch stops for a night and takes a rest, laying his head on a stone. In a dream, Jacob beholds a ladder established on earth and reaching to the heavens. The ladder is comprised of twelve steps and features several supernatural elements: a fiery, humanlike face at the top, twenty-four faces on the steps, angels ascending and descending on it. God, who stands above the highest face, turns to Jacob; promising to give him and his progeny the land on which he rests and blessing him.

2. When he awakens from the prophetic dream, Jacob erects a stone as a pillar and anoints it, calling the place "the House of God." Then he offers a long prayer, in which he praises God and asks for an interpretation of the dream.

3. The patriarch's supplication is instantly answered; God sends the archangel Sariel to bless him and to explain the meaning of his dream.

4. Before providing the explanation, the angel changes Jacob's name to "Israel."

5. The angel Sariel reveals to Jacob the meaning of the vision of the ladder. According to him, the ladder itself symbolizes "this age," while its twelve steps indicate "the periods" into which this age is divided. The twenty-four faces represent twenty-four evil kings from among the nations, who will afflict Jacob's descendants as a punishment for their iniquity. The explanation also includes a prophecy about the future
destruction of Temple, related to the notion of "four descents" through which God will punish Israel; a prophecy about an evil king from the descendants of Esau, who will oppress Jacob's progeny and cause some of them to lapse into idolatry; and a prophecy about the exile and suffering of Jacob's seed "in a strange land."

6. Continuation of the prophecy concerning the course of world history, which portrays an image of the righteous king who will deliver the people of Israel from enslavement to the nations and exact revenge upon their oppressors. In addition, Jacob is shown a vision of the eschatological consummation, where he learns of the judgment of the nations by God, the defeat of two monsters, and the final triumph of Israel.

The text of the Ladder has not survived as a separate work, but only as a part of the Palaea Interpretata, where it is intertwined with Christian exegesis and anti-Jewish polemic. There is, however, evidence of an independent, non-Christian channel of transmission for at least one part of the Ladder in Hebrew. One section of this work, the Prayer of Jacob in 2:6–22, is attested as a separate textual unit; it was included in an eleventh-century collection of Hebrew magical texts, preserved in the Cairo Genizah.

These facts pose the scholarly question of the textual integrity of the Ladder as it was transmitted in Slavonic. First of all, pertinent to this issue is the problem that, while the beginning of the text in the Palaea is relatively clear, it is more difficult to establish where the text ends. Horace Lunt, in his preface to the English translation of the Ladder, concludes that chapter 7 (according to his own division) should be regarded as a separate work, because it does not contain identifiable references to Jacob and is connected to the main body of the work only by means of a grammatically incongruent sentence that refers to the descending and ascending angels. Moreover, this chapter contains explicit Christian themes, as it refers to the divinity of Christ and the nativity. Some of the Christian motifs in 7:11–25 have close parallels in the Slavonic version of the Legend of Aphroditian. According to Lunt, the Christian material shared by the Ladder and Aphroditian testifies that this chapter as a whole has been constructed as a framework and excuse for the Christian exegesis, and suggests that "the whole chapter and its commentary is most probably the work of the Slavonic editors of the Palaea, very likely Russians of the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries."

Several scholars have addressed the issue of the Ladder's integrity in view of the contradictory tendencies apparent in this work. Thus Reimund Leicht, who carried out a detailed analysis of the Hebrew version of Jacob's prayer (2:6–22) and

---

4 Ibid., p. 405. Similarity between this section of the Ladder and the Slavonic Legend of Aphroditian was already noted by Porfirijev 1872, p. 285, who suggested that there was a direct literary relationship between these two works. For a discussion of relationship between the Dialogue at the Sasanian Court, the Greek prototype of Aphroditian, and the Ladder, see Bratke 1899, pp. 101–6.
5 Lunt 1983–5, pp. 404–5. Cf. Schegolev 1899–1900, vol. 2, pp. 82–7, who argues that the prophecies of New Testament events shared by the Ladder and Aphroditian were borrowed from the Slavonic (and not from the Greek) version of the latter and introduced into the text of the Ladder by its Slavonic editor.
compared it to the Slavonic version, argues that the prayer does not fit the narrative context of the Slavonic text of the *Ladder*. He comes to the conclusion that “the Prayer of Jacob was not composed for the Ladder of Jacob as found in the Old Slavonic translation, but existed before being inserted and adapted superficially for this purpose.” Leicht’s theory has recently been criticized by Michael Schneider, who argued that the prayer of Jacob, although it does contain signs of later editing, should nevertheless be considered an integral part of the work.

Furthermore, James Kugel considers the text of the *Ladder* to be an amalgam of two separate motifs. According to him, the “original basis of this text” was formed by the motif of the twelve steps of the ladder, in which each step represents a different historical period and its two kings; this was later supplemented by the tradition concerning the four empires. Moreover, K. William Whitney, who compares the long and short recensions of Pennington’s translation of the *Ladder*, suggests that the eschatological materials in 5:4–5 and 6:3–5 of the former (= 6:8–12 and 6:13–15 of our edition) “represent a single unit of eschatological material which was incorporated into the narrative of chapter 6 by the redactor of the long recension.”

Most recently, Schneider has noticed certain incongruities between the dream of the patriarch in chapter 1 and its interpretation in chapters 5–6 that might reflect different stages in the development of the composition.

Before the discovery of the Hebrew portion of the *Ladder*, the prevailing opinion was that the original language of this work was Greek, and that it accorded with the common pattern of Slavonic translated literature. Even the presence in the text of unambiguous Hebraisms, such as some of the divine names in chapter 2, did not tip the scale of scholarly judgment in favor of a Semitic original. Thus, Lunt proposed that the original language of the composition was Greek, intended for readers with some knowledge of Hebrew, while suggesting that the work was translated into Slavonic very early, in a South Slavonic milieu.

The discovery of the Hebrew Prayer of Jacob has significantly changed the situation. However, even following this discovery, some scholars have continued to opt for Greek as the original language of the *Ladder*. The most carefully substantiated argument of this kind has been made by Leicht. In his thorough analysis of the Hebrew version of the work, he regards the divine name אֱלֹהֵי בֵית יַעֲquiv in verse 2:18 as a corrupted form of a Greek version of the Tetragrammaton, such as *Iaoβα*; and on this basis he comes to the conclusion that the whole sequence of divine names was originally composed in Greek. However, as has been pointed out by Schneider, there is no need to resort to such emendations in this case since very similar divine names בסוֹת אָבֹת אֵלֹהֵי בֵית are attested in rabbinic sources. In light of this critique, it

---

7 Ibid., p. 148.
8 Schneider 2013, pp. 233–5.
9 Kugel 2006, pp. 27–32.
10 Whitney 2006, p. 87.
12 Lunt 1983–5, p. 403. On the basis of some linguistic peculiarities, he claims that “the Slavonic *Ladder* existed before the final Byzantine destruction of the Bulgarian state in 1018.”
14 For the references and discussion, see Schneider 2013, pp. 225–6, n. 148.
seems that Leicht's theory of the Greek original of the *Ladder* should be abandoned. To us the most balanced position regarding the original language of this work appears to be the one taken by Kugel. He considers the Slavonic version to have been translated from a lost Greek version, which in its turn seems to have been a translation of an original Hebrew or Aramaic text.\(^5\)

Kugel dates the lost Hebrew or Aramaic original text of the *Ladder* to the Second Temple period.\(^6\) He adopts a differentiating approach to the traditions that comprise this work and distinguishes two chronologically distinctive layers. On the one hand, Kugel singles out the "basic motif" of the twelve equal steps of the staircase and the twenty-four faces on them, expressing the idea of "an unbroken series of foreign oppressors" of Israel, as a possible indication that the nucleus of the work had already taken shape during the pre-Maccabean period.\(^7\) At the same time he offers an alternative hypothesis, suggesting that the earliest version of this work might be dated to the early to mid-first century CE, when "Maccabean nationalism had faded into dim memory and when the later Hasmoneans seemed so linked to Hellenism and foreign powers—indeed, subsequently, to the Romans themselves—as to be classified as foreign rulers, even if homegrown."\(^8\) A later stage in the development of the *Ladder*’s text is comprised by the tradition about the four ascents and Roman domination; according to Kugel, this tradition post-dates 70 CE and thus was added later to the main text.\(^9\) One of the indicators that the section about Rome does not belong to the original stratum of the work is the apparent contradiction between the notion of Roman domination in verses 5:12–15 and theme of Egyptian slavery in 5:16–17. A position similar to that of Kugel has been taken by Whitney. He dates section 5:12–15 to some time after 70 CE, arguing that it refers not to Herod or the Herodian house, who might also be labeled "Esau," but to the Roman empire.\(^10\) Furthermore, on the base of comparison of the long and short recensions of 5:12–6:15, he suggests "the messianic disturbances surrounding the revolt of Bar Kochba around 132–135 C.E." as the point of origin for the oracle of 5:12–17 in the short recension. He also notes the milder outlook of this section in the long recension, and proposes that this version reflects a later, post-Bar Kochba redaction of the original work, in which messianic fervor was less prominent.\(^11\) Finally, Schneider, on the basis of the similarity of the language of Jacob’s prayer to the terminology of Jewish texts from the tradition of Hekhalot mysticism, suggests the third or fourth century as the latest possible date for the composition of the *Ladder*.\(^12\)

There seems to be a consensus among students of the *Ladder* concerning the Jewish origins of this text. Thus, according to Lunt, the *Ladder* was originally a Jewish work, composed in a Greek-speaking milieu in Palestine.\(^13\) A similar opinion has been expressed by Kugel, who likewise considers the *Ladder* to be a Jewish work.

---

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 24.
\(^7\) Ibid., p. 31.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 32.
\(^9\) Ibid., pp. 27–9.
\(^11\) Ibid., pp. 83–6.
\(^12\) Schneider 2013, pp. 234–5.
\(^13\) Lunt 1983–5, p. 404, n. 3.
of Palestinian provenance. The Hebrew version of the Prayer of Jacob is tentatively contextualized by Leicht within eleventh-century European Jewish mystical circles, which adapted a number of apocryphal texts.

While some of the motifs found in the Ladder are attested in other Greek and Slavonic works, we can point to no single composition upon which the author of our work might be dependent in a substantial and consistent manner. The largest number of parallels to the Ladder are found in the Apocalypse of Abraham. This composition shares with the Ladder the following motifs: the image of God's voice as a hypostatized agent; the image of the angels comprising the divine throne; a polemic against astrology; the list of divine names; the division of the world's history into twelve periods, combined with the notion of the four eschatological agents of God's wrath (here otherwise unique terminology is shared as well—Slav. [i]skhody); some of the eschatological woes; the figure of Leviathan. If it is not a sign of literary dependence of one upon the other, this shared material may testify to the close contact of the two works during the process of transmission.

Manuscripts

Slavonic version

As has been noted earlier, the Ladder did not circulate in Slavonic milieu as an independent work, but only as a part of larger composition known as the Palaea Interpretata. Our text is found as an integral part of this work beginning from its oldest textual witnesses, the Barsov and Kolomna manuscripts (recension B) and in the Complete Chronographic Palaea (recension A). Lunt has divided all textual witnesses of the Ladder into three categories of recensions. According to him, recension A is the most conservative, although it may occasionally be marred by omissions, such as the omission of the continuous text after verse 7:9. Recension B was extensively edited in one part of the narrative, while other passages appear to show harmonization with the embedded commentary. In this recension the major part of Jacob's account, from 2:3 to 5:1, is reduced to a short prayer, but features the appearance of a nameless angel who explains the vision. Recension C is comprised by one textual witness, a brief excerpt of little interest.

Recension A

Palaea Interpretata of 1477; GIM, Sinod., #210, ff. 100v–106v (ms. S)
Rumjantsev Palaea of 1494; RGB, Rumjants., #455, ff. 76–83; ed. Pypin 1862, pp. 27–32 (ms. R)

26 Lunt 1983–5, p. 401. Several mss. (Kr, B) are omitted from Lunt's overview.
27 For a facsimile edition of this ms. of the Palaea, see PTSin.
Undolskij Palaea of 1517; GIM, Undol’skij, #719 (ms. U)
Krekhiv’ska Palaea, Lviv, 16th c.; ed. Franko 1896, pp. 108–20\(^a\) (ms. Kr)
RNB, Pogodin, #1436, 16th c., ff. 91–2 (ms. Pog)

Recension B
Barsov Palaea, 15th c.; GIM, Barsov, #619, ff. 36d–38c (ms. B)
Kolomna Palaea of 1406; RGB, Troitse-Serg., #38, ff. 77–9; ed. Tikhonravov 1863, vol.
1, pp. 91–5\(^b\) (ms. K)
MS 83; Public Library, Vilnius, ff. 139–43, 16th c. (ms. V\(^1\))
MS 84; Public Library, Vilnius, ff. 84–6, 16th c. (ms. V\(^2\))
UAN, Melec Monastery, #114 (Aa 1292), ff. 74v–77r, 17th c. (ms. M)
RNB, Solovetsk., #711/653, 16th–17th c.; ed. Porfirjev 1877, pp. 138–49 (ms. P)

Recension C
The Palaea of 1414; BAN Sg, #25.5.8, f. 30r

Two more Serbian manuscripts of the Palaea interpretata that contain the Ladder
have been pointed out by Tomislav Jovanović: Chilandar monastery, #188 (1633),
ff. 96r–101r; and Cetinje monastery, #84 (1630s).\(^c\) However, on the base of his brief
reference it is impossible to say which of the three recensions these textual witnesses
contain.

The Hebrew fragment
The Hebrew textual witness of the Ladder does not cover the whole text of the work.
It contains only Jacob’s prayer (2:6–22 in our text), which apparently circulated as an
independent textual unit. It was discovered in a collection of prayers in the Hebrew
collection, a parchment codex dated to the eleventh century. Our text, bearing the
title “the prayer of our father Ja[cob]” (טברא […] יִת יְבוּנ), is found on f. 2a/1–17.\(^d\)

\(^{a}\) For a description of the ms. see pp. xlviii–xl of that edition.
\(^{b}\) The Slavonic text of this textual witness may be found in the complete edition of the Kolomna Palaea:
\(^{c}\) Jovanović 2011, p. 233.
\(^{d}\) First published, together with German translation and commentary, by Schäfer and Shaked 1997, pp.
31–2, 50–1.
Editions

Franko 1896, pp. 108–20 (ms. Kr)
Porfirjev 1877, pp. 138–49 (ms. P)
PTSin, ff. 100v–106v (ms. S)
Pypin 1862, pp. 27–32 (ms. R)
Tikhonravov 1863, vol. 1, pp. 91–5 (ms. K)

Translations

English:
   James 1920, pp. 96–103
   Lunt 1983–5
   Pennington 1984

German:
   Bonwetsch 1900

Italian:
   Enrietti and Sacchi 1999

Russian:
   Kamchatnov et al. 2002, pp. 203–11

Research

Böttrich 1994–5
Bratke 1899
Leicht 1999
Orlov 2004; repr. in Orlov 2007, pp. 399–419
Porfirjev 1872, pp. 284–5
Salmina 1989
Schneider 2013, pp. 183–245
Shchegolev 1899–1900
Slavova 2002, pp. 263–6
Svjatskij 1911
Vassiliev 1893, pp. xxx–xxxii
Whitney 2006

Based on the German translation of Bonwetsch 1900.
1. Paraphrase of the biblical account: Jacob's dream

//(f. 100c) Понде же Иаук(4) к Лаванам, ошо своею. (Σαρκε τε μαξ(4) ε ση τού, σε κακ(4) τε κες τον γλαβο, σαλις το ω τσακ κας. Η σονγα νόιδ. (Σ) ακτηνια. Η σε ακτηνια оутвеρκηκα εκαςε σε καλην, δεκτε γα(6)δα δοσαθαςε δο νεση.

1a. The ladder of faces

Η βα βερο γλαβηνια λιςε, εκα μαξου, εκτη σιγανα οσουκον. Ναικαν γα μπ. στεπηνι δο νεβομ λιςενια, και σε κασλλ(α) στεπηνι δο νεβομ λιςενια και σε κασλλλ(α) στεπηνι δο νεβομ λιςενια δει, ωδενουμ και ωμ/ (f. 100d)(α ε, Κ. λιςε σε ακτηνια δο ντεση περι περι (χ). Σερεμε (χ) λιςε περιγκε ντεση καςε, εκτε νεβομ(χ) τε εκτε σιγανα ντα(μ) ντα(μ) (χ) Κ. λιςε. Η σε ακτηνια οσίλας και αε αλτε Εσμηνεν θηκαζηνο και ησηκαζηνο πε βεν.

1b. God's voice and promise

Γ(ε) κε βερονικαςαμ(ε) δο νεση. <...> // (f. 101a) Βεν κε στεπηνι πα(α) λιςενια γορηνια, και κες τοπος ακο με αμ γακ: Ιακοβε, Ιακοβε. Και κες(χ): "Γε θτα Γ(ε)νο, και κες(γ) κε ακο: Ζαμελα, και κες νεση της σπηλια, τετικε δει ικ και κεςλλ σκιελομ πο τετεκ. Και κουκοι παμα τοπο εκα με κες(ε) λιςενια λιςενια και κες τοπος ακο με αμ γακ: Ιακοβε, Ιακοβε. Και κες(χ): "Γε θτα Γ(ε)νο, και κες(γ) κε ακο: Ζαμελα, και κες νεση της σπηλια, τετικε δει ικ και κεςλλ σκιελομ πο τετεκ.

Παλαια interpretata of 1477; GIM, Sinod., #210, ff. 100v–106v.

Barsov Palaea, 15th c.; GIM, Barsov, #619, ff. 36d–38c.
The Ladder of Jacob

2. Jacob's response

Hikoe otsūsū'(x) e kōsetsu', ojōketa to
kuretta toppē na ma. I wā'et(a)(x) o
moīgo, e hē gēchō sūrā'i, hēkē Bējīn to
otsūsū'(x) otsūsū'(x). Kōlō strč'(yto) akuroto
cē, hō'(x)'e sē, doyō Bējīn, kē hē mōsū'(y')
nes'(x)ma. I postakā'(x) kāmēn, hē kē kōch
hāmi mi, // (f. 101v) sōto'(α)'pū, kē kodani'(x)
amu dōmo na wāchō mōsū', kē sōto'(x) amu
kuretta toppē na doyō Bējīn. I wā'et(a)(x),
I wā'et(a)(x) otsūsū'(x)

2a. The Prayer of Jacob

Recension A

"Γ(όt)ē

Recension B

"Γ(όt)ē

Hebrew Fragment

"Γ(όt)ē

The ladder at the end of the prayer is depicted as a sequence of events, each represented by a step or a phase. This ladder is symbolic and represents Jacob's ascent towards spiritual enlightenment.

- Fragment: The ladder is depicted as a sequence of events, each represented by a step or a phase. This ladder is symbolic and represents Jacob's ascent towards spiritual enlightenment.
- Lines: The ladder is depicted as a sequence of events, each represented by a step or a phase. This ladder is symbolic and represents Jacob's ascent towards spiritual enlightenment.
- Symbolism: The ladder is depicted as a sequence of events, each represented by a step or a phase. This ladder is symbolic and represents Jacob's ascent towards spiritual enlightenment.

The ladder is a metaphor for Jacob's spiritual journey and his quest for understanding the divine. Each step represents a stage in his spiritual development, leading him closer to God.
Тёжке и на мя, Г(е)ди, мы(е)твно призрн, на рава ского, и скажи ли виадъе ся, еже виадъ стравно».

3. The interpreting angel

И ещё ещё гала чачо мацэв сине./ (f. 101d) гала(е) голова(а) лице во моле гала: «Сарфы, старши шише усляк(д) алевъ(х), иже сно на(д) синь, иди врдсулан Иакову в рай(д)рыкшени сна, иже виадъ, и появъ(д)ъ в сев, гяко виадъ, первые же рагъ(в)ни». И приди ко ля ещё Сарфы архтгавъ, и виадъ(х), и вшше виадъ(и) синь(е) красно этъо и огнено. Иже же не услякъ вкера его, иже виадъ виадъ(х) во сев моле, призрани блеш па(ф) его. И виадъ(ы) дагъла не огуола(х)ъ.
The change of Jacob's name

4. The interpretation of the vision, first part

5a. The kings of the nations

5b. The destruction of the Temple

\[^{25}\text{In ms. степень.}\]
5c. The evil king

Бъз(Δ)книги(τ) Βλασθένης ζ(ε)λα ὤ νινοφ(ε) κρατα τυφενον(ε) ἤσαν κατογοντες πλανήτες ζηλογητα(χ) στυφρησιν(χ) πακότα σκληρον ζωνον κατατηρασιν(τ). Ενετα σοφον(ε) και πρύνασου(ε) κεκα λογογοντες πλανήτες ζηλογητα(χ) στυφρησιν(χ) πακότα σκληρον ζωνον κατατηρασιν(τ). Ι αυτα σοφον(ε) και πρύνασου(ε) κεκα λογογοντες πλανήτες ζηλογητα(χ) στυφρησιν(χ) πακότα σκληρον ζωνον κατατηρασιν(τ).

Будъте ц(ε)зъ ὤ βλασθένης την ζωνον. Οсфіртъ пакоцость скл энна тьвооло. Будъте нигодацъ ини. То же держката ізмаче. Стова сьвлата ии и, ти не възлогоцъ противитъ цему, і ищъ дьвъбы боуцъ тона на на, слугката капицн(и) и жръкъы мръкъ(и), ноуц(ε)іоно ткорітъ съуцпила въ цр(ε)части іго всѣ(и) іже въ таковъ кинъ шалеа, і ианко въшн(α) і плаини твои(ε), іанко цалоаны гвардіана.

5d. Exile

Бъдъй хр. боуан, Иаковъ, іако пришлиці боуцъ(τ) съмы твои на зелан уюк(α)іи и иукълъ(τ) іа работозо, і наложенъ(τ) на на раны по оова дий. Но зызъку, емо(κ) пораватоа(τ), соуан(τ) Гъ.

Бъдъй жъ пруан, Иаковъ, іако пришлиці будъть съмъ твои на зелан уюкъ, і охолъвъ іа работозо, і наложенъ на на раны по оова дий. Но кътъку, імужъ поравотоа, съдъиъ Г(ε)іа.

6. The interpretation of the vision, second part

6a. The righteous king

Ти егда въстапане(τ) цъ, і соу(α) тогла боуцъ(τ) лъкстъгъ толоу. // (f. 102c) Тог(α)а въстапане(τ) съмъ твои Иивъ ῶ работъ іатъкъ, держкагъ(χ) нисанъ, і понъкъ(τ) ὤ всѣко оукоризъъ крацъ твоихъ. Цъ къ бо тъ(ε) главъ всѣколоу мяркъе и ἔθανοι пронироаванъ(μ) въгъ, Ийлъ, і конъцъ въкъа. Горацъ къо въстапоу(τ), въцопъниъ жъ і оускънъ іа Г(ε)іа і оуолевъ боуцъ(τ).

Раскасть бо са Кръпкъы гъ страданы нѣ іухъ. Понеже агъ і держкъи илънъ(τ) лъкъа своа пред нимъ извакъанъ ра(α) плаини твоелоу, і сълънъ(ε) βъшнеломъ. Тогда жънъ и(χ) родъ(τ) польньвъ.

Несъкъ агъ і держкъи илънъ(τ) лъкъа своа пред нимъ извакъанъ ра(α) плаини твоелоу, і сълънъ(ε) βъшнеломъ. Тогда жънъ іухъ рода(τ) польногу. И потолъ покореъ Г(ε)іа по плаини твоелъ. <...> // (f. 38б) Жънъы іухъ рода(τ) польногу,
И потому покоря(π) Гь по пламени твою(ι) знамений людьми, на створшала иль рабо(τας).  
<...>// (f. 103b) Хранящца и(χ) испо(λ)ни и тиши оборачиваются.  
<...> Гадъы и вскии смртчнимь въсчиня земля и(χ). Троуши и разорниа много боудов(β).  
<...> // (f. 103c) Излиши(π) жи гнitchь сторонь на Лоннафана здьша морскаго, сушин(τ) вездоконного фалкона личе(λ), понеже на Бага бпъ боозд(α)енгнис(β) гнitchь сторонь гордънице.  
<...> И тогоа явится правда твоа, Иаковъ, въ дьтей твою(υ) по твоа боудомци(ο) и ходащи(ο) въ твои правды. И тогоаa събла твоа къстроу(υ) рого(λ) и попызен(τ) всев(υ)тко Едем(α), со вскии пазынци Мовантъскыны.

и потому покоря Гь по пламени твою знамений людьми, на створшала иль рабо.  
<...> Хранящца ихъ полны и тиши оборачиваются.  
<...> Гадъы и вскии смртчнимь въсчиня земля ихъ. Троуши и разорниа много будх(β).  
<...> Будь дасть всшишн судъ месету тому и извезд(υ) събла твоа въ работы пазы(α), державшихъ из насилии, и гонятъсю оукоризны сражъ своихъ.  
<...> Будеть же ц(ε)брь — глава лишеню. Горцъкъ къстаниет на на.  
<...> Безпииша, и Гьбъ оусилыша н.  
<...> Изляешь же, — ρι(υ), — // (f. 38c) гнitchь сторонь на Линнафана здьша морскаго, и оубъть вездоконного фалкона личить, поне(ζ) на Бага бпъ будеагнитъ гордънице.  
<...> Тогда явится правда твоа, Иаковъ, въ дьтей твои. И по твоа будущиа и ходащиа въ твои правды. И тогда събла твоа въстручаютъ纥纥, и попыхнеть всев(υ)тко Едемае со вскии пазыники Мовантъскыны.
## 1. Paraphrase of the biblical account: Jacob's dream

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recension A</th>
<th>Recension B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:1 Jacob then went to Laban his uncle.</td>
<td>1:1 Jacob then went to Laban his uncle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:2 He found a place and slept there, laying his head on a stone, for the sun had gone down. And he had a dream.</td>
<td>1:2 And he found a place, and put a stone under his head, for the sun had gone down. And he fell asleep at that place and had a dream there.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**About the Ladder.**

1:3 And behold, a ladder was established on the earth, and its top reached to heaven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1a. The ladder of faces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:4 And the top of the ladder was the face as of a man, carved out of fire. 1:5 The ladder had twelve steps to the top, and on each step to the top there were two human faces, on the right and on the left, twenty-four faces on the ladder, including their chests. 1:6 And the face in the middle was higher than all that I saw, the one of fire, including the shoulders and arms, exceedingly terrifying, more than those twenty-four faces. 1:7 And while I was still looking (at it), and behold, angels of God were going, ascending and descending on it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4 And at the top of it there was the face as of a man, carved out of fire. 1:5 The ladder had twelve steps, and on each step there were two human faces, on the right and on the left; twenty-four faces on the ladder, including their chests. 1:6 And the face in the middle was higher than all that I saw: the one of fire, including the shoulders and arms, exceedingly terrifying, more than those twenty-four faces. 1:7 And while he was still looking (at it), behold, angels of God were going, ascending and descending on it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

36 Although we have introduced new section divisions, we have preserved here the verse division in H. G. Lunt, *OTP*, vol. 2, pp. 407–11.

37 A title in mss. It may possibly go back to “He had a dream about the ladder.”

38 Or “stairway.”

39 Lit. “to their chests” (Slav. пріємні йчко).

40 Le. seen higher and between the two rows of busts.

41 Although the narrative begins in third person (note also 1:7 and 2:2), the bulk of the vision is narrated in first person, beginning with this verse.

42 Some mss. of rec. B have “before” (Slav. пріємні).

43 Cf. third person also in 2:2.
1:8 And God was established on it, <...> and God was standing above the highest face, and he called to me from there, saying, “Jacob, Jacob!” And I said, “Here I am, Lord!” 1:9 And he said to me, “The land on which you are sleeping, to you will I give it, and to your seed after you.

1:10 And I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand of the sea. 1:11 And through your seed all the earth and those living on it in the last times of the years of completion shall be blessed. 1:12 My blessing with which I have blessed you shall flow from you unto the last generation; the East and the West all shall be full of your tribe.”

2. Jacob’s response

2:1 And when I heard (this) from on high, awe and trembling fell upon me. 2:2 And I rose up from my dream, while the voice is still being there and the word of God in my ears, and I said, 2:3 “How fearful is this place! This is none other than the house of God and this is the gate of heaven.” 2:4 And I set up the stone which had been my head rest as a pillar, and I poured olive oil on the top of it, and I called the name of that place the House of God.

2:5 And I stood and began to sing, and I said,
2:6 Lord God of Adam your creature and Lord God of Abraham and Isaac my fathers, and of all who have walked before you in righteousness!

Recension A

Recension B

2:6 Lord Creator of every creature! And also, Lord God of Abraham and Isaac my father, and of all, God, who have walked before you in righteousness!

2:6a Behold, I saw the awesome vision, and trembling fell upon me. But remember, Lord, Abraham my forefather, who walked not before you in evil, but fulfilled all ways of your commandments. The same with my father, your servant Isaac. He did not disobey your commandments.

2:6b And likewise my father, your servant Isaac, did not transgress your commandments.

2:7 The one who sits firmly on the Cherubim and the fiery throne of glory, and [there are] the many-eyed (ones) just as I saw in my dream,

2:8 who holds the four-faced cherubim, and who carries also the many-eyed Seraphim,

2:7 Magnificent God, on the beautiful throne of glory [...] who holds my dream,

2:8 who holds the four corners of

---

46 Cf. Ps 119:32.
2:9 who carries the whole world under his arm, yet is himself not carried by anyone;
2:10 who establishes heaven for the glory of your Name;
2:11 who spreads out upon two heavenly clouds the heaven that gleams under you,
2:12 so that beneath it you might cause the sun to pass; and (you) conceal it at night in order that it not be considered a god;
2:13 (you) who made in (the heavens) a way for the moon and the stars.
2:14 And you make this [moon] wax and wane, and call the stars to pass on, in order that they, too, not be considered gods.
2:15 The six-winged Seraphim are afraid of the face of your glory, and they cover their feet and faces with their wings, while flying with their other (wings), and they unceasingly sing a hymn
2:16 (to you,) to whom I now sanctify a new (song):49

See commentary to 2:20. 48 Slav. ейма abbr. "being" or "sanctifying" (cf. Hebrew version).
49 For the phrase "new song," see e.g. Ps 144:9. An alternative reading (with emendation of one letter) may be Εδθονῃ ἡρικ ανή eймα ποιου, "I sanctify and call him... ."
2:17 "Twelve-topped, twelve-faced, many-named, fiery one, lightning-eyed Holy One,

2:18 Holy, Holy, Holy, Yao, Yaova, Yaoil, Yao, Kados, Khavod, Savaoth, Holy; Holy; Holy, Yao, Yaova, Yaoil, Savaoth, Holy, O Av (Father), Bayah (?), O Olam, El Yao Olam (Eternal God Lord) Melekh (Eternal King) Abir (Strong) Amits (Mighty) Barukh (Blessed).

2:19 Omlelek, Il Avir, Amimis, Varich, Eternal King, Mighty, Powerful, Most Great, Patient, Blessed One,

2:20 who fills heaven and earth, the sea and the abysses and all the worlds with your glory!

2:21 The heavens and the earth, the abysses, and all the worlds are full for (sic) your glory!

2:22 and let me know the interpretation of my dream, for you are a God who is mighty, powerful and glorious, the Holy God, my Lord and (Lord) of my fathers.”

2:22 O Lord, look mercifully at me, your servant, too, and tell me [about] this terrifying vision, which I saw.

50 A superscript slovo in χριστο(ς(ς) must be a late addition trying to read here “Christ.”

51 Or less probably “ages” (Gk. αἰῶνες; Heb. יָמִים); cf. 2:9 where the same word must mean “world.” This meaning goes well also with Isa 6:3 and pass. In Ch. 5 we translate the same word as “age.” The ambiguous Heb. יָמִים (Gk. αἰῶν) is behind both translations.

52 Genitive rather than instrumental. Note also the unusual prepositional construction in the Hebrew version.

53 Not fully clear; see commentary.
3. *The interpreting angel*

3:1 And while I was still saying this prayer, behold, a voice came before me saying, 3:2 “Sariel, leader of the beguiled, you who are in charge of dreams, go and explain to Jacob the interpretation of the dream he has had and tell him everything he saw; but first bless him.” 3:3 And Sariel the archangel came to me, and I saw (him); and his appearance was very beautiful and awesome. 3:4 But I was not terrified by his appearance, for the vision which I had seen in my dream was more frightening than this. 3:5 And I did not fear the vision of the angel.

4. *The change of Jacob’s name*

4:1 And the angel said to me, “What is your name?” 4:2 And I said, “Jacob.” 4:3 (He announced,) “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but your name shall be similar to my name, Israel.” 4:4 And when I was going from Phandana of Syria towards Esau my brother, he came to me and blessed me and called me Israel. 4:5 And he would not tell me his name until I adjured him. 4:6 And then he said to me that he was *kepzul.*"54

---

54 The sense is not clear. According to the reading of S: יָנָאִיקוֹא (instead of יָנָאִיקוֹא in other mss) שָנָאִיקוֹא לֶאֵרְכָּנָא [לֶאֵרְכָּנָא] [לֶאֵרְכָּנָא] [לֶאֵרְכָּנָא] [לֶאֵרְכָּנָא] [לֶאֵרְכָּנָא] [לֶאֵרְכָּנָא].
5a. The kings of the nations

5:1 Thus he said to me: “The ladder which you saw had twelve steps, each step having two human faces that change their appearance.55 5:2 The ladder is this age, 5:3 and the twelve steps are the times of this age. 5:4 And the twenty-four faces are the kings of the lawless nations of this age. 5:5 In the times of61 these kings, the children of your children and the kin of your sons will be tormented. 5:6 These (kings) will arise against62 the lawlessness of your grandsons.

5b. The destruction of the Temple

5:7 “And he will make this place desolate by means of the four messengers63 through the sins69 of your grandsons. 5:8 And through the merits60 of the forefathers its64 palace will be built into a Temple of the name of your God and [the God] of your fathers; 5:9 and through the provocations of your children it will become deserted up to65 the fourth messenger of this age. 5:10 For you saw earlier the four faces that were attached66 to the steps,64 5:11 (where) angels were ascending and descending, and the faces were amid the steps.

5:7 “And will make this place desolate by means of the four messengers, for the sins of your grandsons. 5:8 And in the name of the forefathers the Temple of your name [and] of your fathers will be burnt 5:9 through the provocation of your children, in the time of66 the fourth messenger of this age. 5:10 For you saw the first four faces that were attached to the steps.

55 Or possibly “of different appearances” (Slav. папілялечипи рдока сбом rec. A папілялечипи рдока сбом rec. B).
56 Lit. “in” (въ) in both recensions. 57 Or “because of”
58 The term is not fully clear: събла S събла R събла F събла rec. B.
60 Lit. “property.” 61 The pronoun is feminine. It is not clear to what it corresponds.
62 Or “till.” 63 ппіпіпіліачіпа (папілялечипи from Gk. ἐπικρατοῦ “hammer in”).
64 Lunt translated: “striking against the steps.” 65 Lit. “in”; cf. 5:5 in rec. A.
5:12 “The Most High will raise up a king from the grandsons of your brother Esau, and all the rulers of the tribes of the earth that have done harm to your seed will accept (him).”

5:13 And they will be delivered into his hand and they will be vexed at him. 5:14 And that one will hold them by force and rule over them, and they will not be able to resist him until the day when his thought will turn against them, (to make them) serve idols; and in order to compel all those who are in his kingdom (to offer) sacrifices to the dead; (that is,) all who will be revealed in such guilt—(to reveal that) some from your tribe (worship) the Most High and some (k)falkon gargailuy.

5d. Exile

5:16 “Know, Jacob, that your seed will be sojourners in a strange land, and they will afflict them with slavery and inflict wounds upon them every day. 5:17 But the Lord will judge the people for whom they slave.

66 Slav. морята, Gk. δυνάρτες may also be “kings.”
67 Cf. Apos. Abr. 29:10: “Everyone from my people will admit him.”
68 Most probably “your seed” is meant, and not the (enemy) tribes. Note that “seed” agrees with the plural verb in 5:16.
69 Or “he will decree upon them to” (Slav. ηκάτην μυελαὶ τὸ να ὡς, possibly Heb. מיכל ועשת את).”
70 Or “sanctuaries, altars” (Slav. камири).”
71 Slav. supinum παρατηθη, possibly Gk. βας ποιεῖν.”
72 Lit. "of" (cf. Heb. בֵּית רֶשֶׁת in Ps 106:28; LXX δυσας νεκρῶν).”
73 The sense of the whole passage is unclear. Possibly: “when he will decree upon them to serve idols?? and [to offer] sacrifices for the dead…[omitted text] in order to do violence to all those who in his kingdom who will be revealed in such guilt.”
74 Slav. емако can only be a relative pron., while its equivalent Gk. ὤσι is also demonstrative.
75 Or literally "as to the highest [man] from your tribe, so also to falkon gargailuy" (Gk. ενιαν ους πρωτος έμακο κ καλκον γαργαλού). The whole verse is not clear; see the discussion in commentary.
76 Gk. δησις.
77 Slav. кфалкона гаргайлю.
78 Some mss. have καλκον.
Translation

6. The interpretation of the vision, second part

6a. The righteous king

6:1 “And when the king arises, judgment too will come upon that place. 6:2 Then your seed, Israel, will go out from their enslavement to the nations who hold them by force, and they will be delivered from any rebuke of your enemies. 6:3 For this king is the head of all revenge and retaliation against those who have done evil to you (pl.), Israel, and (he is) the end of the age. 6:4 For the bitter ones will rise (and) cry out, and the Lord will hear them and accept their plea.

6:5 “And the Mighty One will repent because of their sufferings. 6:6 That is why the angels and archangels will pour out their lightnings before them for the salvation of your tribe. 6:7 And you will gain the mercy of the Most High. 6:8 Then their wives will bear many children.

6b. The punishment of the nations

6:9 “And afterward the Lord will fight for your tribe [bringing] great and terrible signs against those who made them slaves."<\ldots>”

6:10 “He filled their storehouses, and they will be found empty. 6:11 Their land swarmed with reptiles and all sorts of deadly things. 6:12 There will be earthquakes and much destruction."<\ldots>”

(See 6:12a–d below)

6:5 “And the Mighty One will repent because of their suffering, 6:6 since the angels and archangels will pour out their prayers before him for the salvation of your tribe. 6:8 Then their wives will bear many children.

79 Either “leader” or “beginning” (as in Heb. וְאָדָם or Gk. δύστις); see commentary.
80 Slav. προσέκαθα usually means “since,” which is not appropriate to the context here in rec. A (to go with "lightnings"). However, the meaning “that is why” is very rare, if not unique, for προσέκαθα (Supr. 379.12), and probably the reading “prayers” of rec. B should be preferred.
81 προσέκαθα “prayers” instead of προσέκαθα “lightnings” in three mss. of rec. B.
82 Lit. “who made for them slavery” (συγκεράμενοι κρύον ράπτετε).
83 The text itself breaks off here. What follows is a commentary that quotes lemmata from the main text. Some of these quotations are absent from the coherent text. Although we have not included the commentary in our edition, we cite here the quoted material that is missing from the text given above; the quoted material is given in italics.
84 Or less probably “of all mortals.”
6:13 "And the Lord will pour out his wrath against Leviathan the sea-serpent (and) will kill the lawless\(^{85}\) falkon with the sword, because he will raise in his pride against the God of gods. <...>

6:14 And then your righteousness will be revealed, Jacob, and that of your children who are to be after you who will walk in your righteousness. 6:15 And then your seed will blow the horn and all the kingdom of Edom will perish together with all the peoples of Moab."

---

\(^{86}\) See note to 6:3.  
\(^{87}\) The same verses, almost identical to 6:1-4 of rec. A, occur in the commentaries to rec. A in the same order as in the main text.  
\(^{88}\) The mss. have ΑΙΜΑΦΑ Β and ΑΙΜΑΦΑ Κ.  
\(^{89}\) In some mss. "kings and peoples."
1. Paraphrase of the biblical account (Gen 28:10–22): Jacob’s dream

The notion of a ladder that connects the heavenly and earthly realms was popular in Greco-Roman syncretistic cults, where it was deployed in the portrayal of the soul’s heavenly ascent through the seven planetary spheres. Thus, we find in the mythology of Mithraism that the soul is said to ascend “a ladder with seven gates, and at its top an eighth gate.”\(^9\) A ladder as a cultic object signifying the ascent and descent of fortune was known to the third-century Greek author Aelian (and was ascribed by him to a much earlier period): “Pittacus made a ladder for the temples in Mytilene, not to serve any useful purpose, but simply as an offering. His intention was to hint that fortune moves up and down, with the lucky, as it were, climbing up, and the unlucky coming down.”\(^9\)

The image of a ladder or pillar that functions as an *axis mundi* and makes possible the heavenly ascent of the soul is well attested in medieval Jewish mysticism, where it apparently developed under the influence of the Neoplatonic philosophical tradition.\(^9\) This imagery also appears in Christian spirituality; e.g. the *Ladder of Divine Ascent* by John Climacus (seventh century).

1a. The ladder of faces

One may distinguish three main elements in Jacob’s vision of the ladder: the twenty-four “human faces”; the human face on the top of the ladder; and God standing above the highest face.

The Slavonic noun *моза*, “face,” most likely translates the Greek *πρόσωπον*, which in addition to its primary meaning of “face” may also mean “portrait,” “mask,” and specifically “bust.”\(^9\) The number of human faces that Jacob sees on the ladder, i.e. twenty-four, has various parallels in ancient Jewish and Christian sources. Thus, Philo ascribed particular importance to this number in his numerological speculations, since it represents the number of the hours of day and night as well as the number of the letters in the Greek alphabet.\(^9\) According to *m. Negaim* 6:7, “there are twenty-four tips of members that may not be deemed unclean by reason of quick flesh” in a man’s body.\(^9\)

---

9 Origen, *Celsus* VI.22; tr. Chadwick 1965, p. 334. A similar notion appears in the *Chaldaean Oracles*; see on this Lewy 1956, p. 414.
9 Var. *hist.* II.29; tr. N. G. Wilson 1997, p. 101. This tradition appears also in rabbinic sources. Cf. *Lev. Rab.* 81b: “R. Berekiah said: In the following manner did R. Jose b. Halafta answer her: ‘Ever since He completed creation, the Holy One, blessed be He, makes ladders by which He makes one go up, and another go down,’ as it is said, ‘God is a judge; this one He humbles, and this one He lifts up’ (Ps 75:8);” tr. Freedman and Simon 1951, vol. 4, p. 101.
9 See sources in Liddell and Scott 1996, p. 1533.
9 Cf. *Quaest. in Gen.* II.5.
9 Tr. Danby 1933, p. 683.