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## The Eight Kinds of Linen in the Old Testament

MONY ALMALECH\*

**Italian title:** *Gli otto tipi di lino nel Vecchio Testamento.*

**Abstract:** Eight different words are used to denote *linen* in the Old Testament: שֵׁשׁ [šeš], בּוּץ [butz], בְּדִים [badim], בְּשֵׁטִים [pištīm], כֶּתֶנֶת [ketònet], סָדִין [sadin], אֶטֶן [etùn], and חוּר כַּרְפָּס [hur karpàs]. In Jewish ancient rituals, linen clothes were known as ‘the robe of light’. The detailed analysis of the different words for linen in the Old Testament leads to the following conclusions: each different word for *linen* builds its own web of meanings in the Hebrew Biblical world view, serving the monotheistic mentality in the frame of the Old Testament. Such mentality involves a requirement for harmony between spiritual and ritual purity obtained by wearing linen clothes. The monotheistic mentality as coded in the different words for linen in the Old Testament is drastically different from the polytheistic mentality and language of neighbouring peoples, albeit certain borrowed lexemes in Hebrew originate from these peoples’ languages and cultures. The different words for the fabric, which ‘the robe of light’ is made of, are subject to a special ideology and give rise to several symbolic chains, based on worldly, moral, and abstract ‘ritual purity’, as conveyed by the notion of ‘whiteness’. The different words for *linen* testify to the immense variety of transformations of the notion of light in the Old Testament. The text of the Old Testament is a declaration and an injunction for the initiated Israelite to see, cover, and handle the world through the ‘robe of light’ and not through the ‘robe of darkness’.

**Key-words:** sacred; color; semiotics; hermeneutics; translation; Hebrew Biblical worldview; linen; whiteness; purity; ephod; priest.

### 1. Introduction.

The present article is a small part of my monograph *Light in the Old Testament* (Almalech 2010), the last book in a research and publication project spanning over thirty years. Methods and points of view of this project are briefly presented in the next paragraphs.

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### 1.1. *The semiotic approach to the Bible.*

In its one hundred year history, semiotics has achieved significant success. Achievements, however, require specialized training and long-term educational effort. Semiotics as a field of study has received some bad press over the years. Trask comments that “in spite of its deliberate emphasis upon the social nature of the sign systems examined, semiotics tends to be highly abstract and at times seemingly impenetrable” (1999, p. 180). Leone holds a softer but similar position: “At times the effort to create an artificial meta-language [...] has led semioticians to develop an abstruse jargon” (2010, p. 18).

Appreciation and criticism of Greimas’s semiotics can be read in Ricoeur (1989). Greimas and his Paris school received the highest recognition from the Vatican (Pontifical Biblical Commission 1994) as a method recommended and allowed for the Catholic Church. Elapsed time and experience gave rise to the view of Christian Bankov:

If in previous lectures we determined the claims of semiotics to cover everything as ‘imperialism’, its structural variant proposed by Greimas can be described as a kind of ‘extremism’. His theory is the most slender and complete among the existing semiotics. These qualities, however, cause a few side effects. First, it is very abstract and plenty of new terms are introduced or adapted by the author. Without knowledge of these terms it is impossible to understand its basic postulates. Second, this theory does not seem very interested in the facts that it is supposed to explain. In its construction it has pursued the idea of inner perfection and lack of controversy, and concepts are defined by inner interaction. This deviates the attention of the authors from confrontation with real texts; rather than any actual analysis it seems more like an exercise in applying the theory instead of detecting something new in the text. The theory ignores many facts that defy its analyses. Third, it is untranslatable into languages that are not derived from Latin. English translations of Greimas too are sometimes controversial. Of course, only a small part of it is untranslatable, but, as it might be expected, it is the most important one.

(Bankov 2001, p. 53; trans. mine)

I share that “nevertheless, the emerging scholarly rigor associated with semiotics has had a striking effect on the methods of those biblical scholars interested in exploring new approaches to Scripture” (Vanhoozer 2005, p. 276).

Chomsky changed modern linguistics and ways of thinking in the humanities. He achieved the purpose of early structuralism — for the humanities to become equivalent to natural and mathematical sciences. In extreme versions of structuralism, however, semantics is absent

or is an ancillary element. Barbara Partee, an author that worked on generative semantics and on the interface of generative syntax and semantics, relates Chomsky's opinion:

Chomsky's thinking was evolving from *Syntactic Structures* (Chomsky 1957) to *Aspects* (Chomsky 1965) while I was there, and he tentatively accepted Katz and Postal's suggestion of a systematic connection between syntax and semantics at the level of Deep Structure. His continuing skepticism about semantics would still come out in such comments as "Well, I don't think anyone understands anything about semantics, but maybe what Fodor and Katz and Postal are doing has some promise."

(Partee 2007, p. 2)

It became clear that the whole ocean of methods available to formal logic cannot cover the semantics of natural languages. The quality of the syntax to have a finite number of units and rules was the inspiration for structural analysis. Chomsky was impelled to publish his book *Studies on Semantics in Generative Grammar* just to reaffirm the additional role of semantics in his theory (Chomsky 1972). Claude Levi Strauss's syntax type of analysis gave excellent results in the analysis on primitive cultures. But, as Ricoeur remarks, for Judeo-Christian civilization it does not appear to be the best tool:

I will characterize the method in one word: it is the choice of syntax over semantics [...] I find it striking that all the examples were taken from the geographical area which was that of so-called totemic thought and never from Semitic, pre-Hellenic, or Indo-European thought; and I wonder what is implied in this initial limitation of the ethnographic and human material. Hasn't the author stacked the deck by relating the state of the savage mind to a cultural area — specifically, that of the "totemic illusion" — where the arrangements are more important than the contents, where thought is actually bricolage, working with heterogeneous material, with odds and ends of meaning? Now, I wonder whether the mythical base from which we branch — with Semitic (Egyptian, Babylonian, Aramaic, Hebrew), proto-Hellenic, and Indo-European cores — lends itself so easily to the same operation, but does it land itself entirely? In the examples of *Savage Mind*, the insignificance of the contents and the luxuriance of the arrangements seem to me to constitute an extreme example much more than a canonical form. It happens that a part of civilization, precisely the part from which our culture does not proceed, lends itself better than any other to the application of the structural method transposed from linguistics.

(Ricoeur 1974, p. 39)

Despite the criticism of mine and many other authors, theories of earlier generations of semioticians has been applied successfully to

suitable objects. Tim Murphy in *Elements of a Semiotic Theory of Religion* represents his work as

a synopsis of an argument for a semiotic approach to theorizing religion. The central argument combines Jonathan Z. Smith's notion of "sacred persistence" as the dynamic relationship between a canon and a hermeneute with the work of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Mikhail Bakhtin.  
(Murphy 2003, p. 48)

The leader of the *Semea* circle, Daniel Patte, shows his preferences of methods in the title of the book *Dimensions of Biblical Texts: Greimas's Structural Semiotics and Biblical Exegesis* (Patte 1990). Generally speaking, *Semea* is a circle involved with the semiotics of literature. It is an independent stream in the world of semiotics, characterized by a strong interest in the Bible. Its general approach is close to Saussure's perspective.<sup>1</sup> From my point of view, it is a serious attempt to produce research on the Bible from a semiotic point of view.

Robert Corrington's book *A Semiotic Theory of Theology and Philosophy* (2000) is also of interest. The author omits no famous philosopher and semiotician, including John Deely. Corrington's goal is that "the interdisciplinary science and art of semiotics can transform philosophy and theology and pave the way for a new metaphysics" (ibidem, p. ix).

This is not a goal of mine, but I share the following statement:

The current philosophical climate has utterly failed to illuminate the depth-structure of the sign/object relation, primarily because of a commitment to a semiotic idealism that gives signs too much freedom from the vector forces of those objects with which they are implicated. When Peirce's seemingly innocent interpretant theory is grafted onto the first dyad of sign and object, the temptations to idealism become almost overwhelming. Interpretants (new signs that emerge from the original sign/representamen to object relation) are what they are because of human forms of semiosis that can manipulate signs without probing into their underlying objective correlates.

(Ibidem, p. 170)

I join Alexandros Lagopolous's viewpoint (2010) on 'semiotics-structuralism-postmodernism' in Deely 2001. John Deely is a well-trained semiotician but his devoted insistence that St. Augustine is the first semiotician (2005) eludes me. Semiotics as way of thinking is

<sup>1</sup> Another book published by *Semea Studies* is Boer 2007. In 1981 an issue of the magazine *Semea* was devoted to Bible Semiotics.

documented in the Talmud (written in the fifth century A.D.) and in the Zohar (written starting from the thirteenth century A.D.), but it is quite clear that both the Talmud and the Zohar are written forms of a much earlier oral tradition. Jewish Kabbalah developed sophisticated systems for decoding/coding, ‘translating’ into thirty-two ‘languages’, and recoding the text of the Old Testament into as many different Hebrew texts. The thirty-two systems of substitution of every single letter have a goal, that of revealing the hidden messages of the original text. The essence of it is very semiotic.

My understanding of a modern structuralism and semiotic approach is in the sense articulated by Ricoeur:

No structural analysis, we said, without a hermeneutic comprehension of the transfer of sense (without ‘metaphor’, without *translatio*), without that indirect giving of meaning which founds the semantic field, which in turn provides the ground upon which structural homologies can be discerned.

(Ricoeur 1974, p. 56)

I shall not comment on Charles Peirces’ contributions to semiotics, since they are uncontested. Russian and Soviet Semiotics also have their great achievements. They can be traced in numerous works of their followers and great developers, such as Umberto Eco.

Rush 2006 is an example of combining kinds of semiotics which usually do not find place in the overall methodology. This is an attempt which I welcome, because I think everything that serves to decode the internal features of an object must be in use. A very important semiotic issue is translation as far as Christianity is a culture of translation. Here I shall quote a hard follower of Peirce’s approach:

Modern semiotics has influenced just about every humanistic and scientific field with its methods and applications. Its origins lie in the work of three scholars: Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), and Charles William Morris (1901–1979). Saussurean semiotics is also called structuralism or, in French, *sémiologie*. It lies outside our field of interest. We focus rather on Peirce’s semiotics because of its wide-ranging applications to all the forms of translating and interpreting that Jakobson (1959) grouped under inter-linguistic, intralinguistic, and inter-semiotic translation.

(Hodgson 2007, p. 164)

Some of Hodgson’s analyses are quite interesting and others are not. For some issues the author has very accurate opinions that I accept and respect:

From the point of view of translation Christians connect much of their identity and self-definition with the (translated) visible Bible. They define themselves as 'people of the (translated) Book'. They read '(translated) Holy Writ.' Both have a '(translated) Scripture' and a '(translated) Good Book'. Christians take less note of the invisible Bible because its stories, characters, and themes do not reach us as (translated texts), but rather in a mediated way, as artistic texts.  
(Hodgson 2007, p. 182)

I appreciate the difference Hodgson makes between the Bible text and Biblical visual presentations, as it is relevant to visual and linguistic color:

Prior to the nineteenth century, most Christians did not get their knowledge of the Bible from reading a book. Rather they received it aurally or visually, hearing it read from a pulpit or viewing representations of biblical stories and characters in their churches and cemeteries, markets and village squares, and roadside shrines and pilgrimage hostels. When we translate the Bible into non-print media, we are dealing with what Jakobson called inter-semiotic translation.

(Hodgson 2007, p. 183)

Eco points out the same problem with reference to Victor Hugo's famous statement: "The book will kill the cathedral, alphabet will kill images" (Eco 1996, p. 2) In my opinion this is a fundamental theme — over the centuries mass culture was built on something else but not on the text of the Bible. And my contention is that *the Bible is not what other people say that it is; the Bible is the text of the Bible*. Ricoeur reveals a very important feature of the process of translation:

[...] the work of the translator does not move from the word to the sentence, to the text, to the cultural group, but conversely: absorbing vast interpretations of the spirit of a culture, the translator comes down again from the text, to the sentence and to the word. The final act, if one can put it that way, the final decision is about making out a glossary at the level of words: the selection of the glossary is the final test where what should be impossible to translate is crystallized as it were *in fine*.

(Ricoeur 2006, p. 31)

In the twenty-first century, if somebody is interested in a better understanding of the Biblical text he/she needs information on the Hebrew language, not only on its grammar, but also on the psychology of its reading (Shimron 2006). The reader should be better informed on Jewish culture. A good example of this approach are Ugo Volli's works in biblical semiotics.

Jewish Culture has overwhelming respect of the written word, including a mystical kind of respect. For centuries the Kabbalah has been conceived as ‘Jewish mystical theology’ (*Encyclopedia Judaica*, 11, pp. 587–8). The great thinker Gershom Scholem was the first to realize that Hebrew has an algebraic structure, probably because he was a student of Gottlob Frege. At the same time he wrote a ‘strange’ — as Derrida calls it — letter to the German thinker Franz Rosenzweig in 1926 from Jerusalem:

This country is a volcano in which language will boil [*Das Land ist ein Vulkan, Es beherbergt die Sprache*] [...] There exists another danger even more disturbing [*umheimlicher*] than the Arab nation, a danger which is a necessary consequence of the Zionist enterprise: What about the ‘actualization’ of the Hebrew language; does this sacred language by which our children are nourished not constitute an abyss [*Abgrund*] which will, without fail, open up someday? [...] May we not be running the risk of seeing, someday, the religious power of this language turned violently against those who speak it? [...] As far as we are concerned, we live inside our language, which for most of us is like blind men walking over an abyss. But when vision is granted us, to ourselves and our descendants, shall we not fall to the bottom of this abyss? And no one can tell whether the sacrifice of those who will be destroyed in this fall will be enough to seal it up again.

(Derrida 1989, pp. 80–1)<sup>2</sup>

To summarize Scholem’s beliefs about Hebrew: Hebrew has religious power; even in secular Hebrew the power of the sacred often seems to speak to us; names have their own life; Scholem worries that the process of adopting Hebrew as a spoken language will violently turn against those who speak it. That is because of the “religious power” of the sacred and symbolical status of Hebrew; “Hebrew words, all that are not neologisms but have been taken from the treasure-house of our ‘good old language’, are full to bursting with meaning” (Scholem 1990, pp. 98–9).

Jacques Derrida is usually defined as a French–Jewish philosopher. There is a public discussion on ‘Derrida and the Kabbalah’ involving Jürgen Habermas, Emanuel Lévinas, and others, who think that Derrida integrates elements and ideas of Lurian Kabbalah in his academic texts (cfr Drob 2009) It is usual for scholars of Jewish origin to draw inspiration and approaches from rationalist and idealistic methods and ideas actually contained in Jewish Kabbalah. At the same time their

<sup>2</sup> The full text of the English translation of the letter is in Scholem 1990.



scientific achievements are completely within the paradigm of a given science. Mysticism is an element of attitude towards Hebrew, not only of scientists and thinkers like Gershom Scholem and Jacques Derrida but of ordinary Jews.

It is important to understand that semiotic approaches to the Bible are a comment and interpretation of the Bible. But semiotic approach and exegesis should serve a better understanding of the text. I consider such better understanding to be involved with hermeneutics. In other words, any semiotic effort concerning the Bible should serve hermeneutical goals and not only the author's career. When it comes to the semiotics of the Bible, the sophisticated and complex semiotic methods often build their own systems that impede a better understanding of the text.

That is why I present the simplest interdisciplinary approach on the text of the Bible. As regards color, I refer to all the insights brought about by the semiotics of colors; as regards Hebrew, I refer to the 19<sup>th</sup> century understanding of Hebrew grammar (Gesenius 1996) and point out the simplest differences in the structure of Semitic and Indo-European languages — those inter-linguistic symmetry, asymmetry, and dissymmetry that have caused serious troubles to the translators. These differences are the most secret thing that lies on the desk in front of our eyes, because Indo-European languages have lost that which is open to access in the Hebrew text. And the final choice of a word is a complex process, as Ricoeur indicates it (Ricoeur 2006, p. 31). A final introductory remark is that *linen* is a sacral and symbolic ritual artifact. The method of testing and decoding the ritual symbols I choose to follow is that of Victor Turner (Turner 1975, p. 186).

I explore the various terms for *linen* not in a particular book but in the entire text of the Old Testament. The structure of different terms for *linen* in the wholeness of the Bible can be compared to an independent system that runs through the entire text, reflecting the prophetic language attitude in a period of one thousand years during which the Old Testament was written. Since the current form of the Old Testament was canonized in the first century, there are opinions that its text is limited by editorial human intervention. Obviously the problem of the history of Hebrew as the language of the Bible is important. Hence I consider it necessary to point out my opinion in the present article.

## 1.2. Hebrew-based imagining.

Hebrew-based imagining has some special features. Biblical Hebrew is a sacral language. By definition the sacral level (place) is a mediator between humans and God. Because of its mediating function every sacral object (artefact or the sign system of the language) has a very high level of symbolism. Being a sacral language, Biblical Hebrew is thought of as descending from the choices made by Abraham, the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. Every one of them selected words with a sacral function. They chose only the words they needed to communicate at the levels of God and humans but not the linguistic level as a whole. Genealogically the chosen words are from different languages — from Chaldean/Aramaic (Gesenius's *Lexicon* is called 'Hebrew-Chaldee'), Semitic languages and Egyptian. This point is a hypothesis, because the oldest evidence on Hebrew are tenth- and ninth-century b.C. inscriptions.<sup>3</sup>

In its long history, Hebrew has developed its own features, which are independent of any other language. Modern Hebrew is the same language as Biblical Hebrew (Almalech 2004b, iii–v). The prophetic institution calls for and practices a very special culture of spelling choices; for instance, one can write the sound [t] by means of two different letters: *Tav* ט and *Tet* ט; the sound [k] can be written both as *Kuf* כ and *Kaf* כ; the sound [h], as *Het* ה and *Haf* ח, but there are very strong theological and moral differences between *Het* ה and the letter for the short [h], *He* ה.

Hebrew was and still remains not quite suitable for everyday use because of its sacral essence — Jews used some other languages (Aramaic, Idish, Ladino) for everyday purposes — in exile and in the Holy Land. Biblical Hebrew serves the sacral needs and that is why there is such a high level of ambiguity and high profiled spelling features in its written culture. The imagining based on Hebrew root semantics is much more logical than visual. It includes the richness of the Hebrew root semantics (i.e., its ambiguity), the high abstraction of the root

<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the scholarly debate about the history and origin of Biblical Hebrew supports such a hypothesis; for a detailed examination of all the opinions concerning this subject, cfr Kutscher 1982; Sáenz-Badillos 1993; Hadas-Lebel 1995; Emerton 2000; Young 2003; archeological data are in Graham et al. 2004; cfr also the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 8, pp. 620–627. On the history, structure, and psychology of reading of Biblical Hebrew, Shimron 2006 is extremely informative.

(the root has no vocals), and the spelling of the lexemes (some consonants can be written by different letters, meaning different roots):

The most distinctive and common feature of Semitic languages is that many words have roots consisting of (generally three) consonant letters [...] the three consonantal roots carry certain core meanings, whereas vowels (and affixes where applicable) play the role of modifiers, indicating grammatical and some semantic specifications. For English speakers, an analogous demonstration of this characteristic (Kutscher 1982) is the comparison of the words SING, SONG, and SUNG on the one hand, with LIVE, LOVE, and LEAVE on the other. The first triplet is one of the exceptional cases in which English resembles the Semitic principle. If we take SNG as the root of these words, we may define a core meaning for these words, namely having something to do with singing, and then identify the vowels as qualifiers or specifiers of the exact meaning of each word. The words of the other triplet LIVE, LOVE, and LEAVE, do not have a common meaning. Given that the Semitic root generally has a core meaning and its phonological pattern indicates grammatical specifications, the inevitable question arises with regard to the system's productivity. Linguistic elements such as roots and patterns are productive to the extent that they can be repeatedly used to produce instances of the same type (in this case, Hebrew words or word bases) [...] a group of very basic words, many of them connoting body parts tend to be biconsonantal.

(Shimron 2005, pp. 109–10)

The context of the uses of a word is also a tool for commenting on its meanings. Hebrew based imagining is a linguistic kind of imagining. Hebrew based imagining is logical. The sacral motivation of the richness of root semantics stresses the logical kind of imagining but, in addition, it has something to do with mathematics and visual imagining. The richness of Hebrew root semantics (its ambiguity) serves the Judaic doctrine that the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, “which shine in the appropriate color” (Scholem 1979, p.66; Glazerson 1997, p. 12), are the first thing created by God. Every Hebrew root marks a cosmological and creative territory given by God — God created the universe and the world of man from the letters. That is why word formative facts in Hebrew and their spelling bear the feature of divine relations, traces, and instructions for their human interpretation. The extended semantics of a root includes all its derivatives. Words derived from one root have one or few common semantic feature/s that give/s rise to the logic of the derivation. Every sign system attributes meaning to a sign by its use, by the context of its use.

Each of the eight roots for ‘linen’ in the Old Testament presents a different notion of it. The Semitic–Hamitic paradigm of these roots

cannot be preserved in an Indo-European language. Exploring the Hebrew root semantics means to reveal the real Hebrew message lost in translation. Therefore it means to reach a better understanding of the text of the Old Testament. As regards the task of decoding the structure of the Hebrew terms for colors, prototypes of colors, and prototype revival terms, the structural and semiotic approach and analysis provide a better understanding of the original Hebrew semantics, of its worldview, and of the content of the Bible. There is much that remains hidden in Hebrew, which needs to be revealed also for the sake of the Christian interpretation of the Bible.

In this context, to decode the Hebrew text means that we need a detective kind of semiotic work but not to build a new semiotic theory. The decoding process aims at the highest goal of hermeneutics: to reach a better understanding.

I shall now enter the 'tangled forest of ambiguous names and words presented by Hebrew' (Jerome 1992, p. 493) for the Indo-European reader in order to provide a better understanding of the text of the Bible. The analysis will be preceded by a last section of introductory remarks on the semiotics of colors in the Bible.

### 1.3. *The semiotics of colors in the Bible.*

Color in the Bible includes the basic color terms *white, black, red*, etc. (BCT); the prototype terms *light, darkness, sun, fire, blood, sky, sea*, etc. (PT), the prototype rival terms *linen, cherry, duckling, ruby, wine, sapphire*, etc. (PRT), and terms for the basic features of the prototypes: *clean, pure*, and *immaculate* for light; *hot* and *warm* for fire; *fresh* for plants etc. (TBFP).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The background of my research on color in the Bible includes my studies on the meaning of colors in Balkan traditional marriages and burials (Almalech 1996; 1997; 2006b; 2007); cfr also the works of Victor Turner on color language among Ndembu and other South African tribes (1966; 1967; 1973; 1975; 1979). According to Zollinger (1999, pp. 134–5), the most recent approaches to color-term categorization are those by Wierzbicka (1990) and MacLaury (1992; 1997). A third approach is represented by the World Color Survey (Berlin and Kay 1969; Kay et al. 1997; Regier and Kay 2009; Regier, Kay, Gilbert, and Ivry 2010), providing new data on color naming in many different languages and an increasingly specific and clear methodology. Cfr also Danesi 2004a and 2004b (which studies color from an anthropological and linguistic point of view), as well as Eco 1985. Two independent studies on BCT in the Bible (Brenner 1979 and Almalech 2006a) proved that the Hebrew text of the Bible does not confirm the evolutionary aspect of Berlin and Kay's theory.

*Linen* is an example of Prototype Rival Term. *Linen* is also a ritual symbol and needs the methodological attention suggested by Victor Turner (Turner 1975, p. 186). Bible descriptions of linen (as ritual symbol) are written. *Linen* is often a part of the Biblical law. The Priest Code commands that in the Tabernacle and in the First Temple the clothes of the priests must contain four colors. In the Second Temple the four-color priest code is revolutionarily replaced by a one-color code — the white of *linen*. Written Hebrew presents two sign systems, language and alphabet. Both establish the ritual significance of *linen*. The spelling and word choices are a matter of the Priest Code and of the sacred (Scholem 1979).

## 2. Linen in the Old Testament.

This is what the *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* points out about linen:

The word *linen* appears about one hundred times throughout the Bible, approximately 80 percent of the time in the OT. Nearly all references to linen in the Bible connect it directly with persons or nations of wealth and power, with priests and with God Himself. For each of these three main types of usage, there are clear and consistent OT and NT counterparts [...] The association of linen with earthly honor and power becomes apparent in the many OT references linking it to kings and prosperous nations. [...] The virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 wears and sells fine linen. Ezekiel records God's lament that he wrapped Jerusalem with fine linen and silk (Ezek 16: 10–13) and that the prosperous city of Tyre's sail of "fine embroidered linen from Egypt [...] became distinguishing mark" (Ezek 27:7). Thus linen in the Bible is a "power fabric", an unequivocal sign of earthly success to persons and nations of the ancient world. The OT contains nearly thirty<sup>5</sup> references to linen as part of the priest's required garments, from turban to breeches (Ex 28–29; Lev 16). The NT counterpart to this is presented consistently — even emphatically — in all four Gospels: the linen cloths used by Joseph of Arimathea to wrap Christ's body for burial. Hebrews 7 and 8 establish the doctrinal framework for this identification of Christ as humanity's perfect and permanent high priest. Finally, OT usages connecting linen to God himself begin with numerous references to the Tabernacle, God's temporary dwelling place among his wandering people (Ex 25: 8). All of the linen gathered for the tabernacle (and later for Solomon's temple) was "fine linen" or "fine twisted linen". While linen adorns God's dwelling on earth, it also clothes the citizens of heaven, God's eternal dwelling. We see this in apocalyptic usages in Ezekiel, 10: 1–7, Daniel, 12: 7.

<sup>5</sup> N.A. — actually they are thirty-nine only in the sacral four-color unit.

In conclusion, linen in the Bible speaks of status. To humans, linen symbolizes power, wealth, honor, and success. To God, linen reflects his holiness, purchased for humans by Christ and to be worn by the church when she weds Christ, to dwell for eternity in his glory”.

(Ryken and Wilhoit 1998, pp. 1739–41)

### 2.1. *Linen as ‘the robe of light’.*

In ancient rituals, linen clothes are known as ‘the robe of light’. Usually the high priest in polytheistic religions is honored with a linen robe. The initiated individual should also be dressed in clothes of linen or at least he should wear clothes with linen elements. In both cases the linen texture is a sign for ‘the robe of light’ (Goodenough 1964, pp. 165–76; Josephus 1987, §§ 8, 3 (122); 5 (128); 7 (137)).

In monotheism, polytheism, and folklore rituals of transition, the strategy of equipping someone with the robe of light is motivated by accepting the white cloth as a necessary and sufficient ‘armor’, for at least three reasons: 1. wearing white / linen clothes is the right way to present the initiated person to the gods / God; a piece of white cloth is the most suitable votive gift to the gods; 2. by the robe of light one pretends to have purity — physical and spiritual — the purity of one free from contamination with the body, that is, moral purity; 3. the white cloth has protective powers against the killing strength of God’s energy but also against the negative powers of death (wedding, funeral), so that one takes sides against Death and darkness. In the Bible, linen can be defined as macro–light white.

In Judaism, the High priest and the rest of Levites, called *kohens*, are instructed in the Pentateuch (Exodus 25–39) as to what they should wear. Clothes count in the sacral four colored textures — blue, purple, scarlet/crimson, and fine linen. It is part of the Priest Code. Here I shall focus on every word used for linen in the Old Testament and not only on the fine linen from the four sacral colors. Furthermore, I shall emphasize the logical relations and the associations evolving from the root semantics of the eight names for linen. The context of their uses is an auxiliary tool for commenting on their meanings. The observations and the conclusions made on the sacral four colored clothes will be used here. I recall that at the time of Moses, the part of white in the four sacral colors unit is played by the linen type—שש [šeš], and at the time of King Solomon by the linen type בוצ [butz] but not by any of the other nouns.

I should summarize the conditions and the context of that use of the linen type–שֵׁשׁ [šeš]. We should not forget that at the basis of the sacral Jewish use of the robe of light are: the sacral space; the killing power of the energy of God that is beyond human strength; the preserving function and meaning of fine linen; the declarative sense of ‘physical and moral purity’ of linen; the context of the sacral four colored textures (wool and linen — *blue* תְּכֵלֶת [tehèlet]; *purple* אֶרְגָּמָן [argemàn]; *scarlet / crimson* תּוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי [tolàat šani] + שֵׁשׁ [šeš]) — the four constituents of sacral incense (*sweet spices* סַמִּים נְטָף [samim natáf]; *stacte* שְׁחָלֶהֶט [šelahèvet]; *onycha* לְבֹנָה זָכָה [levonà zakà]; *galbanum* סַמִּים חֶלְבָּנָה [halbenà samim] (Exodus 30:34), the four kinds of metals (pure gold, gold, sliver, copper). The materials in the Tabernacle are structured in a virtual semiotic mirror command by the numerical relation 3:1 – 1:3 (“The Seal of Moses”, Almalech 2005).

Linen, together with blue, purple, scarlet/crimson, gold and silver, is often wore by kings (Almalech 2004a; 2006a). The king’s clothes do not only mark the social status of ‘power’ but also the concept of the ancients of the extraordinary character of the king’s person; even further — in Egypt the Pharaoh is a god. In the earlier texts (the Pentateuch) of the Old Testament, linen is generally named by three lexemes שֵׁשׁ [šeš], בְּדִים [badìm], חוּר [hur], but in a few uses of the term *linen clothes*, the *linen* is named by two other words — פִּשְׁתִּים [pištìim] and כְּתוֹנֶת [ketònet]. In the later parts of the Old Testament more terms for *linen*, *fine linen* and *linen clothes* appear — בּוּז [butz], סָדִין [sadin] and אֵטוּן [etùn].

## 2.2. שֵׁשׁ [šeš].

The word שֵׁשׁ [šeš] means *six* in Modern and in Biblical Hebrew. The Biblical meanings are ‘six’, ‘fine linen’ and ‘marble’. Moses chooses שֵׁשׁ [šeš] to build the sacral four-color sign in the Tabernacle — *blue*, *purple*, *scarlet / crimson* and *fine linen*. Four comes from the sacral textures *blue*, *purple*, *scarlet / crimson* and *fine linen*. The naming of the robe of light with the word שֵׁשׁ [šeš] gets the linen cloth of the Levites into the string ‘six–white marble–linen’. The Biblical meanings make organize doctrinal string ‘the white of the robe of light and the marble’ — ‘six (as arithmetic)’ — ‘four (square as geometry)’ — ‘six (the cube of the Kaabah as solid geometry)’. Thus the term שֵׁשׁ was included as a doctrinal, monotheistic term in the system



of Hebrew. Despite its Egyptian origin of שֵׁשׁ [šeš], that term becomes part of the Hebrew language and takes part in the unique Hebrew Biblical world view.

In the prophetic terminology, the numerical relation 6–4 is reestablished by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 1; 10 where the celestial creatures Cherubims and Ophanim (*wheels*) הָאוֹפָנִים [ofanīm]) have four wings (Ezekiel 10:16–21). Usually the Cherubims have two wings (Exodus, 47:9; 2 Chronicles 3). There is no doubt that the relation 6 — 4 steps into the inner structure of the prophetic terminology and is a part of the canonical mystic content of the Old Testament. Moses used שֵׁשׁ [šeš] for *linen* not because there was no word for *linen* in Hebrew at that time, but to build a prophetic terminology including the numerical relation 6–4.

Most of the researchers show the Egyptian origin of the word שֵׁשׁ [šeš] (Hurvitz 1967; Eitan 1925), and also the equivalence between שֵׁשׁ [šeš] and בּוּרְץ [butz] (Hurvitz 1967). Thus the word שֵׁשׁ [šeš] is not just borrowed from Egypt. It is inscribed in the system of Hebrew Language and it becomes an element of the sophisticated monotheistic, sacral instruments used by the prophets to communicate with God. They use this instrument to distribute to govern and communicate at the level of human space with the relation 6–4, with the paradigm ‘square–cube’ (geometry–stereometry).

As we know from Plato’s *Cratylus*, the “question about the correctness of names” is a complicated one, “and the knowledge of names is a great part of knowledge”. “And that which has to be named has to be named by something”; “the name is a part of true proposition”; “Regarding the name as an instrument, what do we do when we name?”; “not every man is able to give a name, but only a maker of names; and this is the legislator, who of all skilled artisans in the world is the rarest.” And of course “I should say that this giving of names can be no such light matter as you fancy, or the work of light or chance persons”.

In regard to the fact that Moses chooses this word for *linen* (but none of the existing in Hebrew) to build the sacral four color sign in the Tabernacle, we know that the number 4 or 40 is also connected to the acts of Moses (40 days on the Mount Sinai, 40 years in the desert etc.), and the association between 6 and 4 (four comes from the sacral textures *blue, purple, scarlet / crimson* and *fine linen*) which makes it possible to situate the name שֵׁשׁ [šeš] in a mystical sign string:



‘The white of the robe of light and the marble’ — ‘six (as arithmetic)’ — ‘four (square as geometry)’ — ‘six (the cube of the Kaabah as solid geometry; the cube of Kaabah is built by Abraham; the cube has six walls, every wall is a square, made of stone)’.

The linen type–שֵׁשׁ [šeš] is a cloth connected with Macro Light and with preserving functional meaning, because by its form and function it secures an adequate and secure communication with the powers of God, as well as with the human level.

The linen type–שֵׁשׁ [šeš] is not only a manifestation of an indivisible relation but carries the category of time, because the whole meaning is extended, stamped into the times after Moses, into the whole monotheistic culture. The relation 6 — 4 from the Seal of Moses extends into further lives and further prophetic contacts with the angels. The communicative parameters of the relations from the Seal of Moses are vertical — to God, and horizontal — to the space of humans. Thus the Seal of Moses leaves a profound imprint on time and space.

There are two more words for linen which are attributed to Egyptian origin. These are linen type–פִּשְׁתִּים [pištīm] / פִּשְׁתָּה [pištà] and linen type–בְּרִים [badim] / בָּד [bad]. Both terms are part of the lexical usage in the Pentateuch. The three types of linen generate a specific cultural and linguistic picture of the world which is unique. The constituents of monotheistic picture and their functional semantics make the difference from the pictures created by their Israelites neighbors.

The linen type–שֵׁשׁ [šeš] ‘names, covers and may govern through the white power of the „robe of light” the cubic shape, the square and the arithmetic proportion 6–4 that are related to the hardness of marble’.

### 2.3. בוץ [butz].

In the times of Moses and the Tabernacle the place of fine linen is occupied by the word שֵׁשׁ [šeš]. In the times of Solomon 2 Chronicles 3:13–14 בוץ [butz] is at the place of [šeš] and becomes a sign for a sacral place but also for wealth and creative abilities. Thus at the Temple of Solomon the “Seal of Moses” is replaced. What is certain is that the relation 4 — 6 carried by the lexeme שֵׁשׁ [šeš] is not here because the word for *fine lien* is now בוץ [butz].

The word בוץ [butz] is used for the first time in 1 Chronicles 4:21, which means that it is not part of the Pentateuch linguistic evidence and plan. In 2 Chronicles 2 there is description how Solomon employs

a skilled worker from the town of Tyre–Hiram. In this information on Hiram the word for *linen* is בוץ [butz].

It is significant that the lexeme בוץ [butz] is used in a compound with the sacral colors (blue, purple, scarlet/crimson). Hurvitz contrasts the description of same the four colored sacral unit from Exodus 36:35 (the Tabernacle) to 2 Chronicles 3:13–14 (the First Temple) (Hurvitz 1967, pp. 117–8). In the times of Moses and the Tabernacle the place of fine linen is occupied by the word שש [šeš]. In 2 Chronicles 3:13–14 בוץ [butz] is at the place of שש [šeš] and becomes a sign for sacral place, as well as for wealth and creative abilities. Thus at the Temple of Solomon the “Seal of Moses” is replaced. What is certain is that the relation 4 6 carried by the lexeme שש [šeš] is not here because the word for *fine lien* is now בוץ [butz]. The First Temple does not use the “Seal of Moses” but presents a new notion on the symbolism of the sacral space “stamped” into the structural design. When the Tabernacle was described, the word בוץ [butz] never appeared in the sacral four color unit. Moses’s accurate description of the unit includes *blue* תְּכֵלֶת [tehèlet], *purple* אֶרְגָּמָן [argemàn], *scarlet / crimson* תּוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי [tolàat šani] + שש [šeš] (Exodus 25; 26; 27; 28; 35; 36; 39).

According to BibleWorks98 the term בוץ [butz] refers to an expensive, fine, white linen, manufactured in Egypt. Gesenius states that the root of the word is Semitic and penetrates Hebrew through Aramaic, and the lexeme בוץ [butz] in the earlier layers of Biblical Hebrew refers to Syrian fine linen, see Ezekiel 27:16, while the linen from Egypt is called שש [šeš] (Gesenius 1996, p. 108).

Gesenius specifies that the Semitic root *Beth–Vav–Tzadi* בוץ is unused in Hebrew; in Arabic it means “to become white”, “to be white”. According to Gesenius this root enters into Hebrew via Aramaic; thus in Hebrew we have the words *linen* בוץ [butz] and *egg* בֵּיצָה [betzà], derived from this root. (Gesenius 1996). If the derivative structure of the root *Beth–Vav–Tzadi* בוץ is developed semantically, then from the Hebrew–acquired *egg* בֵּיצָה [beitzà] clarifies the possibility for ascribing to the linen type–בוץ [butz] the following semantic features: ‘round object’, ‘round white object’, ‘round white volumetric object’, ‘preserved life’, ‘preserved life, which needs warmth and care to become real life’, ‘food’.

For the understanding of the text, the spelling and the oral features are crucial. Thus from the extended root–semantics it becomes clear

that Moses names, covers, and may be, governs by means of white robe of light cubeness, squareness, as well as the algebraic and arithmetic relations between the numbers 6 and 4. Solomon made a different choice — with the help of the linen type—בויץ [butz] to name, to cover, and may be to govern by means of the white robe of light the oval shapes (mystically and realistically), the roundness — both connected to the different forms of life, with different kinds of food, as well as with care and the ability to give life.

Essential in this white naming of the forms of the Universe and the Earth (cubeness and roundness) is that, for the Tabernacle, Moses uses only the white, marble, six—multiple cubeness of the linen type—שש [šeš]. The white roundness of the linen type—בויץ [butz] Moses leaves to other times, occasions, and finally — to other persons. Thus by linguistic analysis I can enter the inner sides of the text of the Old Testament, avoiding any mystical meditations.

#### 2.4. *Hypothesis about the Tabernacle's use of שש [šeš] and the First Temple's use of בויץ [butz].*

The material forms of cubeness and roundness are understood as elements of darkness and blackness. By specific naming and spelling Moses had given meaning to the world and to the universe from the side of “whitness”. Thus Moses works on a declaration and an obligation fixed by the laws for every initiated Jew to look at, to cover, and to deal with the world from the side of the robe of light but not from the side of the robe of darkness. By the changes he made King Solomon pretends that the legacy of Moses is already a fact and the monotheistic culture needs the next step — to turn the roundness to the side of light.

#### 2.5. *בדים [badim]; בָּד [bad]; בָּד [vad].*

The word בַּדִּים [badim]; / בָּד [bad] with the meaning of *linen* is used for the first time in Exodus 28:42.

וַעֲשֵׂה לָהֶם מְכַסְּיִם בָּד לְכַסּוֹת בֶּשֶׂר עֲרוּהָ מִמִּתְנַיִם וְעַד־יְרֵכָם וְהָיוּ  
(WTT Exodus 28: 42)

You shall make for them linen undergarments to cover their naked flesh; they shall reach from the hips to the thighs.

(NRS Exodus 28: 42)

The terms for this type of linen appear many times, from the Pentateuch to Danail, in the forms בָּדִים [badim]; בָּד [bad]; בָּדָ [vad]; *linen breeches / linen undergarments / linen trousers* מִכְנָסֵי־בָד [mihnasèi vad], *linen ephod* בָּד אֶפֹד [efòd bad]. BibleWorks98 gives the meaning *linen* as the first of few meanings:

I. white linen בָּד [bad].

This type of linen differs drastically from the type-שֵׁשׁ [šeš] and the type-בוץ [butz]. The difference occupies two directions. The first one is that the linen בָּדִים [badim]; בָּד [bad]; בָּדָ [vad] stays constantly in use for a period of 1000 years, from Moses to Daniel. The second direction is that the word is too ambiguous.

II. alone לְבַד [levàd] This derivative is used over one hundred times, usually in the compound l<sup>c</sup>bad. It may have a positive, negative or neutral connotation. The core concept is “to be separate and isolated”. It can also connote the idea of dividing into parts. This verb underscores the idea of isolation, e.g. the lonely bird on the housetop (Psa 102:8), the donkey (simile of Ephraim) willfully going alone to Assyria (Hos 8:9), and the lone army straggler.” [BibleWorks98] One more meaning, *part*, of בָּד [bad], derivative from *alone*, is used in the earlier stages of the Old Testament — ever since Exodus 30:34.

III. poles בָּד [bad]. The same word has one more meaning — *poles*, and appears in the earlier stages of the Bible — in Exodus 25:13 in Smihut form בָּדֵי [vadèi]. BibleWorks98 / TWOT give for this verse the meaning *alone* which is a correct decision but so is the translation with *poles*. We should understand that the material must be only / alone of *shittim wood / acacia wood*. Nothing else is the appropriate wood for the Tabernacle.

In Ezekiel 17:6 one should take into account the same word in regular plural בָּדִים [badim]. The context commands to translate it as *branches* and / or *shoots* (sprout) where the underlying meaning is ‘poles of grape’. The Bulgarian Orthodox version (Библия 1991) uses the word *филизи* (shoots, sprout) and the Bulgarian Protestant version (Библия 1995) prefers *пръчки* (branches, poles of grape). The different English versions play between the words *branches–shot–sprigs; shoots–branches; branches–foliage; branches–shoots*.

IV. liar (twice), lie. In Isaiah 44:25 the word בָּד [bad] is used in its next meaning — *lie; liar; deceive, cheat*. “The etymology of this word is uncertain. Its basic meaning is *empty, idle talk*. Moab’s idle boasts were false (Isa 16:6). The term “empty talkers” described false prophets, e.g., oracle priests (diviners; Jer 50:36). The boaster’s omens were idle talk (Isa 44:15). L.G” (TWOT).

The linen type-בָּד [bad] is used in a few Noun Phrases referring to different kinds of linen clothes. The Noun Phrase מִכְנָסֵי־בָד [mihnasèi vad] is a construct case (Smihut) consisting of *linen* בָּד [vad] and the smihut-form מִכְנָסֵי [mihnasèi] of the word *trousers, drawers* מִכְנָסִים [mihnasàim]. Thus the requirements to the cohen include wearing *linen breeches / linen undergarments / linen trousers* מִכְנָסֵי־בָד [mih-

nasèi vad]. Such an action means that they will “cover their nakedness” (Exodus 28:42) “that they bear not iniquity, and die” (Exodus 28:43). The expression is used systematically in the Pentateuch, e.g. Leviticus 6:3.

It appears from these examples that the linen type–בָּד [bad] is used in a context for ‘collecting the physical matters’. The linen type–שֵׁשׁ [šeš] is different — it appears to be part of a linguistically motivated string ‘fine white linen — the number six — white marble’ and the distribution of this string into the earthly space. Later, at the time of monarchy of David and Solomon (X–th century B.C.), the *linen* בָּד [bad] as part of the *linen ephod* becomes another important element, e.g. the garments of the High priest, the linen ephod of Samuel, see 1 Samuel 2:18. Here the child is Samuel who was chosen to be high priest in short future terms.

Some people, including Anthony Phillips, think that “the linen ephod is not to be understood as a special priestly garment but a brief loin cloth suitable for young children” (Phillips 1969, p. 487). Also “it was not normal Israelite practice for a person acting as a priest to appear clad only in a linen ephod”; Phillips (1969, p. 487), Tidwell (1974), and many others challenge that point of view.

What I think is that the description of Samuel at his childhood is also symbolical — the high priest is like a child when he serves before God (*The wise man is like a child before God*). The same way David cursed Michal to become a childless woman because she chose him for the leader but her own father. As Phillips concludes the word בָּד [bad] in the case of child’s garment “is used to refer to the minimal garment worn by a child to cover his loins, in the other to an empty case, like a stiffened garment, which could be used for obtaining an oracle by means of inserting one’s hand (1 Sam. 14:19) (Phillips 1969, p. 487).

In 2 Samuel 6:14 David is defined as *dancing before the LORD with all his might and girded with a linen ephod*. In the following verses the story of Michal’s condemnation takes place that “the king of Israel uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants’ maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself!”.

In Ezekiel 9:2 and Daniel 10:5 the word בָּד [bad] is part of expression *clothed in linen / dressed in linen* לְבוּשׁ בְּדִים [lavùš bad]. The word בָּד [bad] means *white linen* or *cloth of white linen*; *clothed / dressed* לְבוּשׁ [lavùš]. In Ezekiel 9:2 we can also find the word שֵׁשׁ [šeš] but here it means the number *six*, preserved in Modern Hebrew.

Ezekiel 1; 10 is one of the most mystical parts of the Old Testament. There is no better proof for the status of the term בַּד [bad], plural בְּדִים [badim], between all other seven Biblical designations for *linen*. If prophet Ezekiel prefers the word בְּדִים [badim] for *linen*, it means (despite the homonyms *staves, poles; part; alone; lie, liar*) the term should be considered ‘ritual purity of a man’ + ‘immaculate man punishes the sinful people’.

The comparison between the *linen* type-שֵׁשׁ [šeš] and type-בְּדִים [badim] shows a clear difference. The *linen* type-שֵׁשׁ [šeš] is a linguistically motivated model of a mathematical computation of the relation 4–6<sup>6</sup> or the semiotic significance of numerical mirror signs 3:1–1:3.<sup>7</sup> The *linen* type-בַּד [bad] has the meaning ‘immaculate man who punishes the sinful people’ but also ‘the punishment can not be calculated’. This is because the *linen* type-בַּד [bad] has no connection to computing the numbers or the mirror computation of numbers. The only thing to calculate here is the kind of punishment related to the meanings of the homonymous words: ‘punishment–poles’, ‘punishment–part’, ‘punishment–alone’, and ‘punishmen–lie’.

Christopher Rowland, 1985, compares Daniel 10:5 to passages from New Testament’s Revelation and to the apocrypha on Jewish Angelology (Apocalypse of Abraham; Joseph of Asenath; Apocalypse of Zephaniah). The synopsis brings him to the conclusion the *man clothed in linen* הַבְּדִים הַלְבֻשׁ הָאִישׁ הַלְבֻשׁ [ha-iš ha-lavùš ha-badim] is an angel too (Rowland 1985). The use of a word for *linen* in Noun Phrase is canonical.

In the dictionaries of Modern Hebrew, the meanings of בַּד [bad] are the same as in Biblical Hebrew (Podolski 1995; Almalech 2004a). There is one more Noun Phrase בְּהִנֵּת בַּד [katònet vad] where בַּד [bad] stands for *linen*, and [katònet] denotes *coat, tunic* (Leviticus 16:4). Finally Rabin concludes that the *linen* type-בַּד [bad] / בַּד [vad] means textile for priestly clothes made of thick linen with the symbolic meaning ‘power’ and ‘strength’. This type of linen is one of the oldest Hebrew names for *linen* and its semantisation is quite rich.

<sup>6</sup> On the relation color–arithmetic–geometric–stereometric and the word šeš cfr Almalech 2006, pp. 112–3.

<sup>7</sup> On the semiotic significance of the relation 1:3–3:1 see Almalech 2005.

2.6. פְּשֵׁתִים [pištìm] / פְּשֵׁתִים [fištìm] / פְּשֵׁתָהּ [fištà] / פְּשֵׁת [pèšet] / פְּשֵׁתָהּ [pištè].

The term is used in plural פְּשֵׁתִים [pištìm] / פְּשֵׁתִים [fištìm]. The linen type—פְּשֵׁתִים [pištìm] appears for the first time in Leviticus 13:4 (*linen* פְּשֵׁתִים [pištìm]; *garment* בְּגָד [veged]). According to BibleWorks it is used in Lev. 13:47; 48; 52; 59; Deut. 22:11; Jos. 2:6; Jdg. 15:14; Prov. 31:13; Isa. 19:9; Jer. 13:1; Ezek. 40:3; Ezek. 44:17; 18; Hos. 2:7; 11.

The root of פְּשֵׁתָהּ [fištà], pl. פְּשֵׁתִים [fištìm] is *Pe–Shin–Tav* פֶּשַׁת. The word denotes *linen*, and has no other meanings. Thus it is possible, in a hypothetical manner, an association based on the pronunciation but not of the spelling — ‘spreading the whiteness, radiating from the robe of light’. It seems that Jeremiah 13 gives full decoding of the linen type—פְּשֵׁתִים [pištìm] and the term אֵזוֹר פְּשֵׁתִים [ezòr pištìm]. It is interesting that different English versions use different word for אֵזוֹר [ezòr]: *loincloth* (NRS), *girdle* (KJV), *waistband* (NAU), *sash* (NKJ).

R. Peter–Contuse and J. Ellington (1994) claim the same as Rowland (1985) (that man in linen is an angel), but for the so-called “Revelation of Jeremiah” (Jeremiah, 3–4). Possibly they rise their point on Jeremiah, 13:1 on the word פְּשֵׁתִים [pištìm] in the Noun Phrase *linen girdle / linen waistband / linen loincloth / linen sash* אֵזוֹר פְּשֵׁתִים [ezòr pištìm]. The context of Jeremiah 13 stipulates an equivalence between God and the *linen girdle / linen waistband / linen loincloth / linen sash* אֵזוֹר פְּשֵׁתִים [ezòr pištìm]. This is a mark of the symbolism of the linen in the Old Testament — a sign of ‘purity’, ‘immaculateness’.

Daniel Olson presents the ancient Jewish idea that the prophets and the priests are considered as angels. “If the tabernacle and its furnishings are a copy of the heavenly one (Exodus 26:40), what can the linen-robed priesthood who minister before the throne of God be but an earthly manifestation of the heavenly liturgy?” (Olson 1997, p. 101). Olson, R. Peter–Contesse, J. Ellington, and Rowland — all mention Ezekiel 10 where the Throne of God is described.

In the entire Chapter 13 the noun phrase אֵזוֹר פְּשֵׁתִים [ezòr pištìm] is used only in verse 1. In all other verses only the word אֵזוֹר [ezòr] is used to present the *linen girdle / linen waistband / linen loincloth / linen sash*. The text explains that just as the *girdle* (despite its whiteness and purity) is ruined by the humidity and dryness of the soil the same way God will ruin His linen girdle — the Jews — because of their pride. The homophonic association comes in mind that the Isra-



elites should use closeness to God in a proper way — as a linen girdle — but not to take it off פָּשַׁט [pašàt]. The *linen girdle* (אָזוֹר פְּשָׁתִים [ezòr pištìim]) should be worn but not to taken off פָּשַׁט [pašàt].

The *girdle / waistband / loincloth / sash* is a symbol by itself. In the Old Testament the prophets or mystical characters are usually honoured with the special act of putting a girdle around their waist, as in “Gird up his loins” (see 2 Kings 9:1; 2 Kings 1:8; Job 40:7; Ezekiel 9:2). The information about this act in different Bible Dictionaries and Encyclopedias is not satisfactory. At a macro level it seems that St. Peter gives the best explanation of what it means in the Jewish tradition to *gird up the loins*, and according to the faith of Peter:

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest *your* hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

(NKJ 1 Peter 1:13)

To *gird up the loins* means to gird up our minds and to rest our hope on God. To *gird up the loins* means to the men to work hard on consciously choosing the side of the spiritual — in their thoughts and in their behavior. If we get back to Jeremiah 13:16 we can say that the *linen girdle* אָזוֹר פְּשָׁתִים [ezòr pištìim] is a closeness to God, spiritual light and morality that Israelites should hold up, use in practice in their life by keeping the 613 commandments.

The macro meaning of *linen girdle* אָזוֹר פְּשָׁתִים [ezòr pištìim] is equivalent to spiritual light, i.e. one more linguistic transformation of the idea of Light. This meaning is an antonym of the homophone *take off garments* פָּשַׁט [pašàt]. From this point the linen type-פְּשָׁתִים [pištìim] is an obligation to wear Light but not to take it off. To wear the Light of this type means to “Give glory to the LORD your God”. If not — God will punish the ex-girdle, the chosen people, by “He brings darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dusky mountains, and while you are hoping for light He makes it into deep darkness, *and turns it into gloom.*”

### 2.7. A dramatic change in the Priest Code.

Such an explanation of the linen type פְּשָׁתִים [fištìim] seems to be actual good news at the time of Ezekiel. It explains why Ezekiel replaced the sacral four-color unit of Moses with onecolored linen garments type-פְּשָׁתִים [fištìim] of the Levites (see Leviticus, 44:17–18). It



is indicative that the priests in the Tabernacle and in The First Temple have fourcolored sacral garments (*blue* תְּכֵלֶת [tehèlet], *purple* אֲרָגָמָן [argemàn], *scarlet / crimson* תּוֹלַעַת שָׁנִי [tolàat šani] + linen type-שֵׁשׁ [šeš]). Moreover, according to Ezekiel the Priest Code at the garments of Levites in the Second Temple should not be no longer the permitted mixture of linen and wool. The same mixture is forbidden for the rate Jews at the Time of Tabernacle. In the Second Temple the priests should use garments made only of linen. The word used for this linen is פְּשִׁתִּים [fištìim].

May be we should consider this fact as an indication of the incompetence of the remaining Levites to wear four colors, including the linen type-שֵׁשׁ [šeš]. It is because “the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment” (Ezekiel 44:10).

17 When they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen vestments; they shall have nothing of wool on them, while they minister at the gates of the inner court, and within. 18 They shall have linen turbans on their heads, and linen undergarments on their loins; they shall not bind themselves with anything that causes sweat.

(NRS Ezekiel 44: 17–18)

The word play could continue with another Hebrew lexeme for the English verb *extend* — פָּשָׂה [pasà]. In singular feminine this verb sounds פָּשְׁתָּה [pastà]. In this case in relation to mutual spelling without Nikud (the diacritics for the vowels and points for distinguishing *Shin* שׁ from *Sin* שׁ, *Pe* פּ from *Fe* פּ) פָּשְׁתָּה [pištà] (פשחה – פשחה) — the only semantisation should be ‘extending the white linen’.

The linen type-פְּשִׁתִּים [pištìim] marks a crucial change in the sacral symbolism of the Old Testament — Ezekiel replaced the sacral four-color unit of Moses with onecolored linen garments פְּשִׁתִּים [fištìim] of the Levites (see Ezekiel, 44:17–18). We should consider this fact as an indication of the incompetence of the remaining Levites to wear four colors, including the linen type-שֵׁשׁ [šeš] or בּוּץ [butz]. It is because “the Levites who went far from me, going astray from me after their idols when Israel went astray, shall bear their punishment.” (Ezekiel 44:10)

## 2.8. כְּתוֹנֶת [kutònet]; כֶּתֶנֶת [ketònet]; כְּתוּנוֹת [katònet].

The word is used at about 30 times, and it appears in three phonetic variants in the Old Testament — כְּתוֹנֶת [kutònet]; כֶּתֶנֶת [ketònet]; כְּתוּנוֹת [katònet]. Most of the uses are of the meaning *tunic, principal ordinary garment of man and woman, worn next to the person*. I should mention that in Hebrew the ordinary word for *garment, cloth* is בְּגָד [vèged]. On more word, a derivative from Hebrew *to dress*, is used for cloth לְבוּשָׁה [levuš].

The first appearance *tunics of skin / coats of skins / garments of skins* עוֹר כְּתוּנוֹת [katònet or] is in the very early stages of the Old Testament — in Genesis 3:21. It is a mark for the division between God and primeordial man and woman — they are punished and instead of a paradise connection to God by *light* אֹר [or] they are divided by the (garments of) *skin* עוֹר [or]. The word for *garments / tunics* is the word כְּתוּנוֹת [katònet]. In Judaism it is a popular object of comments, e.g. the *tunics of skin* is a kind of veil that hides God's presence from primeordial man. The Hebrew homophones *light* אֹר [or] and *skin* עוֹר [or] cannot be the cause for concluding by analogy that skin is white. What is for sure is that the skin is a kind of veil which hides the direct presence of God.

וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כְּתוּנוֹת עוֹר וַיְלַבְּשֵׁם  
(WTT Genesis 3: 21)

And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.

(NRS Genesis 3: 21)

The second use is also very remarkable because כְּתוֹנֶת פְּסִים [ketònet pasim] is a sign of the special love of the patriarch Jacob / Israel for his most beloved son Joseph (Genesis 37:3). Here the sense of כֶּתֶנֶת [ketònet] is also *coat, tunic, robe*. Now the tunic is *varicolored, of many colors, with sleeves* but not of *skin*.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than any other of his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he had made him a long robe with sleeves.

(Genesis 37: 3 NRS)

There is another noun phrase where one of the constituents is our word, and the meaning is still *coat, tunic, robe— priestly robes /*

*priestly garments* כְּהֵנֹת כֹּהֲנִים [katenòt kohanìm], see Nehemiah 7:69. It seems that in Nehemiah 7:69 / 70 the term כְּהֵנֹת כֹּהֲנִים [katenòt kohanìm] should remind the reader that the clothes of the priest consist of four sacral colors (blue, purple, scarlet/crimson, and fine linen) as it is formulated in Exodus. The word is used in the same meaning by the greatest master of Hebrew — Job. The Septuagint uses χιτωνός which explains the Slavic translation with the same Greek term *xumoh*. Job's beloved method of parallelism characterizes the verse — Job uses the routine word for *cloth* לְבוּשׁ [levùš].

בְּרָב־כַּף יִחַפֵּשׂ לְבוּשֵׁי כִפֵּי כְהֵנֹתַי יֵאָזְרֵנִי  
(WTT Job 30: 18)

With violence he seizes my garment; he grasps me by the collar of my tunic.  
(NRS Job 30: 18)

ἐν πολλῇ ἰσχύϊ ἐπελάβετό μου τῆς στολῆς ὥσπερ τὸ περιστόμιον τοῦ χιτωνός μου περιέσχεν με  
(LXT Job 30: 18)

In Nehemiah 7:69 / 70 and in Genesis 3:21 the form is in plural and Hebrew Smihut. In Job 30:18 and Genesis 37:3 the word is in singular. A few verses before the use of כְּהֵנֹת כֹּהֲנִים [katenòt kohanìm], in Nehemiah 7:65, the fact is indicated that at the moment of returning from exile (VI B.C.), among the Jews there is no immaculate and competent High Priest or any of the cohens who can predict the future by the stones Urim and Tummim:

And the governor said to them that they should not eat of the most holy things till a priest could consult with the Urim and Thummim.  
(NKJ)

On one view this means that there is a crisis in Judaism because there is no priest who deserves serving God. From a second viewpoint we should remember that before Nehemiah the prophet Ezekiel initiated a dramatic change in the clothes of the priests in the Temple. Ezekiel modified the sacral fourcolor clothes of the priests to one, linen kind of clothes. The word used for this change is for linen type—פְּשִׁטִּים [pištìm], see Ezekiel, 44. The word is used also in Song of Solomon 5:3 in the sense of *garment* or Orthodox Slavic *xumoh* [hitòn]:

Song of Solomon 5:3 I had put off my garment; how could I put it on again? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them?  
(NRS)

It is possible for our word to appear in a noun phrase together with the typical word for *linen* — בַּד [bad], which keeps the meaning for *linen*, and [ketònet] denotes *coat, tunic* in Smehut בַּתְּנֵת-בַּד [ketònet bad].

בַּתְּנֵת-בַּד קֹדֶשׁ יִלְבָּשׁ וּמְכַנְסֵי-בַד יִהְיוּ עָלָיו-בְּשָׂרוֹ וּבְאַבְנֵט בַּד  
 יִחַגֵּר וּבְמוֹצָנֶפֶת בַּד יִצְנַף בְּגָדֵי-קֹדֶשׁ הֵם וְרַחֵץ בַּמַּיִם אֶת-בְּשָׂרוֹ וּלְבָשָׁם  
 (WTT Leviticus 16: 4)

He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and shall have the linen undergarments next to his body, fasten the linen sash, and wear the linen turban; these are the holy vestments. He shall bathe his body in water, and then put them on.

(NRS Leviticus 16:4)

Finally, there are a few cases where the word denotes *linen*. In Ezra 2:69 it is the phrase *priests' garments* בַּתְּנֵת כֹּהֲנִים [katenòt kohanim]. In Leviticus 8:7 the word functions as linen cloth because it is a part of the priest clothes. Nobody translates it by linen but from the context it is quite clear that בַּתְּנֵת [kutònet] refers to linen texture. Most of the uses of בַּתְּנֵת [kutònet] in Leviticus have the same character.

The linen type-בַּתְּנֵת [ketònet] signals “the unity of the „robe of light” with „the first cloth (tunic) of the primordial man which divided him from God” + „the colored robe as mark of love” + „the priest’s robe”.

## 2.9. סָדִין [sadin].

The word is used only once in the singular סָדִין [sadin] (Proverbs 31) and three times in the plural סָדִינִים [sedinim] forms (Judges 14:12–13; Isaiah 3:23). TWOT gives two meanings: 1) linen wrapper; cloak; 1a) rectangular piece of fine linen worn as outer, or at night, as a sole garment. Whittaker’s Revised DBD (from BibleWorks98) adds “*wrapper* or rectangular piece of fine *linen*, worn as outer, or (at night) as sole garment, in list of women’s finery, made and sold by the capable woman.” According to Gesenius 1996, the root is *Sameh-Dalet-Nun* סָדִין, and the verb סָדַן [sadan] means *to loosen, to let one’s garment hang loose*.

The word is used 4 times in the Old Testament, starting from Judges. In the context of Proverbs 31 the semantics סָדִין [sadin] has a remarkable context-dependent meaning. Chapter 31 of the book Prov-

erbs presents directions to a king how to rule in a wise manner (NKJ Proverbs 31:10 Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth *is* far above rubies...)

The word סָדִין [sadin] is used in a context when the king tries to find a virtuous woman to marry her. Such being the case, a virtuous wife is then associated with the linen type—סָדִין [sadin], and it occurs in verse 24:

סָדִין עָשְׂתָהּ וַתְּמַכְרֶנּוּ וַתִּתֵּן לַבַּנְעָנִי  
(WTT Proverbs 31: 24)

She makes linen garments and sells them; she supplies the merchant with sashes.

(NRS Proverbs 31: 24)

Obviously the virtuous wife makes by herself the garment and sold it. Here the comparison to the verb סָדַן [sadan] is striking because the verb means the antonym of a virtuous and capable wife. Maybe the semantics of the word deriving from the same root is a sign that the wife is not stupid or careless but selflessness and responsible.

If we remember that the mixture of wool and linen is prohibited for the rank Jews (Deuteronomy, 22:11 You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together) but is an obligation for the clothes of the High Priest (Exodus, 28; 39) we can see that the virtuous and capable wife is equivalent to the High Priest. It is because it is written “She seeks wool and flax”. It is interesting that in the commandment not to mix wool and linen (Deuteronomy 22:11), the word for linen in Hebrew is פִּשְׁתִּים [fištīm]. The same is the word in Proverbs 31:13 where it is recommended to the virtuous and capable wife to seek the forbidden mixture. However, the English translations do not use the word *linen* but the word *flax*. Despite the synonymy it is an interesting decision.

The word סָדִין [sadin] is also used in Judges 14:12–13; Isaiah 3:23 in the plural form סְדִינִים [sedinim]. The meaning is *garments of fine linen*. HOL gives the meanings *undergarment, shirt*. The last explains the Bulgarian Protestant translations. The Russian and Bulgarian Orthodox versions transliterate the Greek Septuagint tradition, LXX σινδών [sindòn].

In Isaiah 3:23 the context is that God will punish “the daughters of Sion”. The *fine linen garments* סְדִינִים [sedinim] are a sign of pride and

also of luxury. Bulgarian and Russian Orthodox versions transliterate the term and clarify in an index note — *риза от тънко платно (fine shirts)*. The Bulgarian Protestant version replaces *fine shirts* with *fine cloaks (тънки наметала)*.

The linen type—סָדִין [sadìn] means ‘the ability to sacrifice yourself for others’. The combination of the linen type—סָדִין [sadìn] + type—פְּשִׁתִּים [pištìm] leads to the conclusion that ‘in Judaism a virtuous wife is in a way equal to the high priest’ (Proverbs, 31:13).

#### 2.10. אֶטוּן [etùn].

In Proverbs 7:16 it is asserted that the linen is from Egypt and that the linen is colored. This means that the word should be Hebrew if the text clarifies that the linen is imported from Egypt. At the same time this is the only use of the word אֶטוּן [etùn] in the Bible (*hapax legomena*).

According to Gesenius, אֶטוּן [etùn] means *thread, yarn of linen or cotton*. Gesenius thinks that the word אֶטוּן [etùn] is a Syriacism for אֶטוּן [etùn] and the verb should be *to bind, to bind together* אָטַן [atàn], but the root *Aleph–Tet–Nun* !ja is an unused root. English versions usually use the word *linen*. Bulgarian and Russian texts translate the word אֶטוּן [etùn] as *thread*.

The micro–context of Proverbs 7:27 is that a young man is seduced by a prostitute “with her enticing speech she caused him to yield, and with her flattering lips”. The macro–context of the chapter is that the adult person must keep God’s word and the treasure of the commandments.

The meaning of אֶטוּן [etùn] is ‘protection and of preventing one from deviating from virtue’.

#### 2.11. חוּר כָּרְפֵס [hur karpàs].

The word חוּר [hur] appears twice with the meaning *white texture, white linen* — in the book of Esther 1:6; 8:15. According to BibleWorks98 the root of חוּר [hur] is *Het–Vav–Reish* חוּר. “From this root are the words חוּר (ח'wâr) be, grow white, pale (Isa 29:22, only); חוּר (ח'ûr) white stuff (Est 8:15; Est 1:6); חוּרִי (ח'ûr'y) white stuff (Isa 19:9); חוּרִי (ח'ûrî) white bread or cake (Gen 40:16)” (BibleWorks98).

In Esther 1:6 it is used together with an unique single use of the word כַּרְפָּס [karpàs] — חור כַּרְפָּס [hur karpàs]. There is one more problem when NRS gives for the term כַּרְפָּס *cotton*. The meaning is uncertain and BibleWorks confirms it: “כַּרְפָּס (karpas) cotton or fine linen (Esther 1:6)” (BibleWorks98).

חור כַּרְפָּס ותְּכֵלֶת אָחוּז בַּחבֵּלִים בּוּיץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל־גְּלִילֵי כֶסֶף  
וְעַמּוּדֵי יָשָׁשׁ מִטּוֹת זָהָב וְכֶסֶף עַל רִצְפַת בַּהַטְלָוּשׁ וְרַר וְסִהְרָת  
(WTT Esther 1: 6)

There were white cotton curtains and blue hangings tied with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of porphyry, marble, mother-of-pearl, and colored stones.

(NRS Esther 1: 6)

In Esther 8:15 חור [hur] simply means *white* and the word has the status of basic color term.

Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king, wearing royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a mantle of fine linen and purple, while the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

(NRS Esther 8: 15)

Gesenius gives complex information. The root *Het–Vav–Reish* חור is very often connected to Aramaic and other Semitic languages. Generally there are two directions of the semantic derivatives. The first one is *to be white, to become pale* (as the face) (Isaiah 29:22), figuratively *to be splendid, noble; white and fine linen*. The second one is an “unused root חור, the meaning of which was that of hollowing, boring, as shown by the derivatives *a hole, a cavern* חור [hor], חור [hur]. Thus the word חור [hur] means *white and fine linen* cloths of linen or byssus (Isaiah 19:9) as well as a *hole* as that of a viper (Isaiah 11:8) or *cavern* (Job 30:6; 1 Samuel 14:11; a *den* of wild beasts (Nahum 2:13)” (Gesenius 1996).

In Esther 1:6; 8 the context is a lavish king attire, which is why we have linen type—שֵׁשׁ [šeš] and type—בוּיץ [butz] and the color terms *blue* תְּכֵלֶת [tehèlet], *crimson* אַרְגָּמָן [argamàn], *gold* and *precious stones*. It is very hard to find any additional semantisation of the term חור כַּרְפָּס [hur karpàs] and the word חור [hur].

The word כַּרְפָּס [karpàs] is mentioned by Gesenius as “a spieces of fine linen or flax, which is mentioned by classic writers as being pro-

duced in the East and in India, Sanscr. *karpâsa*, cotton; see Celsii Hierobot. t. ii. page 157” (Gesenius 1996, p. 416). Vulgate and Septuagint transliterate καρπάσινος, Lat. *carbasus*, and meaning is *made of fine flax*. Thus it appears that the single use of the word כַּרְפָּס [karpàs] in the Old Testament is caused by its Indo-European, Sanscrit origin.

The term marks ‘lavish king attire’, ‘expensive imports coloches’

### 3. Imagining semantic and semiotic areas covered by the different words for linen.

The linen type–שֵׁשׁ [šeš] ‘names, covers and may govern through the white power of the „robe of light” the cubic shape, the square and the arithmetic proportion 6–4 that are related to the hardness of marble’.

The linen type–בּוּץ [butz] ‘names, covers and may govern through the „robe of light” the roundness, the circular shape as related to life, food, care and life–giving’.

The linen type–בּוּץ [butz] ‘connects whiteness, life and roundness’.

The linen type–בּוּץ [butz] ‘connects whiteness, roundness and conserved life’, ‘conserved life that needs warmth and care to be transformed from conserved life to life’, ‘food’.

In a behavioral aspect the linen type–שֵׁשׁ [šeš] may mean ‘to be as strong as a rock’.

The linen type–חֹר כַּרְפָּס [hur karpàs] — ‘emphasizes luxury’, ‘the luxury commodity from a faraway land, and its luxurious whiteness’.

The linen type–בָּד [vad] / בַּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] means ‘power’, ‘strength’.

The linen type–בָּד [vad] / בַּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] means ‘gathering the corporeal at the expense of the spiritual’ (Exodus 28:42).

The linen type–בָּד [vad] / בַּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] ‘signals the threat of false prophets’ (Isaiah, 44:25).

The linen type–בָּד [vad] / בַּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] ‘connects whiteness and support in a chain so that the ark could be carried’ (e.g. Exodus, 25:13).

The linen type–בָּד [vad] / בַּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] is related to ‘the mystical use of white and green (*филизи* [shoots] in Библия 1991 or *пръчки на лоза* [vines] in Библия, 1995) symbolizing God’s power to punish and to make the Israelites last despite their sins’ (Ezekiel, 17:6).



The linen type–בַּד [vad] / בָּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] meaning *part* denotes ‘a connection between the white colour and the ability to analyse and distinguish between the parts of things in the name of purity’.

The linen type–בַּד [vad] / בָּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] ‘may be synonymous with the meanings of the „marble”, „cubic” linen שֵׁשׁ [šeš]’.

‘The white linen garments made of the linen type –בַּד [vad] / בָּד [bad] / בְּדִים [badim] have a ‘protective function’ in: 1. unclean rituals (“scapegoat”); 2. a contact with the power of God that is beyond human capacity.’

The expression *linen undergarments* בְּדֵי מִינְסֵי בַד [mihnasèi vad] requires the cohens ‘to gather their nakedness’ and serves ‘the gathering of the corporeal at the expense of the spiritual’.

The expression *linen ephod* בַּד אֶפֶוד [efòd vad] carries the meaning ‘even the wisest among men is a child before God’.

The presence of linen type–בְּשֵׁתִים [pištìim] may be regarded as a ‘signal to the reader not to seek a hidden meaning in or interpretation of a passage’.

Indirect meanings for the linen type–בְּשֵׁתִים [pištìim] based on pronunciation (homophony) but not spelling (the verb פָּשַׁט [pašàt]), include ‘spreading the whiteness exuded by the robe of light’, but also ‘stripping the whiteness of the robe of light’.

The linen type–בְּשֵׁתִים [pištìim] in the phrase *linen girdle* אֶזֶר בְּשֵׁתִים [ezòr pištìim] carries the macromeaning ‘spiritual light’ + ‘understanding that spiritual light is not simple; on the contrary, it is complex and difficult’.

‘Girding up with a *linen girdle* אֶזֶר בְּשֵׁתִים [ezòr pištìim] means that man should make a conscious effort to choose the spiritual in both his thoughts and his behaviours’.

The linen type–סָדִין [sadin] means ‘the ability to sacrifice yourself for others’.

The combination of linen type–סָדִין [sadin] + type–בְּשֵׁתִים [pištìim] leads to the conclusion that ‘in Judaism a virtuous wife is in a way equal to the high priest’ (Proverbs, 31:13).

The linen type–כֶּתֶנֶת [ketònet] signals ‘the unity of the „robe of light” with the first cloth (tunic) of the primordial man which divided him from God + the colored robe as mark of love + the priest’s robe’.

The linen type–אֶטֶן [etùn] derives from 1. to close; 2. to tuck away safely; 3. to silence someone. It is used only in Proverbs where its semantisation is ‘sex may be „a road to hell”, and with this type of linen

the road may be closed'. The meaning is of 'protection and of preventing one from deviating from virtue'.

#### 4. A better understanding.

The detailed analysis of the different words for linen in the Old Testament leads to several general conclusions:

Each different word for *linen* builds its own web of meanings in the linguistic picture of the world in Hebrew.

Each different word for *linen* serves the monotheistic mentality in the framework of the Old Testament. That mentality involves a requirement for harmony between spiritual purity and the ritual purity obtained by wearing linen clothes. From Edwin Goodenough (Goodenough 1964, 165–7) we know that in Hellenistic Antiquity it sufficed to put on „the robe of light” to „please God”. Monotheism rejects this sort of embellishment, as testified by the exclusion of several Levite families from service in the Second Temple (Ezekiel, 44).

The monotheistic mentality as coded in the different words for *linen* in the Old Testament is drastically different from neighbouring peoples' polytheistic mentality and language, despite certain borrowed lexemes in Hebrew originate from these peoples' languages and cultures.

The 8 different words for the *linen* of which „the robe of light” is made *are subject to a special ideology and symbol chains*, based on worldly, moral and abstract 'ritual purity', as conveyed by the notion of 'whiteness'.

The 8 different words for *linen* testify to the immense variety of transformations of the notion of light in the Old Testament.

The text of the Old Testament is a declaration and a duty for the initiated Israelite to see, cover and handle the world through the „robe of light” and not through the „robe of darkness”.

#### 5. Conclusions.

By Hebrew root semantics we can image the extended semantics of a word. Specific Hebrew derivative logic and associations are quite often untranslatable into Indo-European language. The context semantics of a word gives the whole picture of the Hebrew message of

the Old Testament. If we complement Hebrewbased imagining with cultural information, we arrive at a better understanding of the Hebrew content of the Old Testament. The approach is holistic and hermeneutic.

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### Abbreviations.

- Библия (1995): *Библия или Свещеното Писание на Стария и Новия заветъ. Вярно и точно преведена отъ оригинала*, Ревизирано издание, София, Придворна печатница, 1924, The Bible League, South Holland, IL 60473, Минск, PICORP, 1995
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- BHS – *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, fourth corrected edition (1990), ed. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart
- LXX – *Septuaginta*, ed. A. Rahlfs (1935) Württembergische Bibelanstalt / Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart
- KJV – King James Version, 1769 Blayney Edition of the 1611 King James Version of the English Bible
- NKJ – The New King James Version NKJV
- NASB – The New American Standard Bible
- NRSV – The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible