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## **The Gospel According to St. John in the Light of Targum Neofiti 1 to the Book of Genesis**

### **Ewangelia według św. Jana w świetle Targumu Neofiti I do Księgi Rodzaju**

**Abstract.** In the present article the author tries to answer on the questions: What is the importance of Targum texts for a better understanding of the proclamation of the Gospel according to St. John? Is there any connection between the Targum terms „Memra”, „Yeqara”, „Shekinah” and the terms which appear in the Prologue and narrative of the Gospel of John: „logos”, „doksa”, „skeno”? How did the first followers of Jesus from Nazareth understand these terms? Could the traditions contained in Targum synagogue readings have had a bearing on the thought of the author of the Fourth Gospel? The article consists of two parts: (1) Characteristics of the Targumic tradition based on Targum Neofiti 1; (2) The terminological and conceptual convergence between Targumic tradition and the Fourth Gospel. In the present article the author tries to show that Targumic traditions enables a better perception of the New Testament writings which can often be better explained thanks to Targumic traditions rather than to the Masoretic text.

**Streszczenie.** W niniejszym artykule autor pragnie odpowiedzieć na pytania: Jakie znaczenie ma tekst targumiczny dla lepszego rozumienia przesłania Czwartej Ewangelii? Czy istnieje związek między aramejskimi terminami „memra”, „jeqara”, „szekina” a greckimi terminami pojawiającymi się w Prologu Janowym „logos”, „doksa”, „skeno”? W jaki sposób pojęcia te rozumeli pierwsi wyznawcy Jezusa? Czy tradycje targumiczne obecne w liturgii synagogałnej miały wpływ na idee i myśli autora Czwartej Ewangelii? Artykuł złożony jest z dwóch części: (1) Charakterystyka tradycji targumicznych na podstawie Targumu Neofiti; (2) Terminologiczne i konceptualne związki pomiędzy tradycją targumiczną i Czwartą Ewangelią. W niniejszym artykule autor ukazuje, że wiele tekstów zawartych w Czwartej Ewangelii może być głębiej rozumianych w świetle tradycji targumicznej.

**Keywords:** Targums; Memra; Gospel of John.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Targumy; Memra; Ewangelia Janowa.

What is the importance of Targum texts for a better understanding of the proclamation of the Gospel according to St. John? Is there any connection between the Targum terms „Memra” (ממרא), „Yevara” (איקר), „Shekinah” (שכינה) and the Greek terms which appear in the Prologue and narrative of the Gospel of John: „logos” (λόγος), „doksa” (δόξα), „skenoō” (σκηνώω)? How did the first followers of Jesus from Nazareth understand these terms? Could the traditions contained in Targum synagogue readings have had a bearing on the thought of the author of the Fourth Gospel? In the present article the answers to these questions are searched by paying special attention to the terminological and conceptual relation between Targum Neofiti 1 to the Book of Genesis and the Gospel according to St. John.<sup>1</sup> Two questions will be presented: (1) Characteristics of the Targumic tradition based on Targum Neofiti 1; (2) The terminological and conceptual convergence between Targumic tradition and the Fourth Gospel.

## 1. Characteristics of the Targumic tradition based on Targum Neofiti 1

The term “targum” stands for “translation” and it is most often referred to Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible. It used to be read on Sabbath and festivals for a better understanding of the Word of God by Jewish participants in the liturgy.<sup>2</sup> They used the Aramaic language on daily basis. Although the Hebrew language was recognized as the holy language in the Temple and synagogue cult, still the lack of its full comprehension gave rise to the need for making an Aramaic translation, which at first existed in the oral form and then it was

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<sup>1</sup> See the previous studies on this topic in: R.D. Middelton, *Logos and Shekinah in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 101–133; M.É. Boismard, *Les citations targumiques dans le quatrième évangile*, p. 374–378; M. McNamara, *Logos of the Fourth Gospel and Memra of the Palestinian Targum (Ex 12:42)*, p. 115–117; J.H. Neyrey, *Jacob Traditions and the Interpretation of John 4:10–26*, p. 419–437; J.H. Neyrey, *The Jacob allusions in John 1:51*, p. 586–605; G. Reim, *Targum und Johannesevangelium*, p. 1–13; B.D. Chilton, *Typologies of Memra and the Fourth Gospel*; D. Boyarin, *The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John*, p. 243–284; J. Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology*; M. McNamara, ‘To Prepare a Resting-Place for You’: A Targumic Expression and John 14,2–3, p. 444–449.

<sup>2</sup> A. Shinan, *Sermons, Targums, and the Reading of the Scriptures in the Ancient Synagogue*, p. 97–110.

written down.<sup>3</sup> The Aramaic Bible that came into being in this way was not a literal translation of the Hebrew text but a specific commentary explaining and interpreting the texts of the Holy Books. The Aramaic translation intended to provide explanation became a sort of *Volksbibel* – the People’s Bible – thanks to which participants in synagogue had access to the Word of God. In Palestine of the first century the Aramaic version was more vivid and widespread in people’s awareness than the official version of the Torah and Haftarah in the Hebrew language.<sup>4</sup> The Targum written down was not intended to replace the Hebrew original, but it constituted a popular form of understanding of the Holy Books. Its aim was to make the contents of the Hebrew Bible understood and explained as much as possible. In the synagogue cult a particular attention was paid to the reading of the Torah which is considered to be the heart of all the Holy Bible. Based on the available manuscripts scholars identify the Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch, which are called in the Jewish tradition the “Palestinian Targum”, “Eretz Israel Targum”, “*Yerushalmi* Targum”. It comprises various Targum versions contained in quotations from Rabbinic writings, in seven manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, in Aggadic fragments of Targum Onkelos, in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and in Targum Neofiti 1.

The text of Targum Neofiti 1 (TgN) was discovered by Professors A. Díez Macho and J. Milas Vallicrosa in the Vatican Library in 1949. Its critical edition was produced between 1968 and 1978.<sup>5</sup> The Codex was drawn up in Rome at the beginning of XVI century and it contains a complete translation of the Pentateuch into Aramaic in a Palestinian dialect.<sup>6</sup> On the basis of paleographic and philological analyses it is dated at between I and IV century.<sup>7</sup> The text contains

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<sup>3</sup> See: R. Le Déaut, *Introduction à la littérature targumique*; D.R. Beattie – M.J. McNamara (ed.), *The Aramaic Bible: Targums in their Historical Context*; P.V. Flesher, *Targum Studies*; C.T.R. Hayward, *Targums and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism and Christianity*; M.J. McNamara, *Targum and Testament Revisited*; P.V. Flesher – B.D. Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction*.

<sup>4</sup> A.D. York, *The Targum in the Synagogue and in the School*, p. 74–86; R. Kasher, *The Aramaic Targumim and their Sitz im Leben*, p. 75–85.

<sup>5</sup> A. Díez Macho, *Neophyti I. Targum Palestinense. MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana*. In Poland the first edition of Targum Neofiti 1 appeared in 2014. See: M.S. Wróbel, *Targum Neofiti 1. Księga Rodzaju. Tekst aramejski – przekład – aparat krytyczny – przypisy*.

<sup>6</sup> See the history of the discovery and its characteristic in: M.S. Wróbel, *Targum Neofiti 1. Księga Rodzaju*, p. XL–XLVI.

<sup>7</sup> See: J.A. Foster, *The Language and Text of Codex Neofiti 1 in the Light of Other Palestinian Aramaic Sources*; B. Barry Levy, *The Language of Neofiti 1*; E. M. Borobio, *Estudios lingüísticos sobre el arameo del MS. Neofiti 1*; J. Lund, *A Descriptive Syntax of the Non-translational Passages According to Codex Neofiti 1*; D.M. Golomb, *A Grammar of Targum Neofiti 1*;

many references to ancient traditions which may date back even to the pre-Christian era. The text of this Targum is divided into liturgical sections which correspond to the *sedarim* of a triennial cycle of readings in Palestine. In the entire text of Targum there are approximately 80 instances of the occurrence of the Hebrew formula “O my people, my sons / the house of Israel”, which directly precedes the Aramaic translation. That may indicate the liturgical use of the text in the synagogue. When analyzing Targumic paraphrases and additions in TgN, one may indicate a few reasons why they were added: a) a better identification of persons and places; b) elimination of anthropomorphisms in the presentation of God; c) a better presentation of polemical arguments; d) bridging discrepancies between various texts of the Bible; e) presenting positive features of biblical characters, in particular patriarchs.<sup>8</sup>

The expression “Word (*Memra*) of the Lord” (ממרא דיי) is used more than 300 times in TgN. “Memra” (ממרא) is the creating, revealing and saving Word of God. It has personal attributes. Targumists develop the theology of the Divine Presence in the term “Memra” by combining aspects of the two verbs: “to speak” and “to be”. Thus, “Memra” expresses the eternal presence of God and His specific relation to creation and to history.<sup>9</sup> The expression “Shekinah of the Lord” (שכינה דיי)<sup>10</sup> is repeatedly used in TgN in the meaning of the “Presence of God”. The phrase “Glory of the Shekinah of the Lord” (איקר שכינה דיי) occurs more than 100 times. It is an elaborate Targumic translation emphasizing the glorious Presence of God.<sup>11</sup>

In TgN to Gen there are Messianic references.<sup>12</sup> The Messiah (משיחא) in these texts, just like in other Targums, is referred to as “the King” (מלכא) and is expected to appear at the end of time in order to bring peace and justice. In TgN Gen 3:15 in the context of the “Protoevangelium” there is a reference to the day of King Messiah: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your sons and her sons. And it will come about that when her sons

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A. Rosenthal, *The Dialects of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch*, p. 441–448; B. Barry Levy, *Targum Neophyti 1. A Textual Study*; M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*.

<sup>8</sup> See: M. Rosik – I. Rapport, *Wprowadzenie do literatury i egzegezy żydowskiej okresu biblijnego i rabinicznego*, p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> See: D. Muñoz León, *Dios-Palabra, Memra en los Targumim del Pentateuco*; L. Sabourin, *The Memra of God in the Targums*, p. 79–85 C.T.R. Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence the Memra*, p. 15–20.

<sup>10</sup> See for example: TgN Gen 3:24; 17:22; 18:3; 22:14; 28:16; 35:13; 49:27.

<sup>11</sup> See: D. Muñoz León, *Gloria de la Shekina en los Targumim del Pentateuco*.

<sup>12</sup> S.H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation*; M. Pérez-Fernández, *Tradiciones Mesíasicas en el Targum Palestinense*.

observe the Law and do the commandments, they will aim at you and smite you on the head and kill you; but when they forsake the commandments of the Law, you will aim and bite him on his heel and make him ill. For her sons, however, there will be a remedy, but for you, serpent, there will not be remedy, since they are to make appeasement, in the day of King Messiah (משיחא).<sup>13</sup>

The person and creation of the Messiah are invoked in Jacob's blessing to Juda in TgN Gen 49:10–12:

Kings shall not cease from among those of the house of Judah and neither shall scribes teaching the Law from his son's sons until the time King Messiah (מלכא משיחא) shall come, to whom the kingship belongs; to him shall all the kingdoms be subject. How beautiful is King Messiah (מלכא משיחא) who is to arise from among those of the house of Judah. He grids his loins and goes forth to battle against those that hate him. He kills kings with rulers, and makes the mountains red from the blood of their slain and makes the valleys white from the fat of their warriors. His garments are rolled in blood; he is like a presser of grapes. How beautiful are the eyes of King Messiah (מלכא משיחא): more than pure wine, lest he see with them the revealing of nakedness or the shedding of innocent blood. His teeth are purer than milk, lest he eat with them things that are stolen or robbed. The mountains will become red from his vines and the vats from wine; and the hills will become white from the abundance of grain and flocks of sheep.<sup>14</sup>

The importance of the Torah is emphasized in TgN. According to the approach of TgN Gen 3:24, the Torah was created by God two thousand years before the world was created. The Torah is identified with the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. Anyone who observes its precepts lives and endures – as the Tree of Life – in the world to come. The fate of those who do not observe the precepts contained in the Torah is Gehenna (TgN Gen 3:24):

And he banished Adam; and he had made the Glory of his Shekinah (יקר שכינתיה) dwell from the beginning to the east of the Garden of Eden, between the two cherubim. Two thousand years before he created the world he had created the Law (אורייתא); he had prepared the garden of Eden for the just and Gehenna for the wicked. He had prepared the garden of Eden for the just that they might eat and delight themselves from the fruits of the tree, because they had kept precepts of the Law (אורייתא) in this world and fulfilled the commandments. For the wicked he prepared Gehenna, which is comparable to a sharp sword devouring with both edges. He prepared within it darts of fire and burning coals for the wicked, to be avenged of them in the world to come because they did not observe the precepts

<sup>13</sup> M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, p. 61.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 219–220.

of the Law (אורייתא) in this world. For the Law (אורייתא) is a tree of life for everyone who toils in it keeps the commandments: he lives and endures like the tree of life in the world to come. The Law (אורייתא) is good for all who labor in it in this world like the fruit of the Tree of Life.<sup>15</sup>

The relationship between Jacob and Esau is commented on, in a similar context, in TgN Gen 27:40:

And by your sword shall you live and before your brother shall you serve and be subjected. And when the sons of Jacob study the Law (אורייתא) and keep the commandments they will place the yoke of their burden upon your neck. And when the sons of Jacob abandon the commandments and withhold themselves from studying the Law (אורייתא) you will rule over him and shall break the yoke of servitude from off your neck.<sup>16</sup>

When analyzing Targum Neofiti 1 to Gen, one may ask whether the terms and ideas contained in Targumic tradition make the reading of the Gospel according to St. John deeper and more understandable?

## 2. The terminological and conceptual convergence

In TgN to Gen there are numerous instances of the occurrence of the term Memra (ממרא) – the Word – which comes from the root אמר. Targumists associate the term with God. When comparing the Masoretic Text with the Targumic translation, we can observe that the Aramaic phrase “the Lord’s Memra” refers to God appearing in the Hebrew text. For example:

Gen 1:3 ויאמר אלהים יהי אור ויהי אור

TgN Gen 1:3 ואמר ממרא דיי יהוי נהור והות נהור כגזירת ממריה

There is a polarization of viewpoints among researchers as to the identification of “Memra”. Some of them consider “Memra” to be hypostasis, an intermediary between God and humanity. Others reject this approach by perceiving “Memra” as metonymy – calling someone or something through attributes associated with them.<sup>17</sup> They believe that the term is another way of saying “God” or “Lord”. It seems that the earlier debate which concentrated on identifying

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 63–64.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem, p. 137.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 99.

“Memra” introduced – on the one hand – the rich typology of the term in individual books of the Targum, while – on the other hand – an in-depth exegesis of the term “logos” in the Fourth Gospel. In modern research one may distinguish in TgN to Gen the following references of Memra: speaking; creating; involvement in the cult; involvement in covenant; influencing people and events.<sup>18</sup>

In TgN to Gen the phrase “the Lord’s Memra” (מִמְרָא דִּי יְיָ) appears in particular when there is a reference to God’s creating and saving activity. By applying this phrase the translator commits himself, on the one hand, to present God in transcendence toward creation, while on the other hand in immanence toward creation through His Word which has causative power. In the phrase “the Lord’s Memra” – though “Memra” (Word) is God, this still to some extent remains both in separation from and in relation to God. One can see here a parallel between the strongly emphasized relationship between the Father and the Son, who are separate persons, and at the same time, when characterizing this relationship, Jesus declares: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).<sup>19</sup> When reflecting on the Gospel of John, one can notice a certain matrix of the presentation of the “word” (logos), in which “the Father’s word” and “the Son’s word” remain in a close relationship.

John 5:24 says that those who listen to the words of Jesus and believe in the One who sent Him will have eternal life: “Verily, verily I say unto you, He that heareth my word (τὸν λόγον μου) and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death to life.” The text implies that listening to the word of Jesus is equivalent to the faith in God. The text is referred to in the continuation of Jesus’ speech addressed to His Jewish adversaries, in which he talks about “the Father’s word”: John 5:37–38: “And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does His word (τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ) dwell in you, for you do not believe the One He sent.” The text makes a clear statement about the Father’s word, which cannot dwell in Jesus’ interlocutors due to their lack of faith in the Son. When comparing the two texts one can observe a close relationship between “the Son’s word” and “the Father’s word”. The relation is so strong that the lack of faith in “the Son’s word” results in the rejection of “the Father’s word” and vice versa. In the context of the close relationship between “the Son’s word” and “the Father’s word” it is

<sup>18</sup> See: B. Chilton, *Typologies of memra and the fourth Gospel*, p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> See: T.E. Pollard, *The Exegesis of John 10:30 in the Early Trinitarian Controversies*, p. 334–349; G. Morujao, *A unidade de Jesus com o pai em Jo 10,30*, p. 47–64; T. Söding, *Ich und Vater sind eins (Joh 10,30)*, p. 177–199; M.S. Wróbel, *‘Ja i Ojciec jedno jesteśmy’ (J 10,30)*, p. 53–62.

easier to understand recommendations to Jesus' disciples about their abiding in His word which determine whether one is a disciple of Jesus and has eternal life: John 8:31: "To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching (ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ), you are really my disciples.'"; John 8:51–52 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying (τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμὸν), he shall never see death."; John 8:55 "Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and obey his word (τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ)."

In Targum Neofiti 1 the expression "the Lord's Memra" occurs as many as 17 times as the subject of the act of creation in the description of the world and the man. The phrase "And it was so" keeps recurring like a refrain in the description of creation (Gen 1:7.9.11.15.24.30) is extended in the translation in TgN: "And it was so according to His Word" (וזהוה כן כמימריה).

The relation between the Targumic tradition and John's Prologue is indicated by the Midrash of the Four Nights contained in TgN Exod 12:42. The whole story of salvation is summarized in this text as the Four Passover Nights. The first of the Nights is related to the act of creation, the second Night – to the promise given to Abraham, the third Night – is the night of leaving the land of Egypt – Exodus, and the fourth Night – awaiting the Messiah, who will come to save the world and triumph over the evil. In TgN Exod 12:42 the first night is described in the following way: "The first night: when the Lord was revealed over the world to create it. The world was without form and void, and darkness was spread over the face of the abyss, and the Word (*Memra*) of the Lord was the Light, and it shone. And He called it the First Night".

The text can be compared with John's Prologue: John 1:4–9: "In Him [in the Word] was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." In John 8:12 and 9:5 Jesus describes Himself as "the Light of the world". In 1 John 2:8 there is a reference made to the true Light: "On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining."

Apart from the description of the creation of the world and the man the Targumic text emphasizes the creative role of the Word (*Memra*) in relation to God Most High in the blessing which Melchizedek said to Abraham (TgN Gen 14:19):

Gen 14:19 "[Melchizedek] blessed Abraham, saying: 'Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth!'"



TgN Gen 14:19 “He [Melchizedek] blessed him [Abraham], saying: ‘Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, who by his Word (דבמימריה) created the heaven and earth!”

The relationship between God and the Word is apparent in the text describing the covenant arrangement between God and Abraham (Gen 17:7–8):

Gen 17:7–8: “I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

TgN Gen 17:7–8: “I will establish My covenant as an everlasting covenant between Me and you and your sons after you for the generations to come, as an eternal covenant, to be in My Word your God and the God of your sons after you. And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their saving God in my Word.”<sup>20</sup>

The phrase “the Lord’s Word” in some Targumic texts, where there is a reference to faith, is expanded into the phrase “believe in the Lord’s Word”.

Gen 15:6 “[Abram] believed the Lord” (והאמן ביהוה).

TgN Gen 15:6 “Abram believed in the Lord’s Word” (בשם ממרא דיי) (והיימן אברם).<sup>21</sup>

The phrase is important in the context of the Fourth Gospel where the faith in Jesus – and in His name constitutes a key theological conception. For example, in John 2:23 and 3:18 there is a reference to people’s faith or lack of faith in His name: John 2:23 “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs that he was doing.”; John 3:18 “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God”.

The close relationship between the Targumic tradition and the Fourth Gospel is apparent in particular when one compares John 12:37 with TN to Nm 14:11:

John 12:37: “Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him”.

<sup>20</sup> See the similar expression in: TgN Exo 6:7; 29:45; TgN Lev 22:33; 25:38; 26:12.45; TgN Deut 26:17.

<sup>21</sup> See also: TgN Gen 4:26; 8:20; 12:7–8; 13:4.18; 16:13; 21:33; 22:14.16; 24:3; 26:25; 35:1.

TgN Num 14:11: “And how long will they not believe in me (Memra), in spite of all the miraculous signs that I have done among them”.

In Targumic texts the term “Memra” – “the Word” (ממרא) often occurs in relation to the “Glory” (איקר) and the “Presence of the Lord” (שכינה דיי). In the Prologue to John’s Gospel in John 1:14 one can observe a relation between these terms:

Καὶ ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν  
καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ,  
δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός  
πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας.

In the Greek text the sound of the term σκηνώω (to set up a tent) is very close to the Hebrew verb “szehen” (שכן) used to describe God’s indwelling among His people, as well as to the Aramaic noun “miszkan” (משכן) meaning “a tent”. The terms can be referred to the Aramaic word “Shekinah” (שכינה), which stands for the manifestation of God’s presence. In Targumic texts the term “Shekinah” often occurs in relation to the “Glory” and to “Memra”. In the description of creation the active participant is “Memra Adonai” which acts alternately with “Glory Adonai”: For example TgN Gen 1:16–17:

“The Word of the Lord (ממרא דיי) created the two large luminaries, the great luminary for the rule of the day, and the small luminary for the rule of the night; He made tthe stars also. And the Glory of the Lord (איקר דיי) set them in the firmament to give light on the earth”.<sup>22</sup>

In TgN Gen 17:1 it is said that “Word of the Lord” (ממרה דיי) appeared to Abraham and conversed with him. The Targumic text mentions that after the Lord had finished speaking “Glory of the Lord’s Presence” (איקר שכינתיה דיי) went up from Abraham.

TgN Gen 17:1 “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Word of the Lord (ממרה דיי) appeared to him and said: “I am the Almighty God. Walk before me in truth and be perfect in good works ... ”.

TgN Gen 17:22 “And having said these word, the Glory of the Lord’s Presence (איקר שכינתיה דיי) went up from Abraham.”

In TgN Gen 18:1 it is said that “Lord’s Word” (ממרה דיי) appeared to Abraham”. In a close context, in TgN Gen 18:3 Abraham is speaking to God: “O Lord, if I have found favor in your eyes, do not let the Glory of Your Presence (איקר שכינתך) rise above Your servant.”

<sup>22</sup> See also: TgN Gen 1:28.29; 2:3.

In TgNmG Gen 22:1 it is said that the Word of the Lord (ממרה דיי) put Abraham to the test. In a further context (TgN Gen 22:14) it is emphasized by the Targumic tradition that on Mount Moria the Glory of the Lord's Presence (איקר שכינתיה דיי) was revealed to Abraham.

When analyzing the text of John 1:51 in which Jesus speaks to Nathaniel about the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man, one can compare it with Jacob's dream in Gen 28:12:

Gen 28:12 "He [Jacob] had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it."

TgN Gen 28:12 "And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was fixed on the earth and its head reached to the height of the heavens; and behold, the angels that had accompanied him from the house of his father ascended to bear good tidings to the angels on high, saying: 'Come and see the pious man whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory, whom you desired to see.' And behold, the angels from before the Lord ascended and descended and observed him."

The Masoretic Text which uses the preposition „ב” with the suffix for the third person singular masculine may refer both to the ladder and to Jacob. Based on the Hebrew text we cannot unequivocally conclude whether the angels are ascending or descending on Jacob or on the ladder. The translators of LXX settled the dilemma indicating explicitly at the ladder:

LXX Gen 28:12 *καὶ ἐνυπνιάσθη καὶ ἰδοὺ κλίμαξ ἐστηριγμένη ἐν τῇ γῆ ἧς ἡ κεφαλὴ ἀφικνεῖτο εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινον καὶ κατέβαινον ἐπ' αὐτῆς.*

In John's Gospel the angels are ascending and descending not on the ladder but on the Son of Man: John 1:51 "And he [Jesus] said to him [Nathaniel], «Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.»" (*καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*).

The author of the Gospel may have been inspired by the Targumic tradition which unambiguously refers to the ascending and descending of angels in order to observe Jacob called the just man: TN Gen 28:12 "And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was fixed on the earth and its head reached to the height of the heavens; and behold, the angels that had accompanied him from the house of his father ascended to bear good tidings to the angels on high, saying: «Come and see the just man whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory, whom you desired to see.» And behold, the angels from before the Lord ascended and descended and observed him."

It seems significant that Jacob, who later on (Gen 32:25) is given the name Israel, is called "the just man." This may be referred to by what John's Jesus said

in John 1:47, when He directed the following words to Nathaniel: “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit”. The Invisible Word of the Lord that spoke to Jacob (TgN Gen 28:10) now becomes flesh in the person of Jesus and speaks to Nathaniel. In the promise Jesus makes to Nathaniel that he will see heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending on the Son of God (John 1:51), one can notice Jacob’s experience in Betel before the Word (*Memra*) became flesh. Jacob’s experience of communion with God is expressed in TgN Gen 28:15: “And behold, I am in my Word (*Memra*) with you and shall keep you wherever you go ...” In the Fourth Gospel Jesus repeatedly assures his disciples that He is with them for only a short time of His earthly presence (John 7:33; 13:33; 14:9). After leaving the earth He assures his disciples about the presence of Paraclete, who will stay with them forever: John 14:16 “And I will ask the Father and he shall give you another Paraclete, that he may abide with you forever.” The short stay of Jesus on earth, who left the house of His Father and was going back to it (John 14:12–28), can be compared to the short stay of Jacob away from his father’s house. The first reason why Jacob left his father’s house was escape from the revenge of his brother Esau, who was tricked by his twin brother out of his birthright and the blessing from Isaac (Gen 27:41–45). The other reason was finding a wife in the land of his ancestors (Gen 28:1–2). The two reasons can be compared to the mission of Jesus, who leaves His Father’s house in order to, firstly – save humanity from death and bestow it with eternal life, and secondly – marry His bride, whose name is humanity.

In Jacob’s cycle there is a description of his dream during which the Word of the Lord (ממרה דיי) wished to speak to him (TgN Gen 28:10). Having woken up from the sleep in which the Lord directed His Word to him, Jacob realized that the Glory of the Lord’s Presence (איקר שכינתיה דיי) was indeed in this place (TgN Gen 29:16). In Jacob’s cycle as seen in Targumic terms one can notice a textual relation with the description of the meeting of Jesus with a woman of Samaria contained in the Fourth Gospel. In TgN Gen 28:10 we find a longer comment describing five miracles “that were worked for our father Jacob at the time that he went forth from Beersheba to go to Haran.” The fifth of the miracles was described in the following way:

TgN Gen 28:10 “... And the fifth: when our father Jacob raised the stone from above the mouth of the well, the well overflowed and came up to its mouth, and was overflowing for twenty years-all the days that he dwelt in Haran.”

The tradition might have been known to John, who at the end of the first century in a description of Jesus’ dialogue with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well made an allusion to the Targumic rendering. To the Samaritan woman’s question: “Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock?” – Jesus replies:

“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (John 4:12–14).

From the comparison of the texts it follows that in Jacob’s days water welled up only for twenty years. Jesus uses the motif to present his teaching on the water of eternal life, which he wants to bestow on mankind.

Targum studies make it possible to understand better Jewish traditions around which the New Testament writings were composed, including the Gospel according to St. John which is firmly rooted in Judaism. First of all, the Targumic studies open up space for dialogue between Judaism and Christianity, which is encouraged by the Church after the Second Vatican Council. The teaching of the popes of our time based on the council declaration *Nostra aetate* strongly emphasizes that Christianity and Judaism are related as religious communities. By gaining a deeper insight into its own mystery, the Church is discovering the link between itself and Judaism. It is not possible to fully understand the teaching of Jesus Christ and the environment where the Church was born without a reference to the Jewish world and its traditions. Getting acquainted with and studying Targumic traditions makes it possible for Christians to gain a deeper understanding of the Second Temple Period within which the Church was born.

The knowledge of Targumic traditions enables a better perception of the New Testament writings which can often be better explained thanks to Targumic traditions rather than to the Masoretic text. Christian writings were composed in Jewish environment and they are firmly rooted in the tradition of Israel. *The Aramaic Bible* constituted a sort of bridge between the Torah and the Gospel. Its content used in synagogal liturgy became an important part of the emerging Christianity. In Targums one can notice a significant point of contact between Judaism and Christianity. The Jews and the Christians of the first century understood the Bible in the light of exegetical interpretations contained in Targums.

The text of *Targum Neofiti 1* to Genesis still requires in-depth philological, exegetical and theological studies. Although Targumic texts are later than the editing of the Fourth Gospel, many of the traditions preserved in them are of ancient origin. The traditions systematically passed on to participants in the synagogal liturgy had an unquestionable influence on the formation of the New Testament writings, which are deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition. In the light of the Targums the terminology and theology of John’s Gospel becomes more comprehensible and it gains a better perspective of interpretation. The Targumic terms used in synagogal liturgy, such as: “Memra”, “Yeqarah”, “Shekinah”

become for the author of the Fourth Gospel a theological tool referred to Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God.

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