

PRAYER OF THE FATHERS AND THE MOTHERS IN THE TARGUMS, ON THE BACKGROUND OF THE SEPTUAGINT AND THE EARLY JEWISH TRADITION

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Resumo: O presente estudo pretende revelar as concepções targúmicas relacionadas à oração dos Pais e das Mães, no plano de fundo da Septuaginta e da literatura judaica primitiva. De antemão, fornecemos algumas notas sobre a Escritura, sua tradução/interpretação na Septuaginta e no Targum, e sobre a tradição oral, como também sobre o vínculo entre Targum e liturgia. Na tradição judaica, os Patriarcas e Matriarcas foram idealizados desde tempos primitivos. Neste plano de fundo, delineamos as concepções targúmicas sobre a oração dos Pais e das Mães. No Targum eles são apresentados como figuras ideais de orantes e os pilares nos quais a oração de cada descendente se apoia. Os Pais e as Mães são apresentados pelos meturgemanim como personalidades corporativas: neles todo o povo é recapitulado, suas instituições e sua oração. Estas concepções podem iluminar o Novo Testamento e a oração cristã primitiva.

Palavras-chave: Targums aramaicos. Septuaginta. Tradição oral. Liturgia. Patriarcas e Matriarcas. Oração. Plano de fundo do Novo Testamento.

Abstract: The present study intends to reveal the targumic conceptions related to the prayer of the Fathers and the Mothers, on the background of the Septuagint and the early Jewish literature. Beforehand, we furnish some notes about the Scripture, its translation/interpretation in the Septuagint and in the Targum, and about the oral tradition, such as also on the link between Targum and liturgy. In the Jewish tradition, the Patriarchs and Matriarchs were idealized from early times. On this background, we delineate the targumic conceptions about the prayer of the Fathers and of the Mothers. In the Targum they are presented as ideal figures of orantes and the pillars on which the prayer of every descendant leans. The Fathers and the Mothers are presented by the meturgemanim as corporate personalities: in them all the people is summed up, its institutions and its prayer. These conceptions may enlighten the New Testament and ancient Christian prayer.

Keywords: Aramaic Targums. Septuagint. Oral tradition. Liturgy. Patriarchs and Matriarchs. Prayer. New Testament background.

Resumen: El presente estudio pretende revelar las concepciones targúmicas relacionadas con la oración de los Padres y las Madres, en el trasfondo de la Septuaginta y la literatura judía primitiva. De antemano, proporcionamos algunas notas sobre la Escritura, su traducción/interpretación en la Septuaginta y en el Targum, y acerca de la tradición oral, como también sobre el vínculo entre Targum y liturgia. En la tradición judía, los Patriarcas y Matriarcas fueron idealizados desde tiempos primitivos. En este trasfondo, delineamos las concepciones targúmicas acerca de la oración de los Padres y de las Madres. En el Targum ellos se presentan como figuras ideales de orantes y los pilares sobre los que se apoya la oración de cada descendiente. Los Padres y las Madres son presentados por los meturgemanim como personalidades corporativas: en ellos se resume todo el pueblo, sus instituciones y su oración. Estas concepciones pueden iluminar el Nuevo Testamento y la oración cristiana primitiva.

Palabras clave: Targumes arameos. Septuaginta. Tradición oral. Liturgia. Patriarcas y Matriarcas. Oración. Tránsito del Nuevo Testamento.

Sommario: Il presente studio pretende rivelare le concezioni targumiche relazionate alla preghiera dei Padri e delle Madri, nello sfondo della Settanta e la letteratura giudaica antica. In anticipo, forniamo alcune note sulla Scrittura, su traduzione/interpretazione nella Settanta e nel Targum, e sulla la tradizione orale, come anche sul legame tra Targum e liturgia. Nella tradizione giudaica, i Patriarchi e Matriarche furono idealizzati fin dai primi tempi. Su questo sfondo, delineamo le concezioni targumiche sulla

preghiera dei Padri e delle Madri. Nel Targum loro sono presentati come figure ideali di orantes e i pilastri su cui si appoggia la preghiera di ogni discendente. I Padri e le Madri sono presentati dai meturgemanim come personalità corporative: in essi si riassume tutto il popolo, le sue istituzioni e la sua preghiera. Queste concezioni possono illuminare il Nuovo Testamento e la preghiera cristiana primitiva.

Parole chiave: Targum aramaici. Settanta. Tradizione orale. Liturgia. Patriarchi e Matriarchi. Preghiera. Sfondo del Nuovo Testamento.

Résumé: La présente étude tente de révéler les conceptions targumiques liées à la prière des Pères et des Mères, ayant comme arrière-plan la Septante et la littérature juive primitive. En premier lieu, nous fournissons quelques notes sur l'Écriture, sa traduction / interprétation dans la Septante et dans le Targum, et sur la tradition orale, ainsi que sur le lien entre Targum et liturgie. Dans la tradition juive, les Patriarches et les Matriarches étaient idéalisés depuis les temps primitifs. Dans ce contexte, nous retraçons les conceptions targumiques sur la prière des Pères et des Mères. Dans le Targum, ils sont présentés comme des figures idéales de priants et les piliers sur lesquels repose la prière de chaque descendant. Les Pères et Mères sont présentés par les meturgemanim comme des personnalités corporatives: ils résument tout le peuple, ses institutions et sa prière. Ces conceptions peuvent éclairer le Nouveau Testament et la prière des premiers chrétiens.

Mots-clés: Targums araméens. Septante. Tradition orale. Liturgie. Patriarches et Matriarches. Prière. Contexte du Nouveau Testament.

INTRODUCTION

In this article, we elaborate upon our earlier study of the prayer of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs in the Aramaic Targums¹. Our aim is to reveal, on the background of the Septuagint and the early Jewish literature, the targumic conceptions related to the prayer of the Fathers and the Mothers. A. Shinan and M. Maher have showed the importance of prayer in the Pentateuchal Targum². It is surprising, however, that, in dealing with Jewish prayer and its origins, the targumic sources are often neglected: it is a gap to be filled.

Already the Septuagint shows a special interest to prayer and gives a fundamental contribution to the vocabulary and conceptions of prayer³. Between the Septuagint and the targumic traditions, a common ground of exegetical interpretations and theological ideas can occasionally be found. For the development of those interpretations and ideas, the Septuagint and the early Jewish literature have a role of great importance⁴. Only in this widest horizon, will the conception of prayer in the Targum be able to emerge⁵. Our intention will be also to see how these conceptions can enlighten the NT and the ancient Christian liturgy.

¹ VOLTAGGIO, Francesco G. *La oración de los Padres y las Madres de Israel: Investigación en el Targum del Pentateuco. La antigua tradición judía y los orígenes del cristianismo*. Biblioteca Midrásica 33. Estella, Navarra: Verbo Divino, 2010.

² Cf. SHINAN, Avigdor. 'Their Prayers and Petitions': The Prayers of the Ancients in the Light of the Pentateuchal Targums. *Sinai* 78, 1975-76. p. 89-92 [Heb.]; _____. The Aggadah in the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch. Jerusalem: Makor, 1979. 2 v. 2: p. 327-335 [Heb.]; _____. The Embroidered Targum: The Aggadah in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1992. p. 115-120 [Heb.]; MAHER, Michael. *The Meturgemanim and Prayer*. *JJS* 41, 1990. p. 226-246; _____. *The Meturgemanim and Prayer* (2). *JJS* 44, 1993. p. 220-235.

³ On the importance of prayer in the Septuagint, see e.g. JOHNSON, Norman B. *Prayer in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Study of the Jewish Concept of God*. JBL.MS 2. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1948; CHESNUTT, Randall; NEWMAN, Judith Newman. Prayer in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. In: KILEY, M. et al. (Ed.) *Prayer from Alexander to Constantine: A Critical Anthology*. London: Routledge, 1997. p. 38-42; the studies in EGGGER-WENZEL, Renate; CORLEY Jeremy. (Eds.) *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran: Inaugural Conference of the ISDCL at Salzburg, Austria, 5-9 July 2003*. _____. Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2004. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004; MCDOWELL, Markus. *Prayers of Jewish Women: Studies of Patterns of Prayer in the Second Temple Period*. WUNT 2/211. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006. p. 11-17; MATLOCK, Michael D. *Discovering the Traditions of Prose Prayers in Early Jewish Literature*. LSTS 81. London: T&T Clark, 2012. p. 61-83.

⁴ See CIMOSA, Mario. Comparing LXX Job 42:7-10 and T. *Job* 42:4-8. In: EGGGER-WENZEL, R; CORLEY, J. (Eds.) *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran: Inaugural Conference of the ISDCL at Salzburg, Austria, 5-9 July 2003*. Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook 2004. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004. p. 405.

⁵ Cf. BÜCHLER, Adolph Büchler. *Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety from 70 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.*: The Ancient Pious Men. PJC 8. London: Jew's College, 1922. p. 128-195; JOHNSON, *Prayer*, 3-5.

1. TARGUM AND ORAL TRADITION

The development of the Bible is the history of a process of interpretation and actualization *ad intra*⁶. Already in the pre-Christian period the figures of the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs, and the events concerning them, had been objects not only of an intense derashic activity, but also of true paraphrases. Such, even if they cannot be defined as targumic, are parallels of the biblical text, as for instance the *Book of Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon* from Qumran (1Q20), two good examples of the “rewritten Bible”. These texts show how, already in the pre-Christian period, the institutions of the future people, the observance of the Torah, the custom of prayer, and the celebration of the feasts were made to date back to the Fathers and the Mothers.

In this dynamic of translation/interpretation of Scripture, both the Septuagint and the Targum played a fundamental role. The latter being particularly an interpretation for the synagogal liturgy rather than a simple translation, was intended to both suggest the meaning of the text and to actualize it for the assembly⁷. Also in the Septuagint, there are traces of the exegesis of the oral tradition, so much so that it is an interpretation and not a mere translation⁸.

⁶ See e.g. DREYFUS, François. L'actualisation à l'intérieur de la Bible. *RB* 83, p. 162-171, 1976; SHINAN, Avigdor; ZAKOVITCH, Yair. Midrash on Scripture and Midrash within Scripture. In: JAPHET, S. (Ed.) *Studies in Bible* 1986. *ScrHier* 31. Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986. p. 257-277; DOHMEN, Christoph; STEMBERGER, Günter. *Hermeneutik der Jüdischen Bibel und des Alten Testaments*. KStTh 1/2. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1996. p. 24-29; KRATZ, Reinhard G. Rewriting Torah in the Hebrew Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls. In: SCHIPPER, B. U.; TEETER, D.A. (Ed.) *Wisdom and Torah. The Reception of "Torah" in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*. JSJSup 163. Leiden: Brill, 2013. p. 273-292.

⁷ Cf. DíEZ MACHO, Alejandro. El targum: introducción a las traducciones aramaicas de la Biblia. *TECC* 21. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1982. p. 6; MUÑOZ LEÓN, Domingo. El rostro nuevo del Pentateuco en el targum: reflejos en el Nuevo Testamento. *SBFLA* 49, p. 301-302, 1999.

⁸ See LIEBERMAN, Saul. *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E. – IV Century C.E.* TSJTSa 18. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950. p. 50-51; BLOCH, Renée. Écriture et Tradition dans le Judaïsme: Aperçus sur l'origine du Midrash. *CSion* 8/1, p. 29-30, 1954; LE DÉAUT, Roger. La Septante, un Targum? In: KUNTZMANN, R; SCHLOSSER, J. (Ed.) *Études sur le Judaïsme hellénistique: Congrès de Strasbourg 1983*. LD 119. Paris: Cerf, 1984. p. 147-195; DOHMEN; STEMBERGER, *Hermeneutik*, p. 73-80; TOV, Emanuel. The Septuagint. In: MULDER, M. J.; SYSLING, H. (Ed.) *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*. CRINT 2/1. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1988. p. 173-178; TASSIN, Claude. Des versions bibliques anciennes à leurs artisans: Targum, Septante et Nouveau Testament. *EstBib* 56, 1998. p. 315-334; JOOSTEN, Jan. Des targumismes dans la Septante? In: LEGRAND, T.; JOOSTEN, J. (Ed.) *The Targums in the Light of Traditions of the Second Temple Period*. JSJSup 167. Leiden: Brill, 2014. p. 54-71; How Old is the Targumic Tradition? Traces of the Jewish Targum in the Second Temple Period, and Vice Versa. In: OTERO, A. Piquer; TORIJANO MORALES, P. A. (Ed.) *The Text of the Hebrew Bible and Its Edition: Studies in Celebration of the Fifth Centennial of the Complutensian Polyglot*. THBSup 1. Leiden: Brill, 2016. p. 149-154.

In Judaism before 70 c.E., Scripture is inseparable from tradition, which constitutes the “many-coloured garments” in which the former presents itself. Thus, in Judaism of the first century of our era, Scripture did not constitute a naked text, but was already clothed in all the ornaments of the oral interpretations⁹. These ornaments, namely the ancient oral traditions that are found in the Septuagint and in other writings of early Jewish literature, constituted a bridge between Old and New Testament. As Le Déaut affirmed, “the New Testament has inherited an interpreted Bible, where *midrash* played a great role”¹⁰. Septuagint and Targum are both exponent of this derashic activity¹¹.

2. TARGUM AND PRAYER

The targumists took every opportunity offered by the text proclaimed in the Synagogue to instil in the entire people the importance of prayer. The synagogal assembly is thus called to pray in all circumstances of life, imitating the models of the prayer of Israel and identifying itself with them¹². To affirm that the targumic traditions about prayer had their *Sitz im Leben* in the synagogal liturgy does not mean *sic et simpliciter* that they were originated later than the destruction of the Temple¹³. It is true that this event gave rise to an understandable emphasis on prayer, which became

⁹ The expression is from LE DÉAUT, Roger. Targum. In: PIROT, L. et al. (Ed.) *Dictionnaire de la Bible: Supplément*. v. 13. Paris: Letouzey, 2002. p. 271; cf. also VERMES, Geza. La figure de Moïse au tournant des deux testaments. In: CAZELLES, H. et al. (Ed.) *Moïse: L'homme de l'alliance*. Paris: Desclée, 1955. p. 63; FERNÁNDEZ, Miguel Pérez. Gospels, Oral Traditions of the Mishnah. In: NEUSNER, J. et al. (Ed.) *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism*. v. 5/2. Leiden: Brill, 2004. p. 2125.

¹⁰ LE DÉAUT, Roger. A propos d'une définition du midrash. *Bib* 50, p. 409, 1969.

¹¹ Cf. CHURGIN, Pinkhos. The Targum and the Septuagint. *AJSL* 50, p. 41-65, 1933-34; MARCOS, Natalio Fernández. *The Septuagint in Context: Introduction to the Greek Version of the Bible*. Leiden: Brill, 2000. p. 70; MCNAMARA, Martin. *Targum and New Testament: Collected Essays*. WUNT 279. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011. p. 39; THEOCAROUS, Myrto. *Lexical Dependence and Intertextual Allusion in the Septuagint of the Twelve Prophets: Studies in Hosea, Amos and Micah*. LHOBT 570. New York: T&T Clark, 2012. p. 17-18. Already LIEBERMAN, *Hellenism*, 50, stated that the Septuagint is “the oldest of our preserved *Midrashim*” and that it often agrees with the rabbinical interpretations; see also FREICHS, Ernest S.; FLESHER, Paul V. M.; NEUSNER, Jacob. Paraphrase: Midrash in the Septuagint and the Targumim. In: NEUSNER, J. (Ed.) *What is Midrash?* Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987. p. 23-30.

¹² Cf. MAHER, The Meturgemanim (2), 234-235; BISSOLI, Giovanni. La Bibbia in aramaico: Verso una mutua definizione di Giudaismo e Cristianesimo. *SBFLA* 50, p. 176, 2000.

¹³ See JOOSTEN, How Old is the Targumic Tradition? 143-157.

an institution apart. Once sacrifice disappeared after the destruction of the Temple, prayer was sometimes exalted over sacrifice and the study of the Torah (cf. *b. Ber. 32a*). On the other hand, there are several sources, which indicate that, when the Temple worship was still taking place, the daily prayers were recited at the hours of the sacrifices and may have already been interpreted as ‘*avodah* (“worship”)¹⁴. Already before the destruction of the Herodian Temple, there was therefore a progressive interest in prayer¹⁵.

If it is true that the primary vital milieu which gave rise to the Targum, together with the *bet midrash*, was the synagogue, it is not strange to find there many insertions relative to prayer and liturgy, through which the *meturgemanim* intended to nourish the faith of the people¹⁶. Now it has to be noted that liturgy, while being a living reality and directed towards actualization, is essentially conservative¹⁷. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the Targum expressions of prayer are frequently found and that these at times reflect ancient traditions.

The Pentateuchal Targum, destined for the milieu of liturgy and study¹⁸, holds prayer in high esteem and presupposes well-consolidated practices and conceptions of prayer, which the targumists contributed to spread at the popular level. The numerous targumic insertions on prayer are well fitted to a liturgical environment¹⁹. In more than two hundred verses of the Pentateuchal Targum, there occur prayers or references to prayer and many people are dedicated to prayer: Adam, Noah, the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs, Joseph, the sons of Jacob, Tamar, Moses, Zipporah, Aaron, Miriam,

¹⁴ Cf. *Jdt* 9:1; *Luke* 1:10; JOSEPHUS, *C. Ap.* 2:193-198; *m. Tamid* 5:1; *b. Ber.* 26b. See also HEINEMANN, Joseph. *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns*. SJ 9. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977. p. 15.

¹⁵ See NEWMAN, Judith H. *Praying by the book: The Scripturalization of Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*. SBLEJL 14. Atlanta: Scholars, 1999. p. 208-209.

¹⁶ Cf. MAHER, *The Meturgemanim*, 226; SHINAN, *The Aggadah*, 2:327.

¹⁷ Cf. DAUBE, David. *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism*. London: Athlone, 1956. p. 9; HRUBY, Kurt. *La synagogue dans la littérature rabbinique*. *OrSyr* 9, p. 512, 1964; LE DÉAUT, Roger. *Liturgie juive et Nouveau Testament: Le témoignage des versions araméennes*. SPIB 115. Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1965. p. 12-15.

¹⁸ As noted, many prayers, as with various targumic traditions, originated in the *bet midrash*: cf. HEINEMANN, Joseph. *Prayers of Beth Midrash Origin*. *JSS* 5, p. 264-280, 1960.

¹⁹ Cf. MAHER, *The Meturgemanim*, 226.

Phinehas, the angels, the women, the people, etc. In the Targum there are also many references to the liturgical feasts and there is an attempt to link them to the events of the history of salvation; there are private prayers, but also fixed customs, gestures typical of prayer, liturgical formulae, and allusions to "institutional" prayers such as the Shema Israel, the Birkat kohanim, the Birkat hamazon, the Kaddish, and the Kedushah. Traditions, whose *raison d'être* would be difficult to place in an atmosphere distant from the Temple worship, are not lacking either.

If it is true, on the one hand, that the Targumim in their current form represent the final stage of a long elaboration, on the other, the thesis that there are no identifiable ancient traditions at the base of the redactional work of the targumists, however recent this may be, cannot today be maintained. The presence of targumic traditions, which go back to before 70 c.e., is undeniable and this is especially true of the traditions of the Pentateuch. Granted that the Aramaic Targums have developed in a liturgical environment and that the interpretations offered there had to respect the consensus of the synagogal assembly, it is in them that early traditions with regard to prayer are frequently met with²⁰.

In our earlier study²¹, we have shown in detail the antiquity of some traditions from the Pentateuchal Targum related to prayer. The following date back to the pre-Christian era: the targumic tradition regarding Gen 12:8 and 13:4 which considers the invocation of the name of the Lord to be a prayer of praise; the tradition about the prayer after meals performed by Abraham (*Tg. Gen.* 18:5 [*Ps.-J*]; 21:33); the insistence on Abraham's intercession for Abimelech and on the fact that the patriarch prayed for his enemy (*Tg. Gen.* 20:7, 17). The following date back to the first century c.e.: the tradition of Adam's prayer after the sin (*Tg. Gen.* 3:18), while that of his worship in Eden is pre-Christian; the

²⁰ Cf. MCNAMARA, Martin. *La oración de los Padres y las Madres de Israel. Investigación en el Targum del Pentateuco. La antigua tradición judía y los orígenes del cristianismo.* Review of VOLTAGGIO, Francesco Giosuè. *JSS* 59/1, p. 232, 2014.

²¹ VOLTAGGIO, *La oración de los Padres.*

Palestinian targumic expression “to worship in truth”, found in various passages (e.g. *Tg. Gen.* 17:1; 24:40); the interpretation of Abraham’s standing in *Tg. Gen.* 18:22 and 19:27 as a supplication; the targumic interpretation of Gen 24:63 in the sense of prayer. To the pre-tannaite period date back: the link between Gen 12:3 and the priestly blessing; the Palestinian targumic tradition about Gen 21:33; the Palestinian Targum’s insertion at Gen 48:22. The tradition of Abraham’s prayer on Moriah (*Tg. Gen.* 22:14) and that of Jacob’s meeting with “the place” as a prayer (*Tg. Gen.* 28:11) were affirmed at least as far back as the tannaite period.

The study of targumic prayer can illuminate early Judaism. In the liturgical and prayer texts, theological conceptions of great relevance are expressed, for liturgy and prayer are nothing other than faith lived, practised and actualized, according to the principle *lex orandi lex credendi*²². The study of early Jewish prayer can cast light not only on the character and the development of early Judaism, but also on those of early Christianity²³.

3. THE “IDEALIZATION” OF THE FATHERS AND THE MOTHERS

3.1. THE PILLARS OF ISRAEL’S PRAYER

Already in the pre-Christian era, the Fathers and the Mothers of Israel as paradigms of virtue and piety were exalted and idealized: they were presented as Torah-observants *ante litteram*²⁴. In the Jewish tradition and in the Targum, the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs are the foundation of the prayer of Israel. Ideal figures of *orantes*, they constitute the authentic pillars on which the prayer of every descendant leans²⁵. Already Philo exalted

²² In Jewish tradition, this principle is well expressed in *t. Ber.* 1:8; see also ZAHAVI, Tzvee. A New Approach to Early Jewish Prayer. In: BOSKER, Baruch M. (Ed.) *History of Judaism: The Next Ten Years*. BJS 21. Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980. p. 45; JOHNSON, *Prayer*, 3.

²³ Cf. ZAHAVI, A New Approach, 45.

²⁴ See FOSTER, Robert B. *Renaming Abraham’s Children*. WUNT 2/421. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016. p. 139-141, according whom Paul’s argument in Rom 9:10-13 “fits smoothly into this context.” (p. 141).

²⁵ *Tg. Neof. Num.* 21:18 gives the Fathers the title רבֵּי עוֹלָם (“princes of the world”); in *Pirqe R. El.* (ms. B) 47, they are called עֲמֻדֵי עוֹלָם (“pillars of the world”); on this title, see REMAUD, Michel. *À cause des Pères: Le “Mérite des Pères” dans la tradition juive*. REJ Coll 22. Louvain: Peeters, 1997. p. 41-42, n. 14.

the Patriarchs as ideal figures of prayer: without the help of teachers, they “invoked the help of God and with prayers and supplications obtained from him participation in a perfect life” (*Abr.* 6).

According to the targumists, the Patriarchs worshipped God “in truth”, as it is implicit in *Tg. Ps.-J. Deut.* 6:5: “Moses the prophet said to the people of the house of Israel: ‘Follow the true worship of your fathers and love the Lord your God with the two inclinations of your hearts, even if he takes back your soul and all your riches’”. Thus Jewish tradition exalts the prayer of the Fathers and their intimate relation with God²⁶.

The prayer of the Fathers and the Mothers is of extraordinary efficacy. More than in Scripture, in the Targum they are considered as “corporate personalities”²⁷: not only does what is said about them implicitly concern Israel²⁸, but Israel is “summed up” into their persons. In the Patriarchs and Matriarchs the most important realities which will characterize Israel in the future are anticipated, prefigured and concentrated: the worship in the Temple and the sacrifices, the feasts, the prayer. This is the basic principle of “rabbinic typology”²⁹ and what has been formulated as follows: “Everything that happened to the Fathers is a sign for the children (כל מה שאירע לאבות סימן לבנים)”³⁰.

²⁶ In *b. Yebam. 64a* there is an important saying about this: “Why were our Fathers never sterile? Because the Holy One – Blessed be He – longs for the prayer of the just.” In *Gen. Rab. 47:6* there is a mysterious saying in which the Patriarchs are likened to the *Merkaba*, the Chariot of God on the earth, because through them the divine *Shekhinah* dwells on the earth.

²⁷ ROSSETTI, Marco. *Giuseppe negli scritti di Qumran*: Studio sulla figura del patriarca a partire da 4Q372 1. Excerpta ex dissertatione ad Doctoratum in Facultate Biblica Pontificii Instituti Biblici. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 2006. p. 85-86, 89-90, sees in the presentation of Joseph as *orans* in 4Q372 1 the emergence of an interpretation of his figure as a corporate personality; as the author notes (p. 86), already in *Dan 9:1-20*, the prophet in the act of raising his prayer to God acts as intercessor and seems to take on a corporate personality, while maintaining his own personal identity. The concept of “corporate personality” has therefore strong relations with the intercession: the intercessor is presented as representative of the people; see MAUCLINE, John. *Jesus Christ as Intercessor. ExpTim* 64, p. 355-356, 1953; JACOB, Edmond. *Prophètes et Intercesseurs*. In: CARREZ, M. et al. (Ed.) *De la Tôrah au Messie: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Henri Cazelles pour ses 25 années d'enseignement à l'Institut Catholique de Paris*. Oct. 1979. Paris: Desclée, 1981. p. 206-214.

²⁸ Cf. HOUTMAN, Alberdina. *The Role of Abraham in Targum Isaiah. AS* 3/1, 7, 2005.

²⁹ See LEVENE, Abraham. *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis, from a Syriac MS. on the Pentateuch in the Mingana Collection: The First Eighteen Chapters of the MS*. Edited with Introduction, Translation and Notes and Including a Study in Comparative Exegesis. London: Taylor's Foreign, 1951. p. 316.

³⁰ According to the formulation of Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman in his commentary on *Gen 12:6*. For this principle, see also *Tanḥ. Lekh Lekha 9; Ṣoṭah 8:6; Gen. Rab. 48:7; 54:5; 60:5; 68:10; 78:5*. A commentary on these texts can be found in REMAUD, *À cause des Pères*, 52-61.

3.2. ABRAHAM

The MT already noted the intimate relation between God and Abraham. In Isa 41:8, God himself declares: "You Israel, my servant, Jacob whom I chose, posterity of Abraham, my friend (אֱהָבִי)". In Gen 18:17, the Septuagint attributes to Abraham the title "my servant" (παῖς μου), where in the MT there is no title (while it occurs in Gen 26:24). The Palestinian Targums (*Neof., Frg. Tg.*) here inserts the title "my friend" (אֱהָבִי)³¹. On the strength of this friendship God cannot hide anything from Abraham. It is interesting to note that there is an occasion when Philo cites the verse inserting the title φίλος μου³² and that Jas 2:23 uses it, a sign that it was common in the tradition³³. The title "beloved" or "friend" of God already referred to Abraham in early times; in Dan 3:35 (LXX) the title "beloved" (in the expression διὰ Αβρααμ τὸν ἡγαπημένον) is found. According to some Apocrypha, because of Abraham's prayer, God makes his mysteries known to him and listens to him because he is his friend³⁴. This is a point of contact with the Targum.

In Gen 26:24b (MT) God reveals to Isaac: "I shall bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake (וְהַרְבִּיתִּי אֶתְיֹצְקֶךָ בְּעַבְדִּי אַבְרָהָם עַבְדִּי הַבְּרִיָּה)". The Septuagint has here the title "your father" instead of "my servant": the blessing is given to Isaac *because of his father* Abraham (διὰ Αβρααμ τὸν πατέρα σου); the expression διὰ Αβρααμ is reprised in

³¹ In Aramaic, the term "friend" (אֱהָבִי/אֱהָבִי) comes from the root אָהַב ("to love, to have mercy"; see SOKOLOFF, Michael. *A Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*. DTMT 2. Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1990. p. 521: its relation with the Hebrew אָהַב ("womb", "uterus") must have made the term full of allusions. In Luke 16:22, "to be in the womb/bosom of Abraham" marks the intimacy of the relation between the elected and the Patriarchs and alludes to the eschatological banquet: on this interpretation and on the importance of this expression in the Christian liturgy for the dead, see BOTTE, Bernard. Abraham dans la liturgie. *CSion* 5/2, p. 93, 1951. In any case, the targumic background may contribute to the comprehension of the expression "to be in the womb/bosom", also present in the NT and express an intimate relationship of love (John 1:18; cf. also 13:25).

³² PHILO, *Sobr.* 56 (in 55 the being a friend of God and being a servant are counter-opposed: φίλον γὰρ τὸ σὸφὸν θεῶ μάλλον ἢ δοῦλον); see also *Jub.* 19:9; PHILO, *Her.* 83. Christian tradition also willingly attributes the title to Abraham: cf. e.g. *1 Clem.* 10:1; see also DANIELÉLOU, Jean. Abraham dans la tradition chrétienne. *CSion* 5/2, p. 68-86, 1951.

³³ The words of Jesus to his disciples in John 15:15 may refer to the same tradition: "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you". Is it perhaps that here is hidden an allusion to the argument about the title given by God to Abraham ("servant" in the LXX / "friend" in the Palestinian tradition)?

³⁴ See *Apoc. Ab.* 17:21; 28:2. Whatever Abraham asks is granted (*T. Ab.* A 12:1-11).

Sir 44:22: "In Isaac did he establish likewise [the blessing], *because of his father Abraham* (καὶ ἐν τῷ Ἰσαακ ἔστησεν οὕτως δι' Ἀβρααμ τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ)". *Tg. Neof.* and *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 26:24 specify that Isaac will be blessed "because of the merits of Abraham (*Neof.*: בְּכִסּוּתָא דְאַבְרָהָם)". Here it is clear that the Septuagint and the Targum agree to make explicit the biblical text in the direction of the "merits of the Fathers", an essential step in the development of intercessory prayer.

Abraham is presented in the Targum as the just man *par excellence*. The Palestinian Targum on Gen 12:3 (*Neof., Frg. Tg.*) exalts the justice of Abraham, stating that all the peoples are blessed "because of his merit". In *Tg. Gen.* 15:6 (*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*), this merit (זֶכֶד) is closely connected to his faith. According to the Midrash, the world itself was created because of the merits of Abraham³⁵. This tradition also occurs in *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 14:19, where Melchizedek blesses Abraham saying: "Blessed be Abraham by God Most High, because, for the sake of the just, he created heaven and earth".

In the Palestinian Targum, Abraham is called צַדִּיק³⁶. He is an "adorer in truth" (cf. *Tg. Neof. Gen.* 17:1; 24:40): he adheres to God and his will, without duplicity of intention, but with a perfect heart (שְׁלֵמָה/שְׁלִים: cf. *Tg. Gen.* 22:6 [*Neof.*], 8 [*Neof., Ps.-J., Tg. CG, Frg. Tg.*])³⁷.

In *Tg. Gen.* 17:1 (*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*), God orders the patriarch to worship him and to be perfect (שְׁלִים). The targumic tradition is unanimous in translating הִתְהַלֵּךְ ("walk!") in Gen 17:1 by פִּלַּח ("worship!"), a verb which is closely connected to liturgical worship. The New Testament, while idealizing the figure of Abraham along the lines of the tradition, specifies the nature of the perfection of Abraham: it does not consist of "good works" (as in *Tg.*

³⁵ See e.g. *Gen. Rab.* 12,9 and *Midr. Ps.* 104, according to which the world was created in view of the merits of the saints. According to *Tg. Ps.-J. Exod.* 40:4, the just "illuminate the world" through their merits.

³⁶ See *Tg. Gen.* 15:1, 4 (*Tg. CG*); 20:16 (*Neof., Frg. Tg.*); 35:9 (*Neof., Tg. CG*); *Tg. Isa.* 41:2 interprets the term צַדִּיק as צַדִּיק and has it refer to Abraham: see HOUTMAN, *The Role*, 4-5. In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 18:19 God declares about Abraham: "His piety is revealed before me" (נִלְוֵי קִדְמוֹתַי חֲסִידוֹתָהּ).

³⁷ In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 11:28 (cf. also *Neof.*) Abraham is thrown into the fiery furnace for having rejected idolatrous worship: Abraham is presented here as the ideal figure of a martyr.

Neof. Gen. 17:1), nor of “the flesh” (as in *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 17:1), but above all of faith, through which he was justified before the circumcision³⁸.

In the Targum, the justice of Abraham consists of the fact that he observes the Torah in anticipation. To give just one example, in *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 14:13, he prepares unleavened bread at the vigil of Passover³⁹. The figure of Abraham as one who observes the Torah was idealized from early times⁴⁰, on the basis of the biblical data. Already the author of the Book of Jubilees says that the patriarch “was perfect in all his actions”⁴¹ and Philo exalts his observance of the Law⁴².

3.3. ISAAC

In the Palestinian targumic versions, Isaac is called “the just one” (יְשִׁירָא, צְדִיקָא) and “the pious one” (הַסִּידָא)⁴³. Formed in “the house of study of the great Shem”⁴⁴, he is the only son not only in a material sense, but also a spiritual one: like his father he is an “only one” (יְחִידָא/יְחִידָה); in other words, his heart does not know duplicity but he is perfect and zealous in carrying out the will of the Only One (יְחִידָא/יְחִידָה)⁴⁵. Josephus and Philo also idealize the figure of Isaac, and his piety. The first presents Isaac as the beloved son who practises every virtue, takes care of his parents and is zealous in worshipping God⁴⁶. The second calls him “the autodidact” (αὐτοδίδακτον καὶ αὐτομαθές) and the “all-wise” (πανσόφος) and

³⁸ Cf. Rom 4:1-25; Gal 3:6-18; 4:21-31; Heb 11:17-19; see however Jas 2:21-24, in line with *Tg. Neof. Gen.* 17:1.

³⁹ See also *Tg. Neof. Gen.* 18:6; *Ps.-J. Gen.* 27:1-9.

⁴⁰ The story of Abraham was amplified before the Christian era with various legendary additions, as testified to by e.g. *Jub.* 11:18-22.

⁴¹ *Jub.* 23:10. See also *Jub.* 16:28, according to which Abraham and his descendants receive an eternal blessing because the patriarch observed all the feasts in their due time; 2 *Bar.* 57, in which Abraham’s, likened to a fountain, fulfilment of the works of the Law is emphasized; PHILO, *Abr.* 5.

⁴² In Hellenistic Judaism, Abraham becomes “the incarnation” of the Greek ideal of virtue: see JEREMIAS, Joachim. Ἰσραήλ. *TWNT* 1:8, who quotes Wis 10:5-6; 4 *Macc* 16:20; JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 1:256; PHILO, *Abr.* 52-54. According to *m. Qidd.* 4:14 and *b. Yoma* 28b, Abraham observed all the commandments and, according to *b. Ned.* 32a, he was the best at caring for the Torah.

⁴³ יְשִׁירָא in *Tg. Lev.* 22:27 (*Ps.-J.*, *Tg. CG*); צְדִיקָא/יְשִׁירָא in *Tg. Gen.* 24:60 (*Ps.-J.*, *Frg. Tg.*); see also *Frg. Tg. Gen.* 22:10; יְחִידָא in *Tg. Neof. Gen.* 24:60.

⁴⁴ See *Tg. Gen.* 24:62 (*Neof.*, *Ps.-J.*); *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 22:19.

⁴⁵ *Tg. Gen.* 22:10 (*Neof.*, *Ps.-J.*, *Frg. Tg.*); *Tg. Neof. Lev.* 22:27. For this title see also *Tg. Gen.* 3:22 (*Neof.*, *Ps.-J.*, *Frg. Tg.*).

⁴⁶ Cf. JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 1:222; 1:346.

presents him as he who has received knowledge naturally⁴⁷, and was born good by nature and is free of the passions⁴⁸.

In *Book of Jubilees* 36:1-11, Isaac's piety is summed up in his discourse to Jacob and Esau when he is on the point of death: the patriarch exhorts his sons to practise justice, to love one another, to reject idolatrous worship and not to do evil to a brother. Another passage attributes to Isaac the title "holy seed": during the Feast of Sukkot, Abraham gave praise to God and rejoiced because he knew that from him would come out "a holy seed, so that it should become like Him who had made all things" (16:26-27). It is implicit in *Tg. Neof.* and in *Tg. Ps.-J.* that Isaac's birth took place on Passover day⁴⁹.

3.4. JACOB

According to the Palestinian Targum, Jacob is the "perfect" man (שְׁלֵיִם/תְּמוּיִם)⁵⁰, who had no defections among his sons⁵¹. This is why, in popular tradition, Jacob may sometimes have been considered to be the most perfect of the Patriarchs⁵². Already both the author of the *Book of Jubilees* and Philo present Jacob as the perfect man⁵³. For the Alexandrian exegete, the patriarch represents the type of the man in progress and of the ascetic⁵⁴. He acquires virtue through effort and so is called the "fighter"⁵⁵, enjoying in addition direct communication with God⁵⁶.

⁴⁷ See PHILO, *Mut.* 88, 255; *Somn.* 1:160, 168; *Cher.* 47; *Sacr.* 43.

⁴⁸ See PHILO, *Somn.* 1:171; *Det.* 46.

⁴⁹ In *Tg. Neof. Gen.* 18:6, Abraham orders Sarah to prepare unleavened bread. Since in *Gen* 18:14 (MT) the angels announce that Isaac's birth would take place the following year at the same time, it can be deduced that Isaac was born during the Passover. *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 18:14 says that Isaac will be born at the "time of the feast", an expression that in all probability indicates the Passover. This is made explicit in *b. Roš. Haš. 11a*, according to which the patriarch was born on the first day of Passover. In the midrashic literature, Isaac's birth is wrapped in a messianic aura.

⁵⁰ *Tg. Lev.* 22:27 (*Neof., Ps.-J., Frg. Tg., Tg. CG*). In *Tg. Neof. Gen.* 33:18 it says that Jacob was perfect in good works.

⁵¹ For the antiquity of this tradition, see *Sipre Deut.* 32; MIHALY, Eugene. A Rabbinic Defense of the Election of Israel: An Analysis of Sifre Deuteronomy 32:9, *Pisqa* 312. *HUCA* 35, p. 107, 1964.

⁵² See e.g. *Gen. Rab.* 75:13; 76:1, 5.

⁵³ See *Jub.* 25:4-10; PHILO, *Leg.* 3:177-179.

⁵⁴ See HAYWARD, Robert. The Date of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Some Comments. *JJS* 40, p. 11, 1989; PHILO, *Leg.* 2:89; 3:18, 93, 191; *Cher.* 46; *Sacr.* 5.

⁵⁵ PHILO, *Leg.* 3:191.

⁵⁶ See PHILO, *Plant.* 90.

In the Palestinian Targum, Jacob is simply called "the just man" (אֲדִיבֵי: *Tg. Neof. Gen. 29:17; Tg. Gen. 35:9* [*Neof., Frq. Tg.*]). The attribution of this title to the third patriarch is early, for it occurs in the Septuagint, in Wis 10:10 (αὕτη φυγάδα ὀργῆς ἀδελφοῦ δίκαιον ὠδήγησεν ἐν τρίβοις εὐθείαις). The patriarch's astuteness is presented more as wisdom than as cunning (cf. *Tg. Gen. 27:35* [*Neof., Ps.-J.*]; *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 29:12*): in this way the less pious elements of his character that might emerge from the MT are mitigated. The patriarch again is presented as a man who fears sin (*Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 27:11; 28:20*)⁵⁷ and as "the pious man" (אֲדִיבֵי: *Tg. Gen. 28:12* [*Neof., Ps.-J., Frq. Tg.*]), thanks to whose merit the plague of the famine of Egypt was withdrawn (*Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 50:3*)⁵⁸. His merits are repeatedly made evident⁵⁹.

In the Palestinian Targums, Jacob enjoys a special relationship with the angels⁶⁰ and special gifts linked to the action of the Holy Spirit: more than once there is an insistence that he "sees" in the Holy Spirit⁶¹. In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 31:21*, he sees in the Spirit the liberation of his sons and in *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 43:14* it is announced to him in the Spirit that he will lose three sons. This means that he is a prophet: *Tg. Gen. 45:27* (*Onq., Ps.-J.*) says specifically that the Holy Spirit came back to rest upon him. The tradition which attributes the prophetic gift of "seeing in the Holy Spirit" to Jacob goes back to at least the end of the first century C.E.: the *Epistle of Barnabas* says specifically that the patriarch sees in the spirit the figure of the future people⁶². This special relationship with the angels and with the Spirit reveals a special intimacy with God. Wis 10:10 says that Wisdom "showed Jacob the kingdom of God and gave the knowledge

⁵⁷ Cf. *Jub. 25:7*.

⁵⁸ In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 29:13* too, Jacob's piety is insisted on.

⁵⁹ Thanks to the merit of Jacob, Laban is blessed (*Tg. Neof. Gen. 30:27; Tg. Gen. 30:30* [*Neof., Ps.-J.*]); the well gave water for twenty years (*Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 31:22*); he himself inherited Adam's clothes (*Tg. Neof. Gen. 48:22*); because of his merit and the merits of his sons all the families of the earth are blessed (*Tg. Gen. 28:14* [*Neof., Ps.-J.*]); see also *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 30:33*.

⁶⁰ See e.g. *Tg. Gen. 32:3, 25, 31* (*Neof., Ps.-J.*); *Ps.-J. Gen. 32:33; Tg. Gen. 33:10* (*Neof., Ps.-J.*); *Ps.-J. Gen. 35:7*.

⁶¹ See, in addition to the texts cited, *Tg. Gen. 37:33* (*Ps.-J., Frq. Tg.*); *Neof. Gen. 42:1*.

⁶² *Barn. 13,5*. That this "to see in the spirit" may be linked to Jacob's prophetic gifts is shown in *Barn. 13,4*.

of holy things" (or "of the saints", which would be yet another reference to the angels). Wis 10:12 already interprets Jacob's fight in Gen 32:24-33 as a spiritual experience (a prayer?), when it says that Wisdom grants the patriarch "victory in a hard fight, so that he might know that piety is more powerful than anything (*παντὸς δυνατωτέρα ἐστὶν εὐσέβεια*)".

3.5. THE MATRIARCHS

Even if, compared to the other matriarchs, in the Targums Sarah is never explicitly presented as an *orans*, her figure as a holy woman is nevertheless exalted and idealized, especially in *Tg. Ps.-J.* Not only her physical beauty is remarked upon⁶³, but also her interior beauty: a chaste woman⁶⁴, along with Abraham, she is "missionary"⁶⁵ and prophetess⁶⁶, shares the same obedience to God in leaving the homeland and the father's house⁶⁷, and like her husband cannot bear idolatry⁶⁸. Her merits⁶⁹ and her just works are remarked upon; the lamp, which goes out at her death, indicates that she was a light⁷⁰. Last of all, God remembers her and performs miracles in her favour⁷¹.

This idealization of the figure of Sarah was widespread in the first century C.E.: Josephus calls Sarah "queen" and "mother of our race"⁷². Philo too exalts her role as mother of the people, which received the priesthood and prophecy as a gift⁷³, and her beauty of spirit and body, in which she surpassed all the women of her time⁷⁴. What in Scripture may be seen as a

⁶³ In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 12:11*, Abraham sees Sarah without her clothes and becomes aware of her beauty.

⁶⁴ *Tg. Gen. 20:16 (Neof., Ps.-J.)*; see JOSEPHUS, *A.J.* 1:209.

⁶⁵ *Tg. Gen. 12:5 (Onq., Neof., Ps.-J., Frq. Tg.)*; see MANNIS, Frédéric. Sara, modèle de la femme obéissante: Étude de l'arrière-plan juif de 1P 3,5-6. *BeO* 26, p. 71-73, 1983.

⁶⁶ *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 21:12*. The tradition of Sarah as prophetess is developed in *b. Meg. 14a*; in *Exod. Rab. 1:1*, Sarah is listed among the seven prophetesses.

⁶⁷ In this way, *Tg. Gen. 16:5 (Neof., Ps.-J.)* emphasizes the free choice of Abraham, a detail missing in the MT.

⁶⁸ See *Tg. Gen. 21:9 (Neof., Ps.-J.)*.

⁶⁹ See *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 22:20*.

⁷⁰ In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 24:67* the lamp lights up again when Rebekah, whose works were just, like those of Sarah, enters the tent. The lamp here is symbol of the justice of the matriarchs.

⁷¹ See *Tg. Gen. 21:1,6 (Neof., Ps.-J.)*.

⁷² JOSEPHUS, *B.J.* 5:379.

⁷³ See PHILO, *Abr.* 98. For the interpretation of the figure of Sarah in Philo, see in particular NIEHOFF, Maren R. Mother and Maiden, Sister and Spouse: Sarah in Philonic Midrash. *HTR* 97, p. 413-444, 2004.

⁷⁴ See PHILO, *Abr.* 93.

defect is completely turned round by Philo to be seen as something positive: Sarah's laughter in Gen 18:12 is not a sign of her lack of faith. On the contrary, "she knew that everything is possible to God and had had this conviction since she was in the cradle"⁷⁵. This reverence for the ancestors is a typical theme of the targumic hermeneutic⁷⁶. In *Tg. Gen. 18:12 (Neof., Ps.-J.)* Sarah's laughter is cleverly glossed over, translating it by a verb that expresses marvel. So Sarah does not laugh, but "is excited" by the announcement of the birth of the son⁷⁷.

In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 2:1*, Isaac speaks fiercely to Ishmael, claiming his right to the paternal inheritance, because he is the son of Sarah and not of Hagar, her slave. The contraposition between Sarah and Hagar that Paul makes in Gal 4:21-32 is famous. Sarah represents the new covenant (Gal 4:24), and the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:24-26). Those who believe in Christ are not only sons of Abraham but also sons of Sarah, free men born of the free woman (Gal 4:31). In 1 Pet 3:5-6 it is emphasized that Christian women have become daughters of Sarah, model of the obedient woman.

The tradition of Sarah's obedience has its roots in Gen 18:12 (MT), where Sarah addresses her husband as "my lord"⁷⁸. The targumists address the women in the synagogal assembly presenting Sarah as the ideal type of the pious woman, so that they, when listening to the Torah, not only come away edified, but also identifying themselves with the matriarch, seeing themselves "prefigured" in her. In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 17:16* there is an allusion to the liturgical assembly as having come out of Sarah's blessed body. God's words to Abraham about Sarah are paraphrased as follows: "I will bless her in her body, I will also give a son from her and I will bless him and she will convert into an assembly (ואבדכניה ביה ותהי לכינשין) and from her will come forth kings who will govern the nations". The term כינשין is used elsewhere in

⁷⁵ PHILO, *Abr.* 112; cf. also *Leg.* 3:218.

⁷⁶ See the examples in LE DÉAUT, *Targum*, p. 253-255

⁷⁷ See *Tg. Onq. Gen. 27:13; Ps.-J. Gen. 27:42.*

⁷⁸ Cf. MANN'S, *Sara*, p. 70

Tg. Ps.-J. to designate the liturgical assembly. Like Abraham, then, Sarah in herself sums up in a certain way all Israel.

In the Targum, Rebekah is presented as a pious woman who accomplishes works of justice, as Sarah did⁷⁹. She receives a spirit of prophecy⁸⁰ and of holiness⁸¹, which reveals hidden things to her. In the *Book of Jubilees* 25,14 too, the Holy Spirit comes down and puts itself in the mouth of the matriarch when she wants to bless Jacob.

4. THE FATHERS AND MOTHERS AS ORANTES

4.1. ABRAHAM

Already the biblical text makes Abraham a precursor of the pious Jew and his religious practices. He is called not only to do the divine will, but also to transmit faith to his sons and his family⁸². This idea is brought together in the eulogy of Abraham in Sir 44:19-21, whose goal is to show that the patriarch is a precursor of the Jewish piety⁸³. As we will see, the Targum develops this conception in the direction of liturgy and prayer.

Before the Christian era, Abraham was presented as the ideal figure of prayer, and some of his prayers were added to the biblical texts. Two examples may be enough to illustrate this. The *Book of Jubilees* (12:19-21) contains a nocturnal prayer by Abraham, which opens as follows (v. 19): "My God, God Most High, you alone are God for me. You created everything and everything that exists is the work of your hands". Elsewhere too, in the same book (11:17), there are references to the prayer of the patriarch: "He began to pray before the Creator of all that he might save him from the corruption of

⁷⁹ See *Tg. Gen.* 24:67 (*Onq., Ps.-J.*).

⁸⁰ See *Tg. Onq. Gen.* 27:13; *Ps.-J. Gen.* 27:42.

⁸¹ *Tg. Gen.* 27:1 (*Frg. Tg. ms. P.*), 5 (*Ps.-J.*); in *Gen. Rab.* 72:6, the matriarchs are considered to be prophetesses.

⁸² See Gen 18:18-19: according to SKA, Jean-Louis. *Abramo e i suoi ospiti: Il patriarca e i credenti nel Dio unico.* Studi Biblici; Bologna: Dehoniane, 2003. p. 14, this passage makes of Abraham a teacher of the law, a kind of rabbi *ante litteram*. On the later "rabbinization" of Abraham, taking the biblical data as the starting point, see FERNÁNDEZ, Miguel Pérez. *Biblia y Corán: Abraham Abinu, Ibrahim Abuna.* MEAH 52, p. 113-114, 2003.

⁸³ See SKA, *Abramo*, p. 25.

the sons of men and that his lot might not fall into the perdition of impurity and abominations”.

Abraham’s prayer in the Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20 XX, 12-16) is well known. In this case too, it is a nocturnal prayer, made in tears and anguish:

That night I prayed, begged for and implored grace and said in anguish, while my tears flowed: “Blessed are you, O God Most High, Eternal Lord, for you are Lord and Master over all and you rule over all the kings of the earth, to carry out judgement upon all of them. And now, my Lord, before you I pour out my lament against the Pharaoh of Zoan, king of Egypt, because my wife has been taken away from me by force. Give me justice and show your powerful arm against him and against his entire house. May he not be able to defile my wife (...) and may everyone recognize, Lord, that you are the Lord of all the kings of the earth”.

That the tradition about this prayer in this time of trial may have been common from early times is attested by Philo, according to whom Abraham and Sarah find refuge in the Lord⁸⁴. and by Josephus, according to whom Abraham, faced with Pharaoh’s army taking Sarah away from him, stretches out his hands in prayer, turning towards the Temple⁸⁵.

The Targum agrees with the oldest Jewish tradition in presenting Abraham as the first true *orans* and in giving importance to his prayer⁸⁶. He is the first to pray explicitly “in the name of the Lord” (*Tg. Gen* 12:8; 13:4 [*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*]); in regards to prayer as well, he is the father of the fathers. In *Gen* 12:8 (MT) occurs the expression וַיִּקְרָא בְשֵׁם יְהוָה (“and he invoked the name of יהוה”), which in *Tg. Onq.* and *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 12:8 is rendered by the expression וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל בְּשֵׁם דְּיוֹ (“and he *prayed* in the name of the Lord”): it is said explicitly that this invocation

⁸⁴ Cf. PHILO, *Abr.* p. 95.

⁸⁵ Cf. JOSEPHUS, *B.J.* 5:380: in this passage the historian also shows the fact that Abraham preferred to pray rather than to take vengeance on his enemy by means of the army he had at his disposal.

⁸⁶ See MAHER, *The Meturgemanim* (2), p. 222-224.

is a prayer⁸⁷. The targumist of *Tg. Neof.* amplifies, translating דייי יב תקרא בשם דקיה ופלה ונלי תמן בשם מומיה ("And he worshipped and prayed there in the name of the Memra of the Lord"). Compared to *Tg. Gen. 12:8*, there are no great novelties in the translation of *Tg. Gen. 13:4*: this verse is a reprise of the first one.

In *Tg. Onq. Gen. 14:22*, Abraham's lifting up his hand in the presence of Melchizedek (see MT) is considered to be a prayer. In *Tg. Gen. 17:20*, (*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*) God grants Abraham's prayer for Ishmael.

In Scripture, Abraham is the first person to pray for others (*Gen 18:16-33*), and so *4 Ezra 7:102* puts Abraham first in the list of the great intercessors of Israel. The targumic and the early Jewish traditions agree in their development of the biblical tradition⁸⁸: Abraham, praying standing like every good Jew, intercedes in prayer for Lot and the inhabitants of Sodom (*Tg. Gen. 18:22-23* [*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*]). It is noted here that the merit of the Fathers (and of the just: cf. *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 18:24*) and their prayer has expiatory force. Philo explains that Abraham intercedes for the people of Sodom, asking for the salvation of the just and the salvation of the others because of those just⁸⁹, and says that Lot was saved because of Abraham's intercession⁹⁰. Targumic tradition is in line with this interpretation.

The getting up early in *Gen 19:27* and its targumic interpretation in the sense of prayer (*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*) has resulted, in the tradition, in Abraham's becoming the one who instituted the morning prayer; thus every morning prayer of the pious Jew opens in the sign of the first patriarch. Abraham, according to the Palestinian targumic tradition, also instituted the prayer after meals and taught it to his guests (*Tg. Gen. 18:5* [*Ps.-J.*]; *21:33* [*Neof., Ps.-J., Frg. Tg.*]; *Tg. Ps.-J. Exod. 26:28*).

⁸⁷ See ABERBACH, Moses; GROSSFELD, Bernard. *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (Based on A. Sperber's Edition). Denver: Ktav, 1982. p. 80, n. 9.

⁸⁸ See BOWKER, John. *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature: An Introduction to Jewish Interpretations of Scripture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979². p. 213-214.

⁸⁹ Cf. PHILO, *QG 4:27*.

⁹⁰ Cf. PHILO, *QG 4:54*. This tradition is however older. *Jub. 16:7* makes *Gen 19:29* explicit, specifying that Lot was saved thanks to the fact that the Lord remembered Abraham.

Abraham intercedes for sinners and his prayer does not stop even in the face of his persecutor Abimelech (*Tg. Gen. 20:7, 17 [Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.]; 21:1 [Ps.-J.]*). Abraham's prayer is a source of life: the oldest tradition notes the fact that Abraham even prayed for his enemy and obtained healing for him.

In Gen 22:5, the LXX translates וְנִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה in the Abraham's words by προσκυνήσαντες: "After having adored, we will come back to you". The Greek version normally uses the verb προσκυνέω in the absolute sense of "to adore"⁹¹. *Tg. Neof.* instead gives the translation וְנִצְלִי ("and we will pray"): when the action is directed to God, *Tg. Neof.* renders the Histafel of הוֹדָה sometimes by צִלִּי, sometimes by יוֹדָה or שִׁבְחָה⁹². In *Tg. Neof.*, however, the act Abraham proposes to perform with Isaac is without a doubt a prayer, and Mount Moriah is the mountain of the future Temple and the appropriate place for prayer. In *Tg. Gen. 22:14 (Neof., Ps.-J., Frg. Tg.)* an explicit prayer of Abraham is found, while various targumic insertions present him as the model of the *orans*. Here Abraham also raises a prayer of supplication at the site of the future Temple for all of his descendants who will pray in the Temple: every future prayer of an Israelite in the Temple, especially that made in the hour of anguish, is thus definitively grafted "into the bosom" of Abraham's prayer.

Abraham is presented, therefore, as a teacher of prayer. He, who is the first "converted one"⁹³, becomes, together with Sarah, the first "proselytizer" (cf. *Tg. Gen. 12:5 [Neof., Ps.-J., Frg. Tg.]*)⁹⁴.

In this way, the targumist actualizes the figure of Abraham for the assembly in the synagogue, bringing each listener to identify himself with Father Abraham. His perspective is however not just pedagogical (the listener

⁹¹ See HARL, Marguerite. et al. (Eds.) *La Genèse*. In: *La Bible d'Alexandrie*. v. 1; Paris: Cerf, 1994. p. 193; WEVERS, John W. *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis*. SBLSCS 35. Atlanta: Scholars, 1993. p. 319.

⁹² See *Tg. Neof. Gen. 24:26, 46, 48, 52; 27:9; 47:31*.

⁹³ Cf. NICKELSBURG, George W. E. Abraham the Convert: A Jewish Tradition and Its Use by the Apostle Paul. In: STONE, M. E.; BERGREN, T. A. (Ed.) *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible*. Harrisburg: Trinity, 1998. p. 151-167.

⁹⁴ On the tradition regarding Abraham's proselytizing, see OHANA, Moïse. Prosélytisme et Targum Palestinien: Données nouvelles pour la datation de Néofiti 1. *Bib* 55/3, p. 317-332, 1974; HAYWARD, R. God as Father in the Pentateuchal *Targumim*: The Case of Abraham Garden at Be'er Sheba. In: LEGRAND, T.; JOOSTEN, J. (Ed.) *The Targums in the Light of Traditions of the Second Temple Period*. JSJSup 167. Leiden: Brill, 2014. p. 97-119; _____. Abraham as Proselytizer at Beer-Sheba in the Targums of the Pentateuch. *JJS* 49, p. 24-37, 1998.

is called to imitate the works and the prayer of Abraham), but also, in some way, “typological”: in the Targum of the Pentateuch, in fact, Abraham is presented as a “corporate personality”. He is *προπάτωρ*⁹⁵ not only in being “progenitor”, but also in being prefiguration of faithful Israel; what is preached about him implicitly concerns Israel⁹⁶. In other words, Israel is “in his loins” (cf. Heb 7:10), in every act of his history, worship and prayer. Various deuterocanonical and apocryphal texts from the Septuagint insist about the fact that sons of Abraham are called to imitate the life and pious works of their progenitor (see e.g. Jdt 8:25-27; Tob 4:12; 1 Macc 2:50-52; 4 Macc 7:19; 16:20).

4.2. ISAAC

With some small additions to the MT, the Palestinian targumic versions make references to Isaac’s prayer. Already Philo presents Isaac as a man who enjoys a special intimacy with God⁹⁷. This characteristic is deduced from Gen 24:63, a verse that the targumic versions also unanimously interpret in the sense of prayer. Most of the early versions of this verse connect *נשׁוּב* of the MT to the root *נשׁוּב*, which occurs several times in the Hebrew Bible, especially in the Psalms, where it designates “talking to oneself”, and therefore “to moan”, “to groan”, “to meditate”. The Septuagint translates *נשׁוּב* by *ἀδολεσχησαι*⁹⁸. It is difficult to determine the meaning of this last verb, through which the Septuagint normally translates the verb *נשׁוּב*. Even if the negative sense of “to use many words” and similar occurs here (e.g. Sir 7:14; 32:9)⁹⁹, the verb is used rather in the positive sense of “to meditate” (e.g. Ps 76:4, 7, 13; 118:23, 27, 48, 78). The versions of Aquila and Symmachus, as with the Septuagint,

⁹⁵ The title is attested in Josephus, *B.J.* 5:380, and in Rom 4:1.

⁹⁶ See EGO, Beate. Abraham als Urbild der Toratreue Israels: Traditionsgeschichtliche Überlegungen zu einem Aspekt des biblischen Abrahambildes. In: AVEMARIE, F.; LICHTENBERGER, H. (Ed.) *Bund und Tora: Zur theologischen Begriffsgeschichte in alttestamentlicher, frühjüdischer und urchristlicher Tradition.* WUNT 92. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996. p. 35.

⁹⁷ See PHILO, Post. 76-78; Sacr. 6-7.

⁹⁸ Cf. the discussion about the meaning of *ἀδολεσχησαι* in HARL, *La Genèse*, p. 204-205, who translates the verb in Gen 24:63 by “méditer” (p. 204).

⁹⁹ For a semantic analysis of *ἀδολεσχεω* in the LXX, see LAZARENCO, Oleg. Does *ἀδολεσχεω* Mean ‘To Meditate’ in the LXX? *BIOSECS* 35, p. 110-126, 2002.

took the meaning from the root שׁוּחַ¹⁰⁰, and similarly the Vulgata gives the translation *ad meditandum*.

All the targumic versions translate the verb לְשׁוּחַ by the root שׁוּחַ ("to pray"). This interpretation is early: for Philo, Isaac's action "at the eventide" in Gen 24:63 is without a doubt an intimate prayer to God¹⁰¹. The rabbinic tradition, on the base of this verse, attributes the prayer of *minḥah* to Isaac; the three Patriarchs are the three pillars of daily prayer: Abraham instituted the *shaharit* prayer, Isaac that of *minḥah*, and Jacob that of 'arvit (cf. b. Ber. 26b). The interpretation of Gen 24:63 in the sense of prayer dates back to the first half of the first-century C.E., as Philo attests, while the custom of praying three times a day certainly goes back to the pre-Christian period (see e.g. Dan 6:11, 14).

According to the Palestinian targumic tradition, the blindness of Isaac's eyes, far from being a mere physical defect, is sign of a deeper reality: Isaac had a privileged meeting with God at the time of his binding, when he fixed his eyes on the angels of the heights (*Tg. Gen. 22:10 [Neof., Tg. Ps.-J.]*) and their heavenly perfections (*Tg. Exod. 12:42 [Neof., Frg. Tg.]*; *Tg. Lev. 22:27 [Frg. Tg., Tg. CG]*). Here reference to prayer is not made, yet it cannot be excluded that the detail could be interpreted in that sense: the lifting up of one's eyes towards the heavens is a typical gesture of prayer in early Jewish tradition.

In the Targum, Isaac likewise is not just a simple *orans*, yet a powerful intercessor. In Gen 25:21, Isaac intercedes with the Lord for his wife Rebekah. The root, which expresses Isaac's prayer in the MT, is עָתַר, used elsewhere to indicate an intercessory prayer or a supplication¹⁰². *Tg. Gen. 25:21 (Onq.,*

¹⁰⁰ See SCHOEPS, Hans J. *Symmachusstudien III: Symmachus und der Midrasch. Bib 29*, p. 31, 1948.

¹⁰¹ PHILO, *Det. 29* says that Isaac went out into the fields for a spiritual battle: "He wanted to be alone and talk face to face with the companion and guide of his soul, God himself". Philo also refers to Isaac's intimacy with God in *Leg. 3:43*: "Therefore Isaac, the 'joy of the soul', when he meditates and is alone with God, goes out, abandoning himself and his own thoughts. In fact, it is said: *Isaac went out to meditate in the field, towards evening*". In *QG 5:140*, Philo once more insists on Isaac's solitary dialogue with God and says about the patriarch: *Solitariam incipit degere vitam solus cum solo invisibili Deo*. And he adds: *Longas autem conversationes homiliasque consuevimus spatia vocare*.

¹⁰² The root עָתַר is used at the Hiphil in the requests for prayer made by the Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron and at the Qal in the following prayers of intercession for him: see Exod 8:4, 5, 24, 25, 26; 9:28; 10:17, 18; see also Judg 13:8; Job 22:27; 33:26. As in our verse, the root is used in the Niphal to express the granting of prayer: see 2 Sam 21:14; 24:25; 1 Chr 5:20; 2 Chr 33:13,19; Ezra 8:23; Isa 19:22. According to Rashi on Gen 25:21, the verb designates prayer that is abundant and intense; see also ABERBACH; GROSSFELD. *Targum Onkelos*, 150, n. 7.

Neof., Ps.-J.) emphasizes that Isaac prayed for his barren wife. According to the paraphrase of *Tg. Ps.-J.*, Isaac makes this intercession at the site of the Temple and his prayer has the power to change God's will. It can be deduced that Israel is fruit of the patriarch's prayer. According to *Tg. Ps.-J.*, however, the patriarch's intercession is not only made to the advantage of his own people. In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 26:31*, Isaac prays for his persecutors. His prayer gives life also to his enemies.

4.3. JACOB

In the Palestinian Targum of Gen 28:10, it is recounted that God accomplishes "miracles" for Jacob¹⁰³. The first of these miracles is that God makes the sun set before its due time, because he wishes to have a nocturnal dialogue with Jacob. In Gen 28:11, 17, Jacob therefore has an encounter with the Place *par excellence*, i.e. a meeting with God in the site of the future Jerusalem's Temple. The tradition which links Jacob's dream in Betel (Gen 28:10-22) to prayer is quite early, as both the Septuagint and Philo's interpretation show: the Septuagint renders the phrase יְדַבֵּר עִקְבָּב of v. 20 by καὶ ἠϋξάτο Ἰακωβ εὐχῆν¹⁰⁴, with the Greek version as a starting point, Philo interprets Jacob's vow (vv. 20-21) as an "admirable prayer" (θαυμασιωτάτη εὐχῆ)¹⁰⁵ and calls Jacob ὁ ἀσκητής¹⁰⁶. It is not to be wondered that, in this text, early Jewish tradition saw the institution by the patriarch of the evening

¹⁰³ Various targumic traditions inserted into the Jacob cycle may date back to at least the first century C.E. To support this theory, it is enough to compare *Tg. Neof. Gen. 49:10* with 4Q252 V, 3-4, a pesher commenting on the verse, which came to light in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The fact that these two texts, even though of different literary genres, draw on a common Palestinian tradition, is undeniable; see FERNÁNDEZ, Miguel Pérez. *Tradiciones mesiánicas en el targum palestinese: Estudios exegéticos*. EMISJ 12. Valencia: Institución San Jerónimo, 1981. p.128-129.

¹⁰⁴ The expression can mean both that he made a simple vow and that he offered a prayer, since in Greek there is no clear difference between the two realities; this is the LXX's usual translation of the Hebrew expression: see e.g. Num 21:2; Judg 11:30.

¹⁰⁵ PHILO, *Somn.* 1:163; in *Congr. 99*, the words of Jacob in v. 22 are considered to be a prayer. For Philo, every prayer is a vow and every vow is prayer, because prayer at the same time includes supplication, thanksgiving and vow: cf. LEONHARDT, Jutta. *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria*. TSAJ 84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001. p. 105, 121-122.

¹⁰⁶ It is one of the appellatives of Jacob found most frequently in his writings: see PHILO, *Somn.* 1:68; *Sacr.* 64; *Post.* 59; *Plant.* 90, where the holy prayers of Jacob are noted; *Mut.* 210, where the patriarch's prayer is remarked on.

prayer. This element is only a development of the typological force already present in the targumic interpretation: every prayer of the Israelite in the Temple of Jerusalem, house of prayer and gate of prayer orientated towards heaven, is already pre-figured in Jacob's nocturnal meeting with God. The patriarch constitutes the *typos* of all the generations that in the future will worship in the Temple (see particularly *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 28:22*). Also Jacob, like his fathers, is an intercessor and God listens to his prayer (*Tg. Gen. 35:3* [*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*]).

According to the Palestinian Targum (*Tg. Gen. 49:2* [*Neof., Frq. Tg.*]; *Deut. 6:4* [*Neof., Ps.-J., Frq. Tg.*]) and the midrashic and rabbinic tradition, Jacob, together with his sons, instituted the recitation of the Shema. Like every pious Jew, he recited it on his deathbed.

Other targumic insertions insist on Jacob's prayer. God listens to his prayer on the day and the night of anguish (*Tg. Gen. 35:3* [*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*]). In *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 30:1* Jacob urges Rachel to prayer, while according to *Tg. Gen. 30:2* (*Neof., Tg. CG*) he himself invites her to pray with him. Jacob is also a figure linked to the blessing: in *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 47:7*, the patriarch pronounces a blessing over the Pharaoh, while in *Tg. Gen. 48:15-16* (*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J., Tg. CG*) the blessing over Ephraim and Manasseh is reported. Thus the patriarch prays in all circumstances of his life, and finally as he draws near the meeting with Esau (*Tg. Ps.-J. Gen. 33:3*).

In his prophecy to Israel in *Tg. Num. 24:5* (*Neof., Frq. Tg.*), Balaam declares that Israel's tents are beautiful because of the merits of the tents where Jacob dwells: "How beautiful are the tents *where Jacob* their father *prayed* and the Tent of Meeting that you built for my Name!" This interpretation had some success in Jewish tradition: the Talmud indicates that "tent" should be interpreted in the sense of "house of study"¹⁰⁷ or "synagogue"¹⁰⁸. In the targumic tradition, Jacob is presented as the just man who dwells in the

¹⁰⁷ *b. Ber. 16a.*

¹⁰⁸ *b. Sanh. 105b.*

tents, which are interpreted as “houses of study”¹⁰⁹. This association appears to be at least from the Tannaite period, because noted in an interpretation of Deut. 33:28, contained in *Sipre Deut.*, where the tents are interpreted in relation to the Torah¹¹⁰.

4.4. THE MATRIARCH

In the Septuagint and in the early Jewish literature, a progressive interest in the prayers of women can be noted. This is a point of contact with the Targum of the Pentateuch, which also gives much space to the piety and prayer of women¹¹¹.

Even if in the Targums a prayer of Sarah is not mentioned, her figure as a holy woman is nevertheless idealized. According to the Palestinian Targums on Gen 25:22 (*Neof., Ps.-J., Frg. Tg.*), Rebekah, in the anguish of a woman that is giving birth, goes to pray at the *bet midrash* of the great Shem. She is thus the first woman of whom it is said that she sought the Lord. The verb דרש used in the MT is ripe with evocative force. The targumic tradition interprets it in two senses: the matriarch looked for a teaching from the Lord (*Tg. Onq.*) or asked for mercy before him (Palestinian Targum). *Tg. Onq.* renders the expression לְדַרְשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה (“to inquire of the Lord”) by לְמַתְבַּע אוֹלְפֵן מִדְּקָרָם יְיָ (“to ask for a teaching before the Lord”). This translation is similar to that of the Septuagint, which translates by πύθῆσθαι παρὰ κυρίου: the verb πύθῆσθαι designates normally in the Septuagint a consulting of men and not of God (see 2 Chr 31:9; 32:31). The Greek text suggests that Rebekah looks from the Lord (maybe through a human mediator) an explanation about the events that she can’t understand (cf. e.g. Exod 18:15). According the Palestinian targumic tradition, the expression לְדַרְשׁ אֶת־יְהוָה in Gen 25:22 means to pray: *Tg. Neof.*, for example, says that Rebekah “went to the house of the great Shem to

¹⁰⁹ See *Tg. Ps.-J. Gen.* 9:27; 46:13.

¹¹⁰ See also *Tg. Gen.* 25:27 (*Onq., Neof., Ps.-J.*); *Ps.-J.* 33:17.

¹¹¹ See BAR-ILAN, Meir. *Some Jewish Women in Antiquity*. BJS 317. Atlanta: Scholars, 1998. p. 112-113; MCDOWELL, Prayers, 197-214.

ask for mercy before the Lord". Also the midrashic tradition presents Rebekah as *orans*¹¹². The presentation of Rebekah as figure of prayer is nevertheless old: in the *Book of Jubilees* a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving by Rebekah is given, when Jacob assures her that he will not marry a foreign woman¹¹³.

In the Targum, the birth of Jacob's sons (Tg. Gen. 29:35; 30:1-2, 8, 13) takes place in the atmosphere of the prayer of the Mothers Rachel and Leah, who even compete in turning to God. The targumist thus presents ideal models to the female assembly in the Synagogue¹¹⁴. A more profound intention of the targumist can however be drawn from his insistence on the prayer of the Mothers: Israel is the son of the miracle of the prayer of the Fathers and of the Mothers, which has the power to change the divine decree, and of the merciful acceptance of this prayer by God.

The Targum insists more than the MT does on the fact that Leah is the first human being to give praise to God (cf. Tg. Gen. 29:35): the first thanksgiving in the history of salvation is therefore reserved to a woman. Now, according to Philo, praise is the most perfect action and the one that is most fitting to the creature¹¹⁵. Judah, Leah's son, is the "perfect fruit", because his name describes his being: he is "the praise" in person, symbol of those who confess the divine praises¹¹⁶. Thus, in generating Judah, Leah reaches the limit of perfection: her figure is therefore strongly idealized by Philo, who presents her as virtue personified¹¹⁷. The Palestinian Targum on Gen 29:17 explains the weakness of Leah's eyes not as a defect, but as fruit

¹¹² 4Q222 1 3-7 (a fragment of *Jub.* that was recovered from among the Dead Sea texts and that is dated through paleography to the second half of the first century B.C.E.); the text is also found in *Jub.* 25:9-13.

¹¹³ The idealization of Rachel can also be seen in a blessing addressed to her in the Palestinian Targum. In Tg. Gen. 49:25 (Neof., Ps.-J.) Jacob blesses Joseph as follows: "Blessed be the breasts from which you took milk and the womb in which you rested". The formulation of the blessing is early, for it occurs in the NT, where a woman speaks to Jesus saying: "Blessed be the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked". (Luke 11:27) Since the Palestinian Targum cannot have copied the NT, it has to be deduced that this phrase was proverbial in the first century C.E.: see MCNAMARA, Martin. *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch*. AnBib 27. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1966. p. 131-133.

¹¹⁴ Cf. PHILO, *Plant.* 135, 140-141.

¹¹⁵ Cf. PHILO, *Somn.* 1:37; 2:33-34; *Leg.* 1:80, 82; 3:26, 146; *Plant.* 135.

¹¹⁶ Cf. PHILO, *Plant.* 134-135.

¹¹⁷ See *Gen. Rab.* 63:4-5, which strongly emphasizes the piety of the matriarch.

of her virtue of orans: the weakness is due to the intensity of her weeping in prayer to obtain the just man in inheritance!

CONCLUSIONS AND OPENING TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

The numerous targumic traditions about prayer appear significant if compared with similar traditions in other sources and their content needs to be taken into serious consideration in order to know about early Judaism and the background of the New Testament prayer.

Thanks to the traditions contained already in the Septuagint (and particularly in the deuterocanonical books) and the targumic traditions, which interpreted and explained the MT, the people gathered in the Synagogue were able to see in the Fathers and Mothers and above all in Jacob/Israel, who bore the same name as themselves, models and prefigurations of themselves. The *meturgemanim*, gathering the living tradition and participant in the synagogal background, make personages and events of Scripture actual for the assembly. In this dynamic of liturgical actualization, they present the Fathers and Mothers of Israel as ancestors, models and types of the people. On the one hand, the targumists offer the synagogal assembly ways for their own self-understanding, expressing the conviction that this is born from the faith and prayer of the Fathers and Mothers and inviting them to imitate their lives. On the other hand, they present the Fathers and Mothers as corporative personalities: while remaining individual figures, in them all the history of the future people is summed up and prefigured because what happens with the Fathers is a prophetic sign for the sons. The Fathers are presented as corporate personalities: in them all the people is summed up, its history, its institutions, its liturgy and its prayer.

From early times the Patriarchs were considered to be not only Fathers *of prayer* (in being institutors and models), but also Fathers *in prayer* (in being mediators whose names were invoked in prayer). The Septuagint gave an important contribution in the development of these conceptions about

prayer and intercession, in general, and about the role of the Fathers and the Mothers in prayer¹¹⁸. These conceptions entered into the NT and the early Church, where the Messiah is the teacher and the model of prayer and at the same time the mediator, he through whom God is praised and because of whose merit and intercession prayer is answered¹¹⁹.

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¹¹⁸ See e.g. Matt 6:15; 14:3-24; 26:6-44; Luke 5:16; 6:12; 9:29; 11:1-13; 22:32, 40-45; John 11:41-42; 17:1-26; Heb 5:7.

¹¹⁹ See e.g. Rom 1:8; 7:25; 16:7; Heb 7:25; 13:21; 1 Pet 4:11; Jude 25; 1 Clem. 59:2-61:3.

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