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“Jacob’s Blessing” (Gen 49:1–28) in Targumic Interpretation¹

Abstract: Genesis 49 shows the scene that takes place at the deathbed of the patriarch Jacob. In the face of his upcoming death, Jacob calls on all of his sons that they may listen to and accept his words of valediction. The patriarch addresses each of them individually. This piece of text serves an example of the biblical poetry in which metaphors play an important role. In the Hebrew text there are words and phrases that raise many doubts and questions. Not only contemporary translators and biblical scholars contend with these difficulties, but ancient and medieval commentators did as well. The Aramaic Targums testify to the early Jewish exegesis and interpretation of Gen 49. This article presents the paraphrase and discusses a few selected verses of the Aramaic version of Torah (Tg. Onq., Tg. Neof., Frg. Tg(s), Tg. Ps.-J.). Based on the above examples, the development of principal Jewish views on eschatology (49:1–2) and of Messianic expectations in context of Jacob’s blessing of the tribe of Judah (49:8–12) is portrayed. The last part of this article comprises the rendering and the meaning of the Targumic animal metaphors based on the examples of Issachar (49:14–15) and of Benjamin (49:27) that significantly differ from the Hebrew text.

Keywords: Jacob’s blessing, Book of Genesis 49, targums, interpretation of the Bible

Genesis 49 depicts a scene that takes place at the deathbed of Patriarch Jacob. Faced with death, Jacob calls on all his sons to listen to his farewell words. The Patriarch addresses each of his sons

¹ The article is a translation of the text originally published in Polish: Anna Kuśmirek, “Błogosławieństwo Jakuba (Rdz 49,1–28) w interpretacji targumicznej,” *Collectanea Theologica* 88 (2018) no. 4, 163–190. Translated from Polish by Maciej Górnicki.

individually. This document (vv. 1–28) is the first clear example a Hebrew poetry in the Pentateuch. It combines three literary genres: a deathbed blessing²; a farewell speech³ and a tribal poem.⁴ Although the composition of these verses follows the general patterns that characterize biblical poetry, there are many uncertainties as to the meaning of the expressions used here and the allusions.⁵

Chapter 49 is commonly known as “Jacob’s blessing.” However, this expression is not precise because the verses contain material of a very mixed nature.⁶ Originally, the collection of aphorisms concerning successive tribes did not form a single text. Individual tribal traditions embedded in poetry probably existed independently of each other and referred to separate stories. An external unity was superimposed on these various materials, which gave coherence and meaning to the whole. The poem is embedded within the framework of prose, which contains references to the death of the patriarch, weaved into the narrative about Joseph. In this way, the biblical author reflects a popular belief in the common origin of the tribes and the fundamental unity of the people of Israel.⁷

Targums, or Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible, are one of the testimonies of early Jewish exegesis. The targum accompanied the Hebrew text and was passed on orally, which

² Already known from earlier narratives about patriarchs (Gen 27:27ff, 28:1–4 and 39f).

³ It appears in later texts: Josh 23f and 1 Kgs 2:1–9.

⁴ Deut 33 and Judg 5.

⁵ Medieval Jewish exegetes were aware of the complexity of the text and the fact that some of the aphorisms may refer to the past, specifically the actions of the ancestor with whom the tribe originated, including his name, while others were allusions to the history of the tribes from much later times. So, they considered them to be prophetic statements, without trying to find in them later reality, as contemporary studies do.

⁶ It includes blessings and curses, expressions of distrust and praise, as well as geographical and historical observations. For this reason, some scholars propose other titles which match the context better, for example: “The Last Words of Jacob” or “Testament of Jacob.” N.M. Sarna, *Genesis. The JPS Torah Commentary*, Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, PA 1989, 331.

⁷ *Ibid.*

resulted in its constant change,⁸ but finally it was written down.⁹ Apart from the translation, it also contained a paraphrase, additions to the text and updates, which helped the faithful in the synagogue or in private use to reflect on the text. They could also be used in *bet ha-midrash*, i.e., rabbinical exegetic schools. The results of such study could then be given to the people gathered in prayer in the synagogue.

The central importance of the Torah in the life of the Jewish community has resulted in the larger number of Aramaic versions of this part of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰ The following targums of the Pentateuch have been preserved to this day: Targum Onqelos (Tg. Onq.),¹¹ Targum Neofiti 1 Codex (Tg. Neof.),¹² Targum

⁸ When reading aloud, the Hebrew text should be read by one person and the translation by another. The Rabbis have also introduced two different ways of reciting. A person reading in Hebrew was not allowed to look beyond the scroll he was holding in front of him, while the person doing the translation had to recite from memory. The introduction of these regulations prevented the impression that the targum was inscribed in the Torah. A minor was not allowed to read in Hebrew, but could, like a blind person, translate.

⁹ The history of the Aramaic Translations of HB is very complex. It is assumed that when they were created, HB was already completed, at least in parts of the Law and the Prophets. Traditionally, the origins of targums are placed in post-exile times.

¹⁰ See for example P.V.M. Flesher, B. Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction*, Baylor University, Waco, TX 2011, 69–166.

¹¹ According to the Babylonian rabbis, the Tg. Onq. was considered to be the official targum for the Pentateuch. The Rabbis called it "our targum." (b. Qid. 49a). The rabbis even thought that his exegesis resolved a key halachic issue. Tg. Onq. Babylonian origins are also evidenced by its language, because its Aramaic has eastern grammatical forms and vocabulary. P.S. Alexander, *Jewish Aramaic Translations of Hebrew Scriptures*, in: *Mikra: Text, Translation, Reading and Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, M.J. Mulder, H. Sysling (eds.), *Compendia rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, Section 2:1, Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, PA 1988, 217f.

¹² The Neofiti 1 Codex was published in 1504 (or 1499). It was discovered in the Vatican Library by A. Diez Macho in 1956, who published: *Neophyti I. Targum Palestinense. MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana. Vols. 1–5. Madrid-Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas; 1 Génesis, 1968; 2 Exodo; 3 Levítico, 1971; 4 Numeros, 1974; 5 Deuteronomio, 1978; M. McNamara, Targum Neofiti 1. Genesis. Translated, with Apparatus and Notes, AramBib 1A, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 1992.*

Pseudo-Jonathan (Tg. Ps.-J.),¹³ Fragmentary Targums (Frg. Tgs.),¹⁴ fragments from Cairo Geniza (CG)¹⁵ and *tosephot*.¹⁶

Sources confirm that targums were intended to explain the Torah extensively to listeners who did not know enough about Hebrew: “And he explains so that the rest of the people could understand, both women and children” (m. *Sopherim* 18:5). This was basically the purpose of the *derash*, that is, the exposition of the sacred text. It seems, therefore, that both the *derash* and the targum originate from the scholars’ desire to make the Torah more known and comprehensible to the people, and also from the intention to combine its knowledge with the tradition of oral teaching.

¹³ The first printed edition was published in 1591 on the basis of a manuscript which, however, did not survive. It is also contained in the manuscript from the fifteenth to sixteenth century, stored in the British Library. Since its first publication, it has been identified as Targum Yerushalmi (TY I or TJ I). However, research on Tg. Ps.-J.’s language has shown that it is not a Palestinian-Jewish Aramaic dialect. Therefore, scientists do not classify this Targum as Palestinian, and the name Targum Yerushalmi, is no longer used. Tg. Ps.-J. contains a translation of almost every line of the Pentateuch. It is a unique literary work, completely different from the rest of the Pentateuch targums. It differs not only from Tg. Onq., but also from Tg. Neof. and Frg. Tg., as well as from excerpts from the Cairo geniza, which represent a genuinely Palestinian tradition of the Palestinian Targums (Pal. Tgs). However, it should be noted that the Tg. Ps.-J. has a close relationship with the Tg. Onq. and the Pal. Tgs. It is written in Aramaic literary language in the late Jewish dialect, which combines elements of Tg. Onq. and Pal. Tgs. It is emphasized that this translation contains about 1500 supplements, which do not appear in existing targums, although some similarity to this material can be found in rabbinical writings. It is very difficult to determine the date of creation of the targum. Different dates are proposed for the creation of the Tg. Ps.-J., one group of scholars advocates its origin from the 4th century. (Hayward, Mortensen, and Flesher), while the second one indicates its origins in the Middle Ages, at least after the 7th century (Shinan, Splansky, itp.). P.V.M. Flesher, B. Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction*, 87–89, 159–166.

¹⁴ Previously referred to as Frg. Tgs., also known as Targum Yerushalmi II (TY II). However, the preserved fragments are fragments of various Targumic manuscripts. These are surviving fragments of Aramaic manuscripts stored in various European libraries: in Paris (Frg. Tg. P, 15th century), the Vatican Library (Frg. Tg. V, 13th century), Nuremberg (Frg. Tg. N, 13th century), Leipzig (Frg. Tg. L, 13th–14th century).

¹⁵ Excerpts from the targum texts of the Torah from the 8th to 18th century found by S. Schechter in 1896 in the geniza of the synagogue in Cairo (CG).

¹⁶ So called additions, which are contained in some medieval manuscripts.

Targumists read the Bible as a message passed on to them and their contemporaries that should remain understandable. Therefore, they tried to focus mainly on vocabulary that was difficult and foreign for their audience and to explain it. Furthermore, their reflection on the text contributed to introducing new elements. Among the translation techniques, an important role was played by bringing the text up to date, which took place on three levels: historical, cultural and religious.

Comparative research on the Aramaic Torah translations shows that targums differ in the way the individual elements of the original are rendered. However, each of them tries not to disturb the narrative fluidity of the Hebrew version. This method involves conscious translation changes, either by supplementing the “one-to-one” system or by deviating from it. This peculiar combination of faithful reflection of the Hebrew vocabulary and exegesis makes it possible to consider the targum to be an ideal equivalent of the Hebrew source text. Targums depart from the literal meaning of biblical texts particularly often in poetic and prophetic verses, which are suitable for eschatological and messianic interpretations¹⁷. One example of such translation is the targumic versions of Genesis 49¹⁸. It should be stressed that the Hebrew text of Genesis 49 itself is unclear in many places, so it is no wonder that the ancient versions translated it quite freely.¹⁹

¹⁷ On messianism in targums see: S. H. Levey, *The Messiah: Aramaic Interpretation – Messianic Exegesis of the Targum, Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, OH 1974*, see also E. Levine, *The Aramaic Version of the Bible. Contents and Context*, de Gruyter, Berlin 1988, 199–215.

¹⁸ M. Pérez Fernández, *Tradiciones Mesianicas en el Targum Palestinense. Estudios exégeticos*, Institución san Jerónimo, Valencia–Jerusalén 1981, 99–146; T. Legrand, *À propos d’un messianisme qui divise : Targum Genèse 49.8–12*, *Aramaic Studies* 12 (2004), 32–52.

¹⁹ On Gen 49 in targums see, among others: Y. Komlosh, “Ha-Aggadah betargumê birkat ya’akob,” *Annual of Bar-Ilan University: Studies in Judaica and the Humanities I, Pinkhos Churgin Memorial Volume*, ed. H.Z. Hirschberg, P. Artzl, Jerusalem, 1963, 198ff; R. Syren, *The Blessings in the Targums. A Study of the Targumic Interpretation of Genesis 49 and Deuteronomy 33*, Åbo 1986; B. Grossfeld, M. Aberbach, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis 49*, Scholars Press, Missoula, MT 1976; see also: B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onkelos to Genesis: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*, Aramaic Bible, vol. 6, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 1988.

It is worth noting that the Aramaic translations of the Pentateuch contain halachic material, but in the Pal. Tgs. and Tg. Ps-J.²⁰ one can find halachic elements, many of which contradict the solutions adopted by rabbis. Similarly, the content of haggadic material often differs from that of other targums. They convey numerous common beliefs by presenting the material in such a way as to build common people and encourage them to follow religious principles.

This article will undertake a comparative analysis of the Aramaic translations of verses 49:1–2 and 49:8–12 in the context of eschatological and messianic concepts and will also short discuss one of the blessings addressed to the tribe of Issachar and Benjamin on the basis of the version of the targums.

The Image of the “End Days” in the Targums of Gen 49:1–2

The poetic passage from Gen 49 plays a key role in the overall strategy of the patriarchs’ narrative, as well as the strategy of the book as a whole. Jacob’s last words to his sons became an opportunity to express the main themes of Genesis. The key to understanding Jacob’s last words is to read them within the narrative they present. As in the Masoretic text, in the Aramaic translations already in the above-mentioned verses 1–2, which are an introduction to Jacob’s blessing, there is additional material presenting a characteristic interpretation of the biblical text.

The Hebrew text of Gen 49:1-2:

- ¹ And Jacob called his sons and said,
Gather together, that I may tell you
what shall befall you in the last days
- ² Gather together and hear, you sons of Jacob,
And listen to Israel your father. (NKJV)

²⁰ M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis. Translated, with Introduction and Notes*, AramBib 1B, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 1992.

Tg. Onq. ²¹	Tg. Neof. ²²	Tg. Ps.-J. ²³
<p>1. Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, Gather together that I may tell you what will happen to you at the end of days.</p>	<p>1. And Jacob called his sons and said to them: "Gather together and I will tell you <i>the concealed secrets, the hidden ends, the giving of the rewards of the just, and the punishment of the wicked, and what the happiness of Eden is.</i>" <i>The twelve tribes gathered together and surrounded the bed of gold on which our father Jacob was lying after the end was revealed to him and that the determined end of the blessing and the consolation might be communicated to them. As soon as the end was revealed to him, the mystery was hidden from him. They hoped that he would relate to them the determined end of the redemption and the consolation. As soon as the mystery was revealed to him, it was hidden from</i></p>	<p>1. Jacob called his sons and said to them, "<i>Purify yourselves from uncleanness, and I will tell you the concealed secrets, the hidden times, the giving of the reward of the righteous, the punishment of the wicked, and what the happiness of Eden will be.</i>" <i>The twelve tribes of Israel were gathered together surrounding the golden bed on which he was lying. But as soon as the Glory of the Shekinah of the Lord was revealed, the time in which the King Messiah was destined to come was hidden from him. Then he said, "Come, and I will relate to you what will befall you at the end of the days</i></p>

²¹ B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, 158.

²² M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti I. Genesis*, 215–216.

²³ M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 157.

	<p><i>him and as soon as the door was opened to him, it was closed from him. Our father Jacob answered and blessed them; each according to his good works he blessed them.</i></p>	
<p>2. Gather together and listen, O sons of Jacob, <i>and receive instruction from Israel, your father</i>”.</p>	<p><i>2. After the twelve tribes of Jacob had gathered together and surrounded the bed of gold on which our father Jacob lay, they were hoping that he would reveal to them the order of the blessings, but it was hidden from him. Our father Jacob answered and said to them: “From Abraham, my father’s father, arose the blemished Ishmael and all the sons of Keturah. And from Isaac, my father, arose the blemished Esau, my brother. And I fear lest there should be among you one whose heart is divided against his brothers to go and worship before foreign idols.” The twelve sons of Jacob answered together</i></p>	<p>2. Gather and hear, O sons of Jacob, and <i>receive instruction from Israel your father</i>”.</p>

*and said: "Hear us,
O Israel, our father;
the Lord our God is
one Lord." Jacob
answered and said:
"Blessed be his
name; may the glory
of his kingdom be for
ever and ever."*

In the verse 1 there is the Hebrew expression *בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים*, which may mean "later times," "in the future", "the end of the days" or "the last days."²⁴ This expression appears, apart from this place, only three other times in the Pentateuch,²⁵ but it is more often used in the prophetic books.²⁶ According to some scholars this is an announcement of changes which will happen in a distant future, while others think that it belongs to the language of prophetic eschatology.²⁷

In the targumic tradition, this phrase becomes an impulse for a paraphrase that shows the eschatological views prevailing in the Jewish community of the time.²⁸ Tg. Neof., Frg. Tg.,²⁹ fragments

²⁴ Cf. "the end of the days", i.e. "the latter days", "the future," in: D.J.A. CLINES (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. 1, Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, Sheffield 1993, 200.

²⁵ Num 24:14; Deut 4:30 and 31:29.

²⁶ Is 2:2; Jer 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Dan 10:14; Hos 3:5; Mic 4:1.

²⁷ See C. Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 37–50*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN 2002, 223.

²⁸ At a time when Aramaic was a spoken language in Palestine, there was a great deal of interest in speculation on eschatology. See R.P. Gordon, "The Targumist as Eschatologists," in: *Hebrew Bible and Ancient Versions: Selected Essays of Robert P. Gordon*, SOTS, Routledge, Florence Taylor and Francis, London, New York 2016, 303–316.

²⁹ See e.g., Frg. Tg. P: "And Jacob called his sons and said to them: Gather together and I will relate to you the hidden determined ends, the concealed secrets, the giving of the reward of the righteous and the retribution of the wicked and what the delights of Eden are. The twelve tribes of Jacob were gathered together surrounding the bed of gold within which our father Jacob lay, requesting that he relate to them the determined end of the blessing and the consolation. As soon as the secret was

from the Cairo Geniza (CG Z) and also Tg. Ps.-J. convey an elaborate paraphrase about the “end of days” and what will happen then. The picture presented in them shows the development of eschatological and messianic ideas.³⁰ This rich tradition of interpretation contained in Palestinian targums and Tg. Ps.-J. to Gen 49 should be studied not only in rabbinical sources where direct parallels can be found, but also in apocalyptic literature, especially in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and the Qumran scrolls.

The translation of the v. 1 in Targum Neofiti is somewhat different from Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Fragmentary Targum P.³¹ Tg. Neof. presents a longer text also in verse 2 and, moreover, repeats a fragment of v. 1 when passing to v. 2.

In the targumic tradition, Jacob begins to reveal the “end days.” All targums verify the view that Jacob had proceeded to reveal the “end days” before he actually received permission from God to do so (cf. b. *Pes.* 56a).

It should be noted that it is only in the Tg. Ps.-J., however, that there is talk of the need to be cleansed of impurities, which is necessary to prepare man for revelation.³²

While the Tg. Onq. translates the Hebrew expressions by the Aram. *בְּסוֹף יוֹמָא* – “at the end of the days,” the Palestinian Targums introduce an additional description, especially the Tg. Neof., which lists the most terms that characterize this time.

רזייה סתימייא	<i>the concealed secrets</i>
קיציייה גניזייא	<i>the hidden ends</i>
אגריהון דצדקייא	<i>the rewards of the just</i>
ופורענתהון דרשיעיא	<i>and the punishment of the wicked</i>
ושלוותה דעדן	<i>and the happiness of Eden</i>
דאטגלי ליה	<i>was revealed to him</i>

revealed to him, it was hidden from him (or: as soon as it was revealed to him, the secret was hidden from him); as soon as the door was opened to him, it was closed from him. Our father Jacob turned and blessed his sons, each in accord with his good works he blessed them.” The text v. 2 in Frg. Tg. P, V, N is very close to that of Neof. with different variants.

³⁰ Extended fragments to v. 1 and 18 can be found in the transmission of the tosefta from the Cairo Geniza (CG. FF).

³¹ And Frg. Tg. V is practically identical with Tg. Neof.

³² Cf. Tg. Nfmg and Tg. Ps.-J. Lev 9:6.

אתכסא מינה	<i>was hidden from him</i>
קץ ברכתא	<i>end of the blessing</i>
וניחמתא	<i>and the consolation</i>
גבר לפם טבייא	<i>each according to his good works</i>

These expressions include a wide range of beliefs, from rewarding the righteous to the punishment of wrongdoers after death (cf. e.g., Tg. Neof. Gen 4:8), as well as in relation to each person and their actions. R. Syrén points out that the language used in the targums seems to be influenced by the Book of Daniel 2:28³³: “But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets” (גְּלֵא רִזִּין), and He tells King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen at the end of the days (יִמְיָא יִבְאָרְרִית).” The mysteries are revealed to Daniel by God in heaven in the apocalyptic sense (cf. Dan 2:18.30.47f).³⁴ Parallels to this text can also be found in other targums.³⁵

In contrast to the apocalyptic texts, the targums to Genesis 49:1–2 convey the text in the third person, and not in the first, as is usually the case in apocalyptic literature. Perhaps the targumists tried in this way to incorporate as much as possible of the beliefs and concepts that were accepted in the Jewish tradition of the time about the events of the final days.³⁶ The targumists not only tried to make up for the deficiencies of the biblical text, but also to explain why the words that followed do not reveal what Jacob says in the introduction.

The translation of Tg. Ps.-J. differs from Tg. Neof. and Frg. Tg. P (cf. Frg. Tg. V) in that it not only mentions the cleansing, but also it has fewer terms presenting the image of the end of times. The main difference is that the Tg. Neof. does not link in this verse the “end of days” to the coming of the Messiah, as the Tg. Ps.-J. and the Frg. Tg. P do. In the Tg. Neof. it corresponds to the mention of the “end of blessing and consolation.” The information about the coming of the

³³ R. Syrén, *The Blessings in the Targums*, 121.

³⁴ Cf. also 2 Ba 81:4, where similar expressions are used.

³⁵ See e.g., Tg. Isa. 24:16: “The prophet said: “The secret of the reward for the righteous has been revealed to me, the secret of the retribution of sinners has been revealed to me . . .”

³⁶ R. Syrén, *The Blessings in the Targums*, 121.

Messiah in 49:1 in Tg. Ps.-J. precedes the phrase: “and the Glory of the Shekhinah YHWH appeared (דאיתגלי איקר שכינתא דיי).” The use of the verb “revealed,” “was revealed” is a specific feature of the translation technique when it refers to divine revelation in the world.³⁷ This term precedes the characteristic phrases that are used in targums to refer to the YHWH, i.e. Yeqara (Glory)³⁸ and Shekinah (Presence).³⁹ They appear here together with the abbreviated version of the name of the Lord.⁴⁰ In those passages where the Bible speaks of God’s Presence, targums usually use the substitute expression Shekinta. In the context of the revelation of the end of times⁴¹ and the coming of the Messiah, the Glory of the YHWH Presence in the world can practically refer to the presence of the YHWH in the temple.⁴² The theme of the temple then returns in the Tg. Ps.-J. to 49:27. Such an interpretation is in line with the rabbinical views, derived from the Pharisaic circles. In Tg. Ps.-J. the most suitable place for Shekinah is the territory of Benjamin, within which there

³⁷ As many as different Hebrew cores are rendered using the Aramaic verb אִתְגַּלִּי; these are: “go down,” “come,” “meet,” “happen,” “pass through,” “go forth,” “arise,” “appear,” “be seen,” and “know.” See A. Chester, *Divine Revelation and Divine Titles in the Pentateuchal Targumim*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentums 14, J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen 1986, 31–155.

³⁸ It is said in HB that the Israelites see the glory of YHWH hovering over Mount Sinai and passing before Moses. It is used in the targums to refer to those biblical passages that may have contradicted the concept which says: “No one can see me and stay alive” (Num 33:20).

³⁹ Review of views on Shekinah and Yeqara, see A. Chester, *Divine Revelation and Divine Titles in the Pentateuchal*, 312–324.

⁴⁰ Cf. revelation given to Balaam and hidden from the prophets (targums to Num 24:17–20), an award prepared for Israel in the future world (Tg. Num 23:23), God’s retribution to the wicked (Tg. Num 24:23).

⁴¹ Ex 16:7.10; 24:16; 33:18.22. “Glory” clearly replaces God himself, because there is parallel vocabulary in the immediate context: “because man cannot see me” (v. 20) or: “I’ll lay down my hand until I pass” (v. 22).

⁴² See for example. “Abraham gave thanks and prayed there in that place, and said: ‘I beseech, by the mercy from before you, O Lord! It is manifest before you that there was no deviousness in my heart, and that I sought to perform your decree with joy. Therefore, when the children of Isaac my son enter into a time of distress, remember them, and answer them, and redeem them. All these generations to come will say, ‘On this mountain Abraham tied his son Isaac, and there the Shekinah of the Lord was revealed to him!’” (Ps.-J. Gen 22:14). M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 80.

was a place where sacrifices can be made (Ps.-J. Gen 49:27).⁴³ It is assumed that although in the times of the translator of the Tg. Ps.-J. there was neither a kingdom nor a temple anymore, the targumist often referred to these most important elements of Judaism.⁴⁴

In this context, the Tg. Ps.-J. stresses that the specific moment in the future when the Messiah, the King, will come (מלכא משיחא) has been hidden from him (Jacob).⁴⁵

Although the theme of the Messiah is quite rare in targums,⁴⁶ in Jacob's blessing it returns this time in all translations also in Genesis 49:10–12.

Although verse 2 in Tg. Onq. and Tg. Ps.-J. does not contain many changes, it is worth noting the Aramaic phrase used there, "and you will be instructed (אולפן)," which corresponds to the call for the sons of Jacob to listen to what their father tells them. The first time, the verb "listen" was used by the targumist, while in the second case, it seems to be understood that it refers to something more concrete than just "listening," namely the instruction that the sons of Jacob receive.

Tg. Neof., like the Frg. Tgs. manuscripts repeat the ending of v. 1, they also add additional haggadic material in which Jacob's blessing begins by examining the faithfulness of the tribes of Israel to the God YHWH. Jacob refers here to the sons of Abraham and Isaac, or Ishmael, as well as the sons of Ketura and Esau, who worshipped foreign deities. In response, the sons of Jacob recite Israel's confession of faith in the only God, in the Aramaic version of the *Shma*⁴⁷: שמע מנן ישראל אבונן יי אלהן יי חד – "Hear Israel, our father! The Lord, our God, the Lord is one." This formula which was the equivalent of a profession of faith in later rabbinical Judaism.⁴⁸

⁴³ A. Kuśmirek, "Świątynia jerozolimska w targumach," *Collectanea Theologica* 79 (2009) no. 2, 65–76.

⁴⁴ B.P. Mortensen, *The Priesthood in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Renewing the Profession*, Studies in Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture 4, Brill Academic Publishers 2006, 173.

⁴⁵ M. Shephard, "Targums, The New Testament, and Biblical Theology," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (March 2008) no. 1, 53.

⁴⁶ See targums to Gen 3:15; Num 11:26; Num 24:7.17; Exod 12:42.

⁴⁷ See the same Midrash in Tg. Neof. Deut 6:4.

⁴⁸ B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, 158.

The response of the Jacob's sons arose in reference to the name of Israel given to Jacob, which was used in Deut 6:4.

In Tg. Neof. Jacob responds with the words: ברוך שמייה כבודיה – “Blessed be his name; may the glory⁴⁹ of his kingdom be for ever and ever kingdom last forever and ever.” This statement is missing from the Frg. Tgs. (P, V, N, L).

In targums Jacob's sons “received instruction” from their father, to recite the Shema daily. This formula was the equivalent of a profession of faith in later rabbinical Judaism. Parallels to the targums' interpretation can be found in the Rabbinic literature, for example in *Gen. Rab.* (98:3) and the Babylonian Talmud (*Pes.* 56a):

“Jacob wished to reveal to his sons the ‘end of days, whereupon the Shekinah departed from him. Said he, ‘Perhaps Heaven forbend! There is one unfit among my children, like Abraham, from whom there issued Ishmael, or like my father Isaac, from whom there issued Esau. (But) his sons answered him, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One;’ just as there is only One in your heart so is there in our heart only One.’ In that moment our father Jacob opened (his mouth) and exclaimed, ‘Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever.’”⁵⁰

Midrash and Talmud relate that Jacob wanted to prophetically reveal the Messianic age to his sons, but was prevented by God from carrying out his intention. Since he suspected that one of his sons might be unworthy, he was reassured by their proclamation in unison of their belief in God (Deut 6:4).

The Image of the Messiah in the Judah's Blessing in Targums (49:8–12)

One of the very popular expectations was that the coming of the Messiah as king, who will come from the David dynasty, will ensure Israel's victory over the pagan nations and will introduce the time of peace and justice. Nevertheless, in targums there is relatively little

⁴⁹ Tg. Neof. used the Hebrew word כבוד – “glory” with the suffix 3 per. m. sg.

⁵⁰ B. Grossfeld, *Targum Neofiti I. An Exegetical Commentary to Genesis. Including Full Rabbinic Parallels*, Sepher-Hermon Press, New York, NY 2000, 288.427.

mention of the Messiah or the King-Messiah, as he is called in the Palestinian Targums.⁵¹

He returns in the context of the words addressed to the tribe for Judah (49:8–12). As with other tribes, the author of the Hebrew text uses a metaphor to characterize other tribes with animal symbols such as a lion, donkey, snake or wolf. In 49:8–9 they emphasize the greatness and power of the tribe of Judah, which used to be similar to a young lion, and over time it has become like an old lion who rests peacefully after the hunt, because its strength arouses widespread fear and therefore nobody dares to disturb it.⁵²

The Hebrew text of Gen 49:8–9:

- ⁸ Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise;
 Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies;
 Your father's children shall bow down before you.
- ⁹ Judah *is a lion's whelp*; From the prey, my son, you have gone up.
 He bows down, he lies down as a lion;
 And as a lion, who shall rouse him? (NKJV)

Tg. Onq. ⁵³	Tg. Neof. ⁵⁴	Tg. Ps.-J. ⁵⁵
8. Judah, <i>you confessed and were not embarrassed</i> ; [therefore] your brothers shall praise you. <i>Your hand shall prevail against your adversaries; your enemies shall be shattered; they shall turn their nape from you.</i> Your father's	8. Judah, you will your brothers praise, <i>and by your name shall all the Jews be called Jews.</i> Your hands will avenge you of your enemies; all the sons of your father shall advance to salute you.	8. Judah, <i>you confessed concerning the incident of Tamar; therefore your brothers will praise you, and they will be called Jews after your name.</i> Your hands will avenge you of your enemies by throwing arrows

⁵¹ M. Pérez Fernández, *Tradiciones Mesiánicas en el Targum Palestinense*, 287–289.

⁵² Cf. Num 23:24; 24:9.

⁵³ B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, 158.

⁵⁴ M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti I. Genesis*, 219.

⁵⁵ M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 158.

sons shall come before you and salute you.		at them when they turn their back before you; and your father's sons will come forward to salute you.
9. From the house of Judah dominion shall emerge in the beginning and a king shall be raised in the end; because you, my son, withdrew yourself from the sentence of death. He shall rest [and] dwell with strength like a lion and like a lioness, and there is no kingdom that could move him.	9. I shall compare you, Judah, to a lion's whelp; you saved my son Joseph from his murderers. From the judgment of Tamar, my son, you are innocent; you will rest and dwell in the midst of battle, like the lion and like the lioness, and there is no nation nor kingdom that shall stand against you.	9. I compare you, Judah my son, to a whelp, the young of lions, because your soul remained aloof from the murder of my son Joseph, and from the judgment of Tamar you shall be delivered. You rest and you are at ease in strength, like a lion, and like a lioness; when he rests, who will rouse him?

In Aramaic translations, poetic metaphors from the Hebrew text are rarely preserved as such. The targumists omit them completely or change them into something comprehensible, often using more descriptive language. In this way, they replace the proper translation with a targum-specific explanation of the text.

In these translations, one can also find another translation technique, which *meturgemanim* use, referring to different meanings of words. An example is the double translation of the Hebrew term *יָדָה*. Targums confirm this translation of the word: “to celebrate,” “to praise,” and “to confess.” Confession, which Tg. Neof. and Tg. Ps.-J. speak of directly and Tg. Onq. indirectly, related to the history of Tamar, is described in Gen 38:26 (cf. *Gen. Rab.* 99:8).

The word “lion” in this verse is interpreted by Tg. Onq. as a symbol of the king, and it then introduces a messianic thread here. Conversely, Tg. Neof. and Tg. Ps.-J. interpret it differently.

Next, in the Masoretic text of Gen 49:10–12 a metaphorical description of Judah is presented⁵⁶:

- 10 The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
 Nor a lawgiver⁵⁷ from between his feet,
 Until Shiloh comes⁵⁸;
 And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.
- 11 Binding his donkey to the vine,
 And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,
 He washed his garments in wine,
 And his clothes in the blood of grapes.
- 12 His eyes *are* darker than wine,
 And his teeth whiter than milk.

Tg. Onq. ⁵⁹	Tg. Neof. ⁶⁰	Tg. Ps.-J. ⁶¹
10. <i>The ruler shall never depart from the House of Judah, nor the scribe from his children's children for evermore until the Messiah comes, to whom belongs the kingdom, and him shall nations obey.</i>	10. <i>Kings shall not cease from among those of the house of Judah and neither [shall] scribes teaching the Law from his son' sons until the time King Messiah shall come, to whom the kingship belongs; to him shall all the kingdoms be subject.</i>	10. <i>Kings and rulers shall not cease from those of the house of Judah, nor scribes teaching the Law from his descendants, until the time the King Messiah comes, the youngest of his sons, because of whom the people will pine away.</i>

⁵⁶ Translation of New King James Version (1982).

⁵⁷ Another translation: “nor the ruler's staff from between his feet” (JPS, NJB, RSV, TNK), or: nor the ruler's staff from his descendants (NLT).

⁵⁸ Transliterated “Shiloh” (ASV, NKJV, NASB), whose meaning is uncertain, another translations: “until he [Judah] comes to Shiloh.” or “until tribute comes to him [Judah]” (NAB, NJB, NRSV); “until he comes to whom it [i.e. sceptre] belongs” (RSV, NLT).

⁵⁹ B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, 158.

⁶⁰ M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1. Genesis*, 219–220.

⁶¹ M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 159.

11. *He shall lead Israel round about his city; the people shall build his Temple; the righteous shall be round about him; and they that carry out the Law shall be with him in study. Let his raiment, be of fine purple, and his garment all woolen, crimson, and of bright sparkling colors.*

11. *How beautiful is King Messiah who is to arise from among those of the house of Judah. He girds his loins and goes forth to battle against those that hate him; and 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.*

11. *How beautiful is the King Messiah who is to arise from among those of the house of Judah. He girds his loins and comes down arranging battle lines against his enemies and slaying kings together with their rulers; and there is no king or ruler who can withstand him. He makes the mountains red with the blood of the slain; his garments are rolled in blood; he is like a presser of grapes*

12. *His mountains shall be red with his vineyards; his vats shall be dripping with wine; his valleys shall be white with grain and with flocks of sheep.*

12. *How beautiful are the eyes of King Messiah; 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.*

12. *How beautiful are the eyes of the King Messiah, like pure wine, for they have not seen the uncovering of nakedness or the shedding of innocent blood. His teeth are whiter than milk because he has not eaten what has been robbed or taken by force. His mountains and his press will be red from wine, and his hills white from the harvest and from the flocks.*

Right at the beginning of v. 10 Aramaic translations provide a paraphrase of the Hebrew text, the noun שֵׁבֶט – “scepter” is interpreted as the future rulers of the tribe of Judah. The Hebrew term מַחֲקֵק – “shepherd’s staff” may refer to “mace”, “rule’s staff”. The term may also be translated as “leader”, “ruler”. However, targums derive it from חֵק – “law,” “decree,”⁶² and the phrase מִבֵּין רַגְלָיו – “from between his feet” is interpreted with reference to future descendants. Based on this, the targums refer the term מַחֲקֵק to “scribe,” (Tg. Onq.: סִפְרָא) or “scribes, teaching the Law” (Tg. Ps.-J.: וּסְפָרִין מֵאַלְפֵי אֹרִייתָא cf. Tg. Neof.; Frg. Tg.). Tg. Onq.: “and a scribe among his children’s children.”⁶³

In this way, an update related to a later institution is introduced into the biblical text. This verse also contains a characteristic targum addition, namely that it does not refer to the patriarch himself, but to the “house of Judah.”

In v. 10 there is an enigmatic expression: עַד כִּי יבֹא שִׁילָה. If שִׁילָה is a proper name, then the meaning appears: “until Shilo(h) comes.” However, if it is a relative particle (ש) combined with the preposition and pronoun of the 3rd male person לו, the phrase can be understood as: “until the one to whom [it] belongs comes.” The Hebrew text of Gen 49:10 is interpreted by targums according to the rules of gematria or the numerical equivalent. The Hebrew word Messiah – מְשִׁיחַ has exactly the same numerical value (358)⁶⁴ as the letters of the expression: “שִׁילָה יבֹא (שִׁילָה יבֹא).” According to gematria, this strange expression has a meaning: “until the Messiah comes.” There is no such ambiguity in the targums. This interpretation is given by Aramaic translations as well as other ancient testimonies.⁶⁵ While the Tg. Onq. mentions the coming of the Messiah, to whom the kingdom belongs, in other targums he is referred to as the King – Messiah (מְלִיכָא מְשִׁיחָא).

⁶² Many early and medieval commentators derived מַחֲקֵק from the root חֵקֵק, meaning “to incise, inscribe,” and understood it as a term for a scribe.

⁶³ Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 97; b. *Sanh.* 5a.

⁶⁴ The value of מְשִׁיחַ is 40 + 300 + 10 + 8 = 358; שִׁילָה יבֹא is 10 + 2 + 1 + 300 + 10 + 30 + 5 = 358.

⁶⁵ The same Messianic interpretation of Gen 49:10 appears in Peshier Gen to 49:10 (4Q252 col. 5, 1–6); CD XII 23; XIV 19; XIX 10; XX 1.

In Tg. Ps.-J. there is another clarification here: “the youngest (זעיר) of his sons,” which may result from the fact that the author combined – “Shilo” with the name “Shelah,” that is the youngest son of Judah (cf. Gen. 38:5) or with a phrase: “the placenta (from שלֵהָה), which came out from between her legs” in Deut. 28:57, which Tg. Onq. explains as: “the youngest (זעיר – this word is also used by Tg. Ps.-J. in this verse) of the children she gives birth to.”

In the Hebrew text verses 11–12 describe the favourable conditions of the tribe of Judah. The biblical poet shows the reader new details of security and peace, emphasizing the country’s prosperity. This is also expressed by the image of the vines which have grown so much that the inhabitants of this land attach their asses to them without worrying that animals will destroy their precious crops. There is so much wine that members of the tribe wash their clothes in it and drink this drink generously, as evidenced by their cloudy eyes. And their teeth show traces of milk, which is also in abundance.

The targum translation, especially of v. 11 has only a remote resemblance to the biblical text. The Hebrew verb אָסַר – “to tie,” which in the Hebrew text is in the sense of “to bind,” “to tether” (e.g., a donkey), was understood by the translators in a completely different way, namely as “to gird on” (a sword),” which in turn leads to presenting the Messiah as a warrior.

Tg. Neof. and also Frg. Tg. and Tg. Ps.-J. contain a double description of the Messiah⁶⁶: while v. 11 shows the image of the warrior and conqueror, then in v. 12 he is shown as the advocate of peace. In this description some of the elements of the Hebrew text metaphor are used.

Both concepts could belong to the same document, complementing each other. The double description of the Messiah in the Palestinian Targums of Gen 49:11–12 (Tg. Neof., Frg. Tg., Tg. Ps.-J.) is considered to be one messianic poem, which includes the war-like aspect of this character (v. 11) as well as the peaceful aspect (v. 12). Their antithetical parallelism and identical vocabulary

⁶⁶ The comparative analysis of Tg. Onq. and Tg. Neof. To Gen 49: 8–12 see T. Legrand, *À propos d'un messianisme qui divise Targumu Genèse 49.8–12*, *Aramaic Studies* 12 (2014), 32–52.

indicate that they formed a coherent work and came out of the hands of one author.⁶⁷

In place of the description of the Messiah's activities in v. 11, Targum Onqelos talks about Israel, which is to take care of the cities, and the nation will build a temple (הֵיכָלֵינוּ). He is further portrayed as a righteous man who will faithfully obey the Law. Targum Onqelos seeks to revise the image of the one to come, replacing the warrior Messiah with the image of the Messiah as a Torah teacher⁶⁸. The change introduced by Tg. Onq. may have been due to a different political situation following the failed Jewish uprising against the Romans.⁶⁹

The Interpretation of Blessings in the Targums on the Example of Issachar and Benjamin

In the Hebrew text, Jacob's statements addressed at individual tribes are a demonstration of human characters and behaviours, as well as of the divine intentions for these tribes. In many of them, the biblical author uses animal metaphors, which are interpreted differently in targums. Such transformations will be discussed on the examples of Issachar (Gen 49:14–15) and Benjamin (49:27).

⁶⁷ M. Pérez Fernández, *Tradiciones Mesianicas en el Targum Palestinense*, 141f.

⁶⁸ T. Legrand, *À propos d'un messianisme qui divise Targumu Genèse 49.8–12*, 38–44.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 143. The same concept of the Messianic warrior king and liberator appears in Frg. Tg. Num 24:7 in the interpretation of the Balaam prophecy: "From among their sons will arise their king, from among them will come their liberator. He will gather again captives from the countries of their enemies, and their sons will rule over many nations. He shall be stronger than Saul, who took pity on Agag, king of the Amalekites, and the reign of Messiah-King shall be exalted. The biblical "scepter" and "star" of Jacob Tg. Num 24:17 interprets in a messianic sense, as does Qumran and the New Testament (4QTest; CD 7:18–21; Matt 2:1nn; Lk 1:78f). In the targum we read: "There shall rise up a king from the house of Jacob, the liberator and ruler from the house of Israel. He will destroy the kings of Moab and destroy all the sons of Seth."

2. Issachar

The Hebrew text of Gen 49:14–15:

- ¹⁴ Issachar is a strong donkey,
Lying down between two burdens;
¹⁵ He saw that rest *was* good,
And that the land *was* pleasant;
He bowed his shoulder to bear *a burden*,
And became a band of slaves (NKJ).

Tg. Onq. ⁷⁰	Tg. Neof. ⁷¹	Tg. Ps.-J. ⁷²
14. Issachar is <i>rich in possessions; he shall have his inheritance between boundaries.</i>	14. Issachar [is] <i>a strong tribe</i> , lying between two territories.	14. Issachar <i>is loaded with the Law. He is a strong tribe, knowing the determinations of the times; and he lies down between the territories of his brothers.</i>
15. <i>On perceiving that his portion is good and the land was producing fruit, he shall conquer the provinces of the nations and destroy their inhabitants; and those who remain of them shall be subservient to him and pay tribute.</i>	15. And he saw <i>from the beginning</i> that it was good, and the land of Israel that its fruits were rich; and he bends his shoulders for the study of the Law, and his brothers bring him up tribute.	15. He saw that the <i>repose of the world to come</i> was good, and that [his] <i>portion</i> of the land of Israel was pleasant; <i>therefore</i> he bent his shoulder to labor in the Law, and his brothers offered him gifts.

The biblical term “rawboned donkey” (תָּמֵר גָּרָם) conveys the idea of “strong”, thus a “strong donkey”. In Tg. Onq. Is rendered as “rich in possessions” (עֲהִיר בְּנִכְסִין). Another way of interpreting this term

⁷⁰ B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, 158–159.

⁷¹ M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti I. Genesis*, 221.

⁷² M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 159–160.

is offered by Tg. Neof. And Tg. Ps.-J. (שבט תקיף – “a strong tribe”) to stress the power of the tribe. It also gives another interpretation, pointing out the wealth of this tribe in reference to v. 15.⁷³ The Tg. Ps.-J. as the only one already in verse 14 draws attention to Issachar’s knowledge of the Law, the term “donkey” (חמר) interprets also as “is loaded” (חמיר)⁷⁴ and adds “with the Law” (באורייה)⁷⁵. It is interesting that targums omit the term “donkey”. It is possible that the targumists considered it unacceptable to compare this tribe to a donkey. For this reason, they give an alternative translation, which is the praise for Issachar and references to the area where he lived.

The Tg. Ps.-J. also adds information about a “determination of the times” (בעני בזימניה), which may result from the opinion that this tribe enjoyed: “Of Issachar men who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs, and all their kinsmen under their command” (RSV 1 Chr 12:33).

The meaning of the Hebrew term מְשָׁכָתִים is uncertain. As the dual form it occurs only here and in Judg 5:16. Translators and commentators vacillate between the translation “burdens”, “saddlebags” and “sheepfolds” or “borders.”. Aramaic translators take on the latter meaning.

The translation of v. 15 emphasizes once again the zealous study of the Law by Issachar. The biblical poet shows an idyllic picture of a place, not only to rest, but also as a good place to live because of the fertile soil.⁷⁶ The translations of Pal. Tgs. And Tg. Ps.-J. speak clearly of this. The latter, however, is the only one to introduce the idea of a “future world” to this verse.

The picture presented in Genesis 49:14 shows a strong tribe, which takes up hard work on good ground (v. 15). In the Hebrew

⁷³ Cf. b. *Qama* 17a.

⁷⁴ Septuagint חמר – “donkey” reads as חמד – Greek: ἐπεθύμησεν; “Issachar desired that which is good.”

⁷⁵ In the Midrash *Gen. Rab.* (98:12 and 99:10) it is said that: “as a donkey carries a load, the Issachar is loaded with the Torah yoke.” Similarly, *Tanhuma* and Rashi give the same interpretation on a different basis: “Carries the Torah like a strong donkey with a heavy load on it.”

⁷⁶ According to the division it was an area located at the eastern end of the fertile Jezreel valley (Josh 19:17–22) between the part of the Zebulun and the Jordan River.

text of v. 15, it is expressed by the phrase: “he bowed his shoulder to bear” and further on it says that he has become a “servant people at forced labour.” Targums change the message of the Hebrew text. It is unacceptable to the interpreters to think that the blessed tribe of Israel could agree to be enslaved. Consequently, the translators interpret the text differently. Tg. Onq. Refers the Hebrew phrase “bow the shoulder” (וַיִּטְּ שֵׁכְמוֹ) to nations whose “arm” is to be bent under the yoke of Issachar. It may, therefore, mean, as in 49:13, the announcement of territorial conquests and, as a consequence, their paying tribute.⁷⁷

Conversely, in Pal. Tgs. And Tg. Ps.-J., and in most of Midrashim Issachar “bows his arms” to study the Torah, and the tribute is paid to him by his brothers.

2. Benjamin

The Hebrew text of Gen 49:27:

Benjamin is a ravenous wolf;
In the morning he shall devour the prey,
And at night he shall divide the spoil. (NKJV)

Tg. Onq.⁷⁸	Tg. Neof.⁷⁹	Tg. Ps.-J.⁸⁰
27. [As for] Benjamin, in his territory shall the Divine Presence dwell, and in his possession shall the Temple be built. In the morning, and	27. Benjamin is a strong tribe ⁸¹ . In his territory will the sanctuary be built and in his possessions will the Glory of the Shekinah of the	27. Benjamin is a mighty tribe, like a wolf [with] his prey. The Shekinah of the Lord of the world will dwell in his land, and in his inheritance the Temple will be built.

⁷⁷ Alternatively, שֵׁכְמוֹ can be translated, similarly to שֶׁכַם in Gen 48:22, where Tg. Onq. translates it as “part.” In this case the translation may be: “and he bowed/tilted their part” (the territory of other nations). See. M. Aberbach, B. Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis*, 294f.

⁷⁸ B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, 159.

⁷⁹ M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1. Genesis*, 226.

⁸⁰ M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, 162.

⁸¹ Tg. Nfmg, Frg. Tg. P: “likened to a violent bear and in (his) territory.”

towards evening *shall the priests offer the sacrifice and at eveningtime shall they divide the remaining portions of the residue of the sacred offerings.*"

Lord dwell. In the morning the priests will offer the perpetual lamb with the minhah, and in the evening they will divide what remains of the offerings of the sons of Israel."

In the morning the priests will offer the regular lamb [of sacrifice] until the fourth hour, and at twilight they will offer a second lamb, and in the evening they will divide what is left of the remainder of the offerings, and each will eat his portion."

In the targumic translations the metaphor of a wolf remained in the Tg. Ps.-J. It seems that the wolf – a beast of prey was not quite suitable as a metaphor of a tribe of Israel. This can be evidenced by a fragment of the *Testament of Benjamin* from 2nd century BC:

"And I shall no longer be called a rapacious wolf on account of your rapine, but 'the Lord's worker' providing food for those who do good works" (11:1).⁸²

Targumists, in turn, endeavoured to explain this verse about the Patriarch, of whom it was said in the Jewish tradition that he was free of all sin or was even so perfect that the angel of death had no power over him (cf. b. *Šabb.* 55b; b. *Bath.* 17a).

Aramaic translators interpreted this verse as an exaltation of Benjamin, because it is on his territory that the Shekinah will dwell (Tg. Onq., Tg. Pal. and Tg. Ps.-J.).⁸³ The Hebrew text mention of times of day refers in targums to the sacrifices made by priests in the Temple. The Targumists had the basis to praise Benjamin in connection with the temple and its worship.⁸⁴

The Hebrew text talks about dividing the remains of the sacrifices. Both daily sacrifices were used up in their entirety, so the translators added other sacrifices to make the biblical reference to

⁸² J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, *Apocalyptic Literature and Testament*, Garden City, NY 1983, 828.

⁸³ See also Deut 33:12; *Mechilta de R. Shimon b. Yohai* to Ex 14:22; b. *Meg.* 26a.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 99:1; b. *Yoma* 12a; b. *Meg.* 26a; b. *Zebah.* 54a; ARN A 35.

“dividing” make sense. To make this possible, a phrase “in the evening” was added, although it had previously already once been translated as “dusk” (Tg. Neof., Frg. P, Tg. Ps.-J.), “sunset” (Frg. Tg. V, N) or “towards the evening” (Tg. Onq.).

Verse 28 concludes Jacob’s blessing in the targums. It is stressed here that “all of them are equally righteous.”⁸⁵ The translators stress that when Jacob finished blessing individual generations, attributing particular values, privileges and announcing their future to each of them, he did not finish his speech yet, but blessed everyone as a group. Thus, none of the generations could consider themselves more important than the others. This view is based on the biblical phrase: “he blessed them.”

The translations of the Aramaic versions of Gen 49:1–8, especially Pal. Tgs. and Tg. Ps.-J., contain many additions and explanations, in which elements of the popular faith can be found. It is worth noting that the targums also justify why Jacob did not transmit the revelation in the Hebrew text, because the mystery was hidden from him and therefore he only blessed his sons. The final lines in Tg. Neof. are very similar to verse 28, which concludes the whole message of Jacob. We learn more about the views of the Jewish community of that time about the Messiah, not only what his actions will be, but even who he will be (Tg. Neof. and Tg. Ps.-J.). The explanations of the Targumists also play an important role. They result not only from the desire to explain the Torah, but also to make it more known to the people, as well as from the intention to combine its knowledge with the tradition of oral teaching.

Jacob’s prophetic words must have provided great encouragement to his descendants in difficult times. Jacob made sure that every tribe would have its place in the Promised Land. It can be said that, also in the targumic version, Jacob’s blessings played an important role, giving hope for the fulfilment of God’s promises in the future, when the Messiah comes.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 99:4; *Tanhuma Wa-Yehi* 16.

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