FINDING CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THROUGH
THE ARAMAIC MEMRA, SHEKINAH, AND YEQARA
OF THE TARGUMS

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Adam Joseph Howell
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APPROVAL SHEET

FINDING CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THROUGH THE ARAMAIIC MEMRA, SHEKINAH, AND YEQARA OF THE TARGUMS

Adam Joseph Howell

Read and Approved by:

_____________________________________
Russell T. Fuller (Chair)

_____________________________________
Terry J. Betts

_____________________________________
William F. Cook III

Date______________________________
To Liz,

my co-heir of the grace of life,

my Beloved
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

General


LXX  Septuagint

mg.  marginal gloss (in Targum Neofiti)

MT   Masoretic Text (Hebrew Old Testament)

Targumic Texts

CTg. Cairo Genizah Targum manuscript fragments (of Palestinian Targums), followed by manuscript identifier.

Frg. Tg(s). Fragmentary Targum(s) (of the Pentateuch)

Tg. Isa, etc. Targum Isaiah, etc. (from Targum Jonathan of the Later Prophets)

Tg. Jon. Targum Jonathan (of the Prophets)

Tg. Josh, etc. Targum Joshua, etc. (from Targum Jonathan of the Former Prophets)

Tg. Neof. Targum Neofiti (of the Pentateuch)

Tg. Neof. [mg.] Targum Neofiti marginal gloss

Tg. Onq. Targum Onqelos (of the Pentateuch)

Tg. Ps.-J. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (of the Pentateuch)
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<td>Neg.</td>
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<td>Qoh. Rab.</td>
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<td>Roš Haš.</td>
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t. Tosefta
Ta’an Ta’anit
y. Jerusalem Talmud (e.g., y. Megillah)
Zebah Zevahim

Secondary Sources

AB Anchor Bible
BECNT Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Bib Biblica
BTB Biblical Theology Bulletin
CBQ Catholic Biblical Quarterly
ChrCent Christian Century
CurTM Currents in Theology and Mission
EstBib Estudios biblicos
ExpTim Expository Times
HTR Harvard Theological Review
JBL Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JJS Journal of Jewish Studies
JPSTC Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
JQR Jewish Quarterly Review
JSJ Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods
JSNTSup Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JTS Journal of Theological Studies
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>New American Commentary</td>
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<td>NICNT</td>
<td>New International Commentary on the New Testament</td>
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<td>NICOT</td>
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<td>NIGTC</td>
<td>New International Greek Testament Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>NovT</td>
<td>Novem Testamentum</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSBT</td>
<td>New Studies in Biblical Theology</td>
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<td>PNTC</td>
<td>Pillar New Testament Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>ResQ</td>
<td>Restoration Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>SwJT</td>
<td>Southwestern Journal of Theology</td>
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<tr>
<td>TDNT</td>
<td>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTC</td>
<td>Tyndale Old Testament Commentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBC</td>
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Writing a dissertation is not a journey that one travels alone. Most often, the author stands on the shoulders of those who have sacrificially given of their time and resources to see this work completed. Doctor Russell Fuller, my dissertation supervisor, has provided feedback that has made this dissertation a worthwhile project. He has taught me to think critically, even about my own writing. By doing so, he has made me a better writer and scholar, and I am deeply indebted for his patience and diligent oversight of this project. Doctors T. J. Betts and William Cook have been sources of encouragement along the way and helped me see the light at the end, even in the most difficult days of this endeavor. Their pastoral demeanor will be rewarded at the resurrection.

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beloved.

Finally, the Lord has given me grace through long nights and early mornings to complete this work for the glory of his name and the building up of his kingdom. My greatest desire is that God would be honored with this work and that Jesus would be exalted. To God alone, through Christ, be the glory.

Adam J. Howell

Louisville, Kentucky

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

For centuries, an important task for Christian scholars has been to find Christ in the Old Testament. Among modern evangelical scholars, finding Christ in the Old Testament is a fundamental pursuit. Various methods have been used to accomplish this task, but one exegetical method used by the apostles was to employ terms and concepts from the Targums.\(^1\) The apostles certainly used other methods to find Christ in the Old Testament, but targumic exegesis is a method that is often overlooked.\(^2\) Modern scholars who follow the exegetical patterns and interpretations of the apostles have the surest footing in finding Christ in the Old Testament. Since the New Testament authors used terms and concepts from the Targums to speak of Jesus, further investigating targumic vocabulary and theological concepts is a legitimate method to see if the Targums possibly point to Christ in the Old Testament. This exegetical method for finding Christ in the Old Testament, so far, has not been fully exhausted.

Many biblical scholars often neglect the exegetical and theological value of the Targums, and yet, as part of the first-century cultural milieu, these traditions on the Hebrew Bible likely influenced the writers of the New Testament.\(^3\) The extent to which


\(^3\)Throughout this work the term “Hebrew Bible” will be used to speak of the Old Testament, distinguishing between the Aramaic Old Testament (Targums) and the Hebrew Old Testament. The term
New Testament authors appropriated targumic terms and ideas remains debatable.\(^4\) However, one could argue that New Testament authors used targumic concepts to explain the person of Jesus Christ. By glancing at the Targums of Genesis 1, John’s Logos theology becomes evident as well as Paul’s claims that “by Him all things were created” (Col 1:16).\(^5\) Indeed, the Targums provide a lens through which New Testament authors read the Hebrew Bible and thus understood the Christ in their Scriptures.

The New Testament authors appropriated many contemporary traditions (Acts 17:28; Jude 14), and the Targums were included among these available sources. Second Timothy 3:8–9 provides names of the two magicians in Pharaoh’s court (Exod 7:11–12), and yet these names are nowhere revealed in the Hebrew Bible. Instead, the Targums likely provided Paul with the names of the Egyptian sorcerers in Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 7:11.\(^6\) In addition, Martin McNamara has seen other possible targumic similarities in the name “Zechariah, son of Barachiah” (Matt 23:35; Tg. Lam 2:20), the idea of extending mercy (Luke 6:36; Tg. Ps.-J. Lev 22:28), and the phrase “son of man.”\(^7\) These examples, among others, show that targumic concepts probably influenced New Testament revelation in the first century.\(^8\)

\(^4\)The debate over the extent to which New Testament authors appropriated targumic terms will be discussed later in this chapter.


\(^8\)Whether the targumic traditions existed in the first century as oral traditions or written texts is debated. Those scholars who argue for written texts typically appeal to the Targum fragments found at
The New Testament authors not only used concepts from the targumic tradition, but they also appropriated specific targumic words in their writing. Three terms appear to shed light on how the New Testament authors understood Jesus’ functional roles as the divine Son through the targumic traditions. The Memra (מִמְרָא, ‘word’) creates, redeems, receives worship, and acts as a warrior on behalf of Israel.\(^9\) The Shekinah (שְׂכַינָה, ‘presence’) represents the manifest presence of God as in the pillar of fire and cloud at the exodus (Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 13:21). Finally, Yeqara (יֵעָרָא, ‘glory’) is the visible, shining glory of Yahweh (Tg. Isa 6:1). In the Targums, these terms often function as an agent of God or a manifestation of God. Similarly, the New Testament presents Jesus as the agent and manifestation of God. Therefore, these three targumic terms may contribute to the New Testament presentation of Jesus’ functional roles.\(^10\)

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\(^10\) Another term that is germane to the discussion is Dibbera/Dibbura (דִּבְּרֵא/דִּבְבְּרָא). Although Dibbera is an important term related to John’s use of Logos, this dissertation is limited to occurrences of Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara particularly. For comments on Dibbera, see Ferdinand Weber, *Jüdische Theologie auf Grund des Talmud und verwandter Schriften, gemeinsam dargestellt*. 
Indeed, Jesus fulfills the roles expressed by these targumic terms. Paul and John teach that the Son of Man creates (John 1:3; Col 1:16–17) and conquers (Rev 19:13). In addition, the New Testament presents Jesus as the physical manifestation of the Godhead dwelling among men (John 1:14; Col 1:15, 27; Phil 2:6–7). Finally, Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God in the New Testament (2 Cor 4:6; Heb 1:3). The Apostle John combines all of these facets of targumic tradition in the prologue to his gospel. He identifies Jesus specifically as the “Word” (corresponding to Memra), but he also says that Jesus has “become flesh and dwelt (corresponding to Shekinah) among us,” and that he expresses a “glory (corresponding to Yeqara) as of the only Son from the Father.” In other New Testament passages, Jesus secured an eternal redemption (Heb 9:12), and as God’s agent to judge, he will return again to deliver retribution on the Father’s behalf (2 Thess 1:7–10). The way New Testament authors present Jesus often corresponds to the targumic presentation of the Lord manifesting himself and working through an agent.

**Thesis**

Since these targumic terms, Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara, often parallel the New Testament presentation of the person and work of Christ, and since the New Testament directly connects these words to Christ, Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara will be examined to find Christ in the Old Testament.

**Methodology**

This thesis will examine the targumic passages where the terms, מימרא, שכינה, and יקרא occur, and then compare the targumic tradition to Christological concepts presented in New Testament revelation. Additionally, this thesis will endeavor

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to follow the exegetical pattern of the apostles to argue whether targumic passages refer to Christ. Where exegesis provides a conceptual, theological, or thematic connection between the targumic Memra, Shekinah, or Yeqara and Jesus Christ, one may find Christ in the Old Testament. In some cases, determining whether these targumic terms refer to Christ may be debatable. In fact, passages exist where these terms do not refer to Christ. Accordingly, this study does not force these terms to prefigure Christ in the Old Testament. However, those passages in which the Memra, Shekinah, or Yeqara acts as the agent for the Father or a manifestation of the Father will be particularly helpful to determine if the targumic texts help one to find Christ in the Old Testament.

**Historical Background**

**Targums in the Ancient Synagogue**

In the ancient synagogue, Targum functioned as an official Pharisaic interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.\(^{11}\) In fact, the word תרגם means “interpretation” or “translation.”\(^{12}\) Since languages other than Hebrew prevailed as the vernacular of ancient Palestine, Jewish leaders sought to provide Scripture’s official interpretation in Aramaic to aid the understanding of the Hebrew Bible. In this sense, Targums were a way of “doing theology.” They provided Jewish people with an official interpretation and application of Scripture so that they could understand its meaning.\(^{13}\)

---


\(^{12}\)Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 1695. Jastrow states that תרגם is derived from the verbal תרגל, which means “to interpret, translate, explain” (ibid., 1696).

\(^{13}\)Some scholars point to the LXX as having a similar function. E.g., see John Bowker, *The
The first-century Jew would have been familiar enough with Hebrew to understand aspects of the synagogue liturgy.\textsuperscript{14} John Bowker points out that Hebrew was “the language of revelation” for the Jewish people, and they would not easily discard this historical language.\textsuperscript{15} Hebrew was, indeed, the language of their fathers. Additionally, scrolls from Qumran demonstrate the use of Hebrew even outside of Scripture, as in legal documents. That the Qumran community wrote non-biblical documents in Hebrew suggests that Hebrew was part of their daily culture.\textsuperscript{16} Outside of Palestine, evidence also exists that Jewish communities wrote in Hebrew into the early centuries AD. Texts from Leontopolis, Alexandria, and Dura-Europos relay prayers written by Jewish communities in Hebrew.\textsuperscript{17} In addition, the linguistic transition from Biblical Hebrew to Mishnaic Hebrew suggests that Hebrew continued as a known language in Judaism.\textsuperscript{18} If another language had fully replaced Hebrew, the question stands why Hebrew continued to be used in Jewish communities both in Palestine and in the Diaspora.

Although the common man knew Hebrew, he also needed help with


\textsuperscript{14}For discussions of the presence of Hebrew in the first century, see George P. Howard, “Hebrew in First Century Palestine,” \textit{ResQ} 5, no. 2 (1961): 57–61. See also the discussion by Bruce Chilton and Paul Flesher, who take a “middle ground” (Flesher and Chilton, \textit{The Targums}, 4, 287–90). They argue that first-century Jews would have known enough Hebrew to participate in the synagogue liturgy, but not enough to apply the reading of the Hebrew Bible, thus, the need for Targum.


\textsuperscript{17}Bowker, \textit{Targums and Rabbinic Literature}, 7n5. That Hebrew continued to be used in prayers outside of Palestine is even more telling that Hebrew was known and used among common Jewish communities.

\textsuperscript{18}M. H. Segal, “Mi\'\textit{\textsuperscript{sh}naic Hebrew and Its Relation to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic,” JQR} 20, no. 5 (1908): 647–737.
understanding the interpretation of Scripture. The Aramaic Targums functioned as an official interpretation of Scripture so that the common person could understand its meaning. 19 While scholars debate the extent to which Hebrew was known, most agree that the primary function of Targum was to translate the Hebrew Bible as an official Pharisaic interpretation. 20 Bowker says, “The tendency in translation to express meaning rather than to be literal was reinforced by the efforts of Jews in every generation to interpret scripture and apply it to their own situation.” 21 This desire to communicate the meaning of Scripture applied to all translations found in ancient Palestine (Aramaic, Greek, etc.), but the Targums were especially important since they were part of the synagogue liturgy.

In the synagogue, rabbis or elders read the Hebrew Bible while another man would recite the Aramaic orally. 22 This interplay between the reader and meturgeman (מהורגם, ‘interpreter’) allowed the audience to follow the meaning of the Hebrew text by hearing the interpretation in a more accessible language. Later rabbinic literature applied several rules to how this interplay would be conducted indicating that the practice of reciting Targum was a vital part of synagogue worship to be executed orderly and

19 Martin McNamara highlights how the rabbis sought to explain the meaning of Scripture (McNamara, Targum and Testament Revisited, 79). He points to R. Judah ben Ila’i, who says, “He who translates a verse literally is a liar, and he who adds to it is a blasphemer” (t. Meg. 4:41; Quiddushin 49a). R. Judah ben Ila’i illustrates his point with Exod 24:10, “They saw the God of Israel.” A literal Aramaic translation would make one a liar since no one has seen God. However, to insert the “angel” of the Lord would make one a blasphemer in R. Judah ben Ila’i’s opinion. Therefore, he concludes the verse should be rendered, “They saw the glory of the God of Israel.” McNamara relates this type of interpretative translation to what John does in John 12:41, where he says that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ (cf. Isa 6:1, 5).

20 Flesher and Chilton’s “middle ground” is probably the best example of scholars who argue that Hebrew knowledge was minimal, and yet the liturgical elements in Hebrew (Shema, Hebrew prayers, etc.) were memorized (Flesher and Chilton, The Targums, 287–90). Even though they argue that Hebrew was mostly out of use, they still agree that Targums’ primary function was to interpret the Hebrew Bible.

21 Bowker, Targums and Rabbinic Literature, 5.

22 See y. Meg. 4, 1, 74d, 1.16.
consistently.\textsuperscript{23} To correlate the targumic interpretation with the reading of the Hebrew text, one verse of the Torah would be read at a time while three verses of the Prophets were allowed. The reason given for such small sections was “so the translator will not err” (\textit{m. Meg.} 4:4b). These strict rules for reading and translating highlight the value the synagogue placed on making the Scripture applicable to the common Jew.

To make the Hebrew reading understandable, Targums display several techniques to communicate the meaning of a text.\textsuperscript{24} Targums often explain idioms or difficult texts (\textit{Tg. Onq.} Gen 4:7), elaborate on poetic passages (\textit{Tg. 1 Sam} 2:1–10), or expand theological terminology (\textit{Tg. Jer} 42:11).\textsuperscript{25} The terms \textit{Memra}, \textit{Shekinah}, and \textit{Yeqara} fall under the third category as the Targums sought to explain God’s actions in time and space through a manifest agent. In the same way Targums explain odd idioms (e.g., \textit{Tg. Onq.} Gen 4:7), they also explain anthropomorphism (e.g., \textit{Tg. Neof.} Gen 3:8). Targums used theological terminology in place of anthropomorphic language to explain the text, not to avoid anthropomorphism.\textsuperscript{26} The Targums were “doing theology” by employing biblical terminology and extending it across broader contexts to explain Scripture to its contemporary audience (e.g., Ps 33:4–7; cf. \textit{Tg. Neof.} Gen 1:1). The result of such targumic expansion was that first-century Jewish communities had an interpretive tradition to help them understand Scripture.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{23}For the Rabbinic references to synagogue prescriptions related to the reading of the Hebrew Bible and its accompanied Aramaic translation, see \textit{m. Meg.} 2:1; \textit{t. Meg.} 2:6; \textit{y. Meg.} 74d; \textit{m. Meg} 4:4–6; \textit{t. Meg.} 3:21. See also Josephus in \textit{Against Apion} 2:175.


\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Tg. Onq.} Gen 4:7 explains “sin is crouching at the door” as “sin is reserved for you in the future to be repaid by you.” \textit{Tg. Jer} 42:11 explains that God will “save” and “deliver” by “my Memra.”

\textsuperscript{26}See discussion and references in Robert Hayward, \textit{The Targum of Jeremiah: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes}, The Aramaic Bible 12 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1987), 22–23.
\end{footnotesize}
Historical Background of Research

In later rabbinic literature, the use of some theological terms to explain Scripture changed. Words like Memra and Yeqara, found primarily in the Targums, were superseded by Shekinah in broader rabbinic discussions about God’s interaction in time and space. Judaism studied the generic “presence” (Shekinah) of God, and yet the rabbis also redefined God’s “presence” for their own purposes. Rabbis now interpreted the Shekinah as the presence of God in man’s obedience to Torah. Even though Judaism adapted these theological terms to reduce confusion about God’s transcendent nature, the issue of intermediaries still lingered.

During the Middle Ages, Jewish scholars discussed the meaning of anthropomorphic language in Scripture in order to establish a firm monotheism. Saadia Gaon rejected all notions of “substance or accident or the attribute of substance or an accident” related to God, and thus rejected the idea that God has a body. Regarding anthropomorphic language of God, Gaon said,

Hence it is out of question and impossible to declare Him to be anything that He has Himself created. Consequently for all divine attributes pertaining to either substance or accident that are encountered in the books of the prophets it is necessary to find in the language of Scripture non-anthropomorphic meanings that would be in keeping with the requirements of reason. Whenever, then, we the community of believers apply to God epithets that have the appearance of anthropomorphisms, this is due to our endeavor to give a proximate and figurative description of deity. They are not to be taken in the material sense in which we

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27 Israel Abrahams argues that the Rabbis held onto the term Shekinah as a combination of the Memra (invisible presence of God in man) and the Yeqara (the visible presence of God in light) in Israel Abrahams, The Glory of Israel: Three Lectures (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), 50–52.


29 Saadia Gaon, The Book of Beliefs and Opinions, ed. Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1948), 93, 111–12. He says, “Once, then, the demand that the Creator be a physical being has been proved to be absurd, the arrogation to Him of bodily accidents in general must likewise be excluded” (ibid., 93).
would apply them to human beings.\textsuperscript{30}

For Gaon, anthropomorphic language about God was intended to provide the meaning behind the language rather than ascribe literal, bodily attributes to God. He lists several examples in which the Jewish interpretation avoids anthropomorphic language, but then he says,

As for the proof from tradition, again, we find that whenever our sages, who were considered trustworthy authorities in regard to our religion, encountered any such comparisons of God to physical beings, they did not translate them in an anthropomorphic sense, but rendered them in such a way as to correspond to the previously established principle. [ . . . ] They therefore translated them in accordance with their clear understanding of the underlying thoughts.\textsuperscript{31}

Some may see in this quote that the sages avoided anthropomorphism; however, Gaon continues to list examples of anthropomorphic language in which the sages alleviate the anthropomorphism \textit{by} explaining the true meaning behind it.\textsuperscript{32} The Jewish Targums were among these traditions that sought to alleviate anthropomorphisms \textit{by} explaining the true meaning of Scripture.

Moses Maimonides argued that \textit{Memra}, \textit{Shekinah}, and \textit{Yeqara} were used to paraphrase passages that implied the corporeality of God. Maimonides affirmed that Jewish theology did not allow a body or form for God, and that the Targums (particularly \textit{Tg. Onq.}) “take all pains to remove the ascription of corporeity (to God), and whenever the Scripture employs an expression that suggests corporeity, he (\textit{Tg. Onq.}) interprets it according to its \textit{meaning}.”\textsuperscript{33} In an attempt to make the Hebrew Bible understandable, Maimonides suggested that the Targums employed theological intermediaries for the

\textsuperscript{30}Ibid., 111–12, italics added.

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid., 115.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., 116–22.

\textsuperscript{33}Moses Maimonides, \textit{Moreh Nebukim}, pt. I, 27–28, cited in Moore, \textit{Intermediaries in Jewish Theology} (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), 3, parentheses and italics added. This monograph is a reprint of Moore’s original article in the \textit{Harvard Theological Review} (“Intermediaries in Jewish Theology: Memra, Shekinah, Metatron,” \textit{HTR} 15, no. 1 [1922]: 41–85). Unless otherwise noted, the citations in this introduction are from the 2007 reprint of the original article.
benefit of the “common man.””\(^{34}\) However, Maimonides was unwilling to allow *Memra, Shekinah,* or *Yeqara* to represent any possibility of hypostasis. For Maimonides, the *Memra* “excludes personality and participation in the divine nature.”\(^{35}\) Maimonides claimed, “*Memra* and *Shekinah* may be called intermediary agencies, not intermediary beings, if there be any profit in labeling them at all.”\(^{36}\) At the same time Maimonides argued these terms refer to anti-anthropomorphic, translational devices, he also argued that they represent “intermediate agencies.”

In the thirteenth century, Nachmanides went slightly further to argue that these terms represented various modes of God’s self-revelation.\(^{37}\) Nachmanides referenced targumic passages that leave anthropomorphisms in place, so he refused to relegate the *Memra, Shekinah,* and *Yeqara* to mere buffer words that only soften anthropomorphic language. In fact, he cited Exodus 14:31 and Deuteronomy 4:34 where the extant Targums translate anthropomorphism literally. Likewise, he cited the Targums using *Memra* or *Yeqara* where no danger of anthropomorphism exists (e.g., Gen 9:16–17; 31:49–50; Exod 16:8).

As “modes of God’s self-revelation,” Nachmanides understood how these terms explained God’s actions in the created world. In his *Commentary to the Torah* (Gen 46:1), he spoke specifically of the *Shekinah* saying,

> God forbid that what is called *Shekhina* or the Created Glory is outside of the divine Name, may He be blessed as the Rabbi believed . . . and if one claims that it is the Created Glory according to the Rabbi’s view of the verse “And the Glory of God filled the tabernacle,” then how can blessing be offered to it? And he who blesses and prays to the Created Glory is an idolater because the many statements of the

\(^{34}\)Moore, *Intermediaries in Jewish Theology,* 3.

\(^{35}\)Ibid.

\(^{36}\)Ibid. Moore’s assessment of Maimonides is crucial at this point. Moore is adamant that the *Memra* and *Shekinah* are not “beings,” and yet Maimonides, a critical Jewish thinker, argued that these terms act as agents for God.

\(^{37}\)For Nachmanides’ discussion, see his *Commentary on the Pentateuch* at Gen 46:1.
Sages have dictated that the Shekhina is God, may He be blessed.\textsuperscript{38} Regardless of what Nachmanides meant by “Created Glory,” he clearly identified the Shekinah as God. Therefore, the Targums used these terms to refer to God’s self-revelation as opposed to a secondary being necessarily. And yet, the self-revelation of God surely entails an agent by which God’s presence is known and/or seen. Nachmanides identified the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara as theological terms in rabbinic literature to indicate God’s use of an agent to reveal himself to the created world.

The medieval Rabbis introduced the ideas of translational circumlocution as well as intermediate agency related to the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara. To them, these terms represented a reverent way to speak of God’s actions in the created world, and yet the terms carried a deeper theological idea than merely a translational technique to avoid anthropomorphism. The terms indicated that the transcendent God of Jewish theology acted in the created order through an agent who was also considered God himself. Nearly all modern scholars of the Targums refer to the early Rabbis in their understanding of the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara, and yet the terminology they use to discuss these terms is often difficult to discern. At times, scholars see these terms indicating divine agency, while at other times, scholars claim the terms are merely translational devices to replace “Yahweh.” However, even those scholars who state these terms represent anti-anthropomorphic translational devices will go on to say that the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara carry out functions that only Yahweh can do and equate these terms with Yahweh or his self-revelation. Therefore, in some sense, all scholarship understands that the targumic method seeks to explain biblical notions that, on the surface, may seem contradictory to God’s transcendence. Many modern scholars view the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara as anti-anthropomorphic devices, but these terms are

not limited to that function. These terms also explain God’s actions in the created world as God’s manifest agents. While nearly all scholarship sees agency in these terms, a clear distinction lies between those scholars who see Christological implications in the Memra, Shekinah and Yeqara and those who do not.\(^{39}\)

Marcus Jastrow shows that the term Memra is both a simple “command” or “word,” and also a “hypostatized” agent when with DOE (‘of the Lord’).\(^{40}\) One cannot be certain what he means by “hypostatized,” except that he further defines the phrase “Memra of the Lord” as “the Lord.” Occurrences of Memra as a mere translation include Onqelos Genesis 41:44, which explains the Hebrew יַד יְהֹוָה (‘and without you’), and

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\(^{40}\)Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, 775. יד is the Aramaic pronoun יד plus the targumic form of יהוה, which is typically written as יד or יד. יד is prefixed to nouns as יד, so the phrase “of the Lord” is rendered by יד (‘the Lord’) + יד (‘of’).
Targum Psalms 19:4 that uses מִימְר (‘word’) to translate the noun form of אָמַר (‘speech’). For the “hypostatized” Memra, Jastrow cites Onqelos Genesis 3:10, when Adam heard the “sound of the Memra” walking in the garden. Rather than inferring that God walked in the garden to confront Adam, Jastrow suggests that the Targum employed God’s agent, the Memra, to walk in the garden. While Jastrow argues this term was used “to obviate anthropomorphism,” he also directly associates the Memra with the Lord as identical beings. Where the Memra acts, the Lord acts. Jastrow’s goal in his dictionary is not to draw Christological implications of these terms, and yet he sets the stage for the broader discussion of divine agents whom he equates with Yahweh.

Ferdinand Weber began speaking of the Memra as a hypostasis in 1897. He said, “In the Targums, and in the older Jewish theology, there is a hypostasis, which carries the name ‘word’ and stands in the place of God.” Using the term “hypostasis,” Weber discussed the theological nature of the Memra. For Weber, Memra represented a translational technique, but it was more than a circumlocution for the divine name. Whether Weber meant duality in God by the term “hypostasis” is unclear. However, “hypostasis” carried the connotation of agency for Weber. Commenting on Targum Song of Songs 1:2, he argued the Memra “stands as a mediatorial hypostasis between God and his people.” Although Weber failed to comment on the Christological implications of the Memra, he at least recognized divine agency in its uses in the Targums.

George F. Moore’s study on these targumic terms is among the standard resources in this field. His contributions to the study of these terms came in his 1922

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41 For another “hypostatized” use of Memra, Jastrow points to Frg. Tg. P Gen 3:9, in which the Memra “called” (קרא) to Adam while walking in the garden to find him. In Frg. Tg. P Gen 3:9, דָּיָני מִימְרָה stands as the subject of the verb of action.

42 Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, 775.

43 Weber, Jüdische Theologie, 180.

44 Ibid.
article in the *Harvard Theological Review* and in his three-volume work, *Judaism in the First Century of the Christian Era*. Moore’s primary focus in these studies was to show that the *Memra* fails to represent a hypostasis within the Godhead. Moore was driven in his conclusions by what he considered an early error in Christian interpretation of the Bible. Moore concedes that the early Christian interpreters of the New Testament understood John’s *Logos* as a clear hypostasis and wanted to find a corresponding hypostasis in the Old Testament. Moore believes that any discussion of a hypostasis regarding the *Memra* was a result of Christianizing the term rather than understanding the term rightly from the Targums. Moore argued that instead of the Christian “apologetic” accomplishing its goal, it had the opposite effect and Jewish interpreters began to understand the *Memra* as an argument for their lofty monotheism. Moore states,

> The material that was diligently collected to prove that Jewish theology made a place for a being of divine nature . . . has more recently been appropriated to prove that Jewish theology, *unlike* Christian, interposed intermediaries between God and the world, rendered necessary by its ‘transcendent’ idea of God, of which error [the Christian error of a hypostatic being in the Godhead], conversely, the invention of such intermediaries is the proof [that is, the invention of intermediaries by the Jews to explain God’s transcendence].

Jewish theologians took the evidence produced by Christian interpreters and adapted it for their own monotheistic theology. According to Moore, Jewish monotheism was so strong that it could not allow for any type of hypostatic intermediary; therefore, Judaism implemented a circumlocution for God where the biblical texts allude to anthropomorphic action by a non-corporeal God.

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46 Moore, *Intermediaries in Jewish Theology*, 2. The brackets are intended to aid the reader in understanding Moore’s position and represent my interpretation of his point. Moore believes that rabbis invented these terms as intermediaries because Christians had carried the idea of mediation to the point of hypostasis in the Godhead. Therefore, in Moore’s understanding, the very invention of intermediaries proves that the Jewish view of God’s transcendence is correct.

47 Whether the *Memra*, *Shekinah*, and *Yeqara* are hypostases is predominantly irrelevant to the discussion even though this is the terminology that most scholars use to discuss these terms. That Moore understood these terms as *agents* or *manifestations* of the invisible God is integral to how one uses these
Moore investigated the targumic *Memra* from what he called a “philological” perspective.\(^48\) He limited his research to lexical uses of *Memra* and failed to address New Testament implications because of his desire to understand Targums in their own right, avoiding Christianization of the Targums. At the end of Moore’s study, he simply concludes, “It [the *Memra*] is a phenomenon of translation, not a creature of speculation.”\(^49\)

Moore rejected New Testament appropriation of the *Memra* because he believed the Jewish context of the Targums would not allow God, who is a transcendent spirit, to act in time and space. By limiting his investigation only to the Targums and not allowing these terms to influence New Testament revelation, Moore developed a limited understanding of the targumic *Memra*.\(^50\)

Even with this partial understanding of the *Memra*, Moore also points out how the *Memra* functions as God’s agent. In a chapter on the Word of God and the Spirit, Moore begins by saying, “God’s will is made known or effectuated in the world not only through personal agents (angels), but directly by his word or by his spirit.”\(^51\) While he limits personal agents to the angels, Moore willingly indicates that God “effectuates” his will in the created order through his word and spirit, namely through agents. Moore points out that *Memra* should be understood properly as “word” or “command,” but he admits it is not used in the Targum to translate וְדָבָר.\(^52\) Moore concludes that the only

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\(^48\)Moore, *Intermediaries in Jewish Theology*, 4.

\(^49\)Ibid., 14.

\(^50\)To say that one’s understanding of the *Memra* is limited in this sense should not imply that the understanding is incorrect. Moore draws helpful conclusions about the targumist’s agenda in using such terminology. However, by arguing for a strictly translational function of these terms, he fails to see the theological implications that helped interpret the Hebrew Bible.

\(^51\)Moore, *Judaism*, 1:414.

\(^52\)Ibid., 1:417. The Targums regularly use מָדַּע to translate the Hebrew וְדָבָר.
personality that can be ascribed to the Memra is the personality of God that it represents. He says,

The appearance of personality which in some places attaches to the word is due solely to the fact that the memra of the Lord and similar phrases are reverent circumlocutions for ‘God,’ introduced precisely where in the original God is personally active in the affairs of men; and the personal character of the activity necessarily adheres to the periphrasis.  

Even so, Moore goes on to show how the Memra represents God speaking, the Lord fighting for Israel, and the Lord meeting Israel in the tabernacle by his Memra.

Moore carries this argument into his discussion of the Shekinah and Yeqara as well. When the Hebrew Scriptures speak of God’s presence coming to or departing a place, the Targums translate Shekinah. Likewise, to speak of the visible manifestation of God directly might demean God’s character, so the Targums employ the term Yeqara. Moore equates the Yeqara with the Hebrew יְקוָרָא saying it is “the splendor of impenetrable light by which [God] is at once revealed and concealed.” While Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara represent translational technique to Moore, he also cites clear examples where these terms represent agency for God or manifestation of God. Although Moore allows the terms to represent agency, he denies that they have Christological implications.

53Ibid., 1:419.


55Ibid., 1:420.

56Moore primarily discusses the lack of Christological implications in these terms by saying that Philo would not have borrowed these terms from the Targums (Moore, Judaism, 1:414–16). Moore indicates that a gulf existed between Philo and Rabbinic Judaism so that the two would not overlap in thought, nor would they be influenced by one another. He says, “Neither his [Philo’s] conception of a transcendent God, nor the secondary god, the Logos, by which he [Philo] bridges the phenomenal world . . . had any effect on the theology of Palestinian Judaism” (Moore, Judaism, 1:212). Moore believes that John borrowed his Logos from Philo, but since Philo had no connection to the targumic Memra, neither did John’s use of Logos. Moore concludes therefore that John’s Philonic use of Logos would not correspond to the targumic Memra. However, Moore’s view of the lack of targumic influence on John is skewed since John would have been directly familiar with the Targums of the synagogue. John most likely used language from the synagogue to speak of Jesus rather than using language from contemporary philosophy.
In H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck’s excursus on the *Memra*, they followed George Moore’s conclusions primarily.\(^{57}\) They said, “The conclusion to be drawn from the above statements with respect to the Johannine Logos, cannot be doubted: the term ‘Memra Adonai’ was a meaningless, purely formulaic substitute for the Tetragrammaton.”\(^{58}\) Strack and Billerbeck show how the *Memra* substitutes for אֱלֹהִים and יהוה, but they do not indicate explicitly whether these substitutions imply agency. They state, however, that *Memra* and *Shekinah* fall short of secondary divine beings.\(^{59}\) In places, Strack and Billerbeck completely disregard similarities between the *Memra* and John’s *Logos*. In other sections, they hint at Christological implications of these terms, for example,

> While the word of Yahweh temporarily “happened” before individual men, it has occurred in a comprehensive and exhaustive manner in the world of Jesus: Jesus would therefore be called the word par excellence because everything the God of all mankind has to say concerning salvation is in his person.\(^{60}\)

The view of Strack and Billerbeck is difficult to discern when they make comments such as this. Even if *Memra* stands for a “formulaic substitute” for Yahweh, they still show how John could have used this theological concept to refer to Christ.

Vinzenz Hamp conceded that these terms evolved in their use and distinct characteristics. He not only researched *Memra* as a divine agent, but also the Holy Spirit,

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\(^{59}\) Speaking specifically of the Shekinah, Strack and Billerbeck say, “As a divine hypostasis, you may give Shekinah as little thought as the Memra of the Lord” (Strack and Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 2:314).

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 2:333.
Wisdom, Torah, Shekinah, and Yeqara. However, he argued that the oldest and most ordinary meaning of a title for Yahweh never disappeared:

. . . the Memra of Yahweh is neither real nor a different person from Yahweh himself. The “word” concept evolved from a purely appellative sense to a divine inner property . . . . The latter use is found mainly in the latest Tg; however, the older and ordinary connotation never disappears.  

Hamp agreed that later developments of these intermediary terms implied agency, but he retained the older sense of the term as a title in order to avoid further Christological study.

Pamela Vermes, in a 1973 article, articulated the view of the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber.  

Vermes built on Buber’s exegesis of Exodus 3:12, 14, extending the evidence of Buber’s conclusions to the Targums and Midrash. Buber argued that one should understand the name יהוה as indicating God’s presence and should be translated, “HE IS THERE.” Additionally, Buber proposed that the name אהיה, which God indicates is his name, is simply the first person form of היה and therefore takes the meaning of “I AM THERE.” Vermes agreed with Buber’s presentation and applied his conclusions to the Targums and Midrash to see if the extra-biblical literature confirmed Buber’s findings.

According to Vermes, the Targums regularly substitute the Divine Name with the Memra. This led Vermes to investigate the nature and development of Memra in the Targums. Vermes concluded that God manifests his presence through his activity within creation, and God’s activity in the created order (including creation itself) is carried out

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61 Hamp, Der Begriff “Wort,” 204.


63 Ibid., 148–49.
by the *decree* or *word* of God.\textsuperscript{64} She combined the הוהי word group with the שֶׁכֶינה word group and argued that the Targums use the term *Memra* as an expression of God’s active, articulated presence in his creation. Vermes writes, “YHWH is *ehyeh*; and *ehyeh* is the ‘Memra of the Shekhinta of YHWH.’ That is to say, the verb *amar* and its derivatives go to join those of the verb *hayah*, and the combination of presence, speech, and creation is rounded off and made perfect.”\textsuperscript{65} For Vermes, the targumic *Shekinah* represents God’s presence, while the *Memra* is God’s name for himself, his *יהיה* as it was given to Moses in Exodus 3:12 and expounded by God in Exodus 3:14. Vermes included other passages (Exod 5:2, 33–34) to argue for the link between God’s presence and his activity in creation.\textsuperscript{66}

Vermes also examined the Jewish Midrash. Since the term *Memra* does not occur in Midrash, she focused on the *Shekinah*. However, Vermes noted the absence of *Memra* in the midrashic literature, stating, “In sum, it may be said that the texture of the *Shekinah* in Midrash may gain in substance from being related to everyday life, and in another sense, be the poorer for the omission of the *Memra* motif and the limitless avenues of thought to which it leads.”\textsuperscript{67} This statement indicates at least two aspects of Vermes’ understanding of the *Memra*. First, Vermes presented the *Memra* as a rich theological term similar to *Shekinah*. Second, and consequently, to say that the *Memra* motif offers “limitless avenues of thought” indicates that the *Memra* perhaps means more than mere presence and speech. Vermes certainly made the case for God’s presence and speech generally, and yet the Targums seem to develop a fuller understanding of *Memra*

\textsuperscript{64}Even though Vermes draws an etymological conclusion regarding the meaning of *Memra*, she simultaneously admits to its role as God’s agent in creation and manifestation.

\textsuperscript{65}Vermes, “Buber’s Understanding of the Divine Name,” 152.

\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., 155–60.

\textsuperscript{67}Ibid., 166.
beyond God’s presence and verbal action. Vermes admitted that exceptions to her evidence exist, and although she never explicitly said that the *Memra* motif extends into the New Testament, she left the option open.  

Robert Hayward independently drew similar conclusions as Vermes regarding the etymology of *Memra*. For Hayward, *Memra* is “an exegetical shorthand” for the term ‘HYH based on his study of *Neofiti* Exodus 3:12 and 6:1–8. *Memra* is “God’s Name for Himself, understood and expounded as meaning God active and present in creation and redemption, in past and future.” Hayward argues that *Memra* is an active presence in God’s covenant and remains a merciful presence in the Jerusalem temple. In these two examples, Hayward defines the *Memra* as God’s name by which his presence is revealed to and invoked by God’s people.

Even though Hayward presents the *Memra* as God’s active presence, he rejects the notion of *Memra* or *Shekinah* as hypostases or personal beings. In his 1978 article in *New Testament Studies*, Hayward says, “The current scholarly attitude towards *Memra* is due almost entirely to the careful and painstaking work of students of Rabbinic Judaism, who were fully conscious the *Memra* could not be an hypostasis.” Since the basis of Rabbinic Judaism would not allow duality in God, Hayward argues that personal being cannot be part of *Memra*’s meaning. Hayward argues that the most helpful studies in the Targums are those that deny hypostasis altogether. He says, “Students of Targumic

68Ibid., 153, 166.


71Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence*, 24 (italics original).

Studies are deeply indebted to the work of those scholars who have demonstrated beyond doubt that the Memra is not an hypostasis, a being in any way separate from God, or an intermediary between the God of Israel and the creation.”

While Hayward holds the impossibility of Memra and Shekinah representing hypostases, he interprets the Memra based on his exegesis of Neofiti Exodus 3:12. In his analysis of the occurrences of Memra in Neofiti, Hayward interprets the texts when Memra occurs with verbs of action as God’s presence rather than a separate divine being. The Memra speaks, calls, and is revealed because God, in his active presence, speaks, calls, and is revealed. Therefore, Hayward affirms that the Memra functions as God’s agent-name to manifest his merciful presence to his people.

Regarding Christological implications of the Memra, Hayward says, “Jesus personifies God’s ‘HYH, the living proof that the God revealed to Moses at the bush is with His people.’” Hayward maintains his original exegesis of the Memra, but goes further to say, “St. John then, if our hypothesis be correct, depicts Jesus as the Memra, who is God’s Name, manifesting God’s glory, full of grace and truth of the covenant, dwelling with us in the flesh, which Jesus himself describes as a Temple, the very dwelling place of the Memra.” Hayward refuses to allow any form of personal being in the Memra, and yet he shows how “God active and present” in his Memra has

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73 Hayward, Divine Name and Presence, 5. Hayward points primarily to Strack and Billerbeck, Moore, and Hamp on this point.


75 Ibid., 414. Hayward basically disregards Memra with verbs like blessing, leading, sending, protecting, rescuing, standing, and redeeming because their uses are so infrequent. “The use of Memra as subject of these verbs on such isolated occasions appears arbitrary and unmotivated by theological considerations” (ibid.).

76 Hayward, “The Holy Name of the God of Moses,” 29.

77 Ibid., 30, (italics original).
Christological implications beyond the Targums.

Like the medieval Rabbis, modern Jewish scholarship would not argue that *Memra, Shekinah, or Yeqara* refer to Christ. However, they understand these terms as God’s agents of action and manifestation so clearly that they can see how the New Testament authors could have appropriated these terms, giving them Christological significance.

The Jewish scholar Kaufmann Kohler, who would not see the *Memra* as Christ, affirmed the theological connection between the targumic *Memra* and the Christian doctrine of the Word.\(^78\) Kohler understood the *Memra* to be derived from the Hebrew *Ma’amar* and *Dabar* (Ps 33:6; 107:20; cf. Tg. *Neof.* Gen 1 and Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 32:39 respectively), but argued that the Targums used *Memra* in a way similar to *Shekinah* as the manifestation of God’s presence.\(^79\) Without affirming any form of hypostasis, Kohler argued that the Aramaic *Memra* influenced Philo’s *logos* theology.\(^80\) He also believed that the New Testament church employed Philo’s “semi-Jewish philosophy” in order to develop its doctrine of the Incarnation and Trinity.\(^81\) Even though Kohler was unwilling to admit these terms represent hypostases, he allowed that Christianity could find value in these targumic terms as mediating powers/agents when


\(^{79}\) Kohler, *Jewish Theology,* 198–99. Kohler says, “The *Word* was thus conceived of as the first-created being, an intermediary power between the Spirit of the world and the created world order” (ibid., 198).

\(^{80}\) For Kohler’s discussion of how the *Memra* may have affected Philo, see Kohler, *Jewish Theology,* 199. Kohler says that the *Memra* was the “cornerstone” of Philo’s “peculiar semi-Jewish philosophy” of the *Logos.* In Kohler, “*Memra,*” 465.

\(^{81}\) Kohler, “*Memra,*” 465. While many of these scholars connect *Memra* with Philo’s *Logos* in some capacity, the New Testament authors attained their understanding of the Word from the Old Testament and Targums directly. As stated before, Rabbinic Judaism made no place for Philo. John did not borrow Philo’s semi-Jewish philosophy; rather, he appropriated Rabbinic Jewish theology regarding the *Memra.* Even so, Kohler acknowledges John’s use of the *Memra* concepts in the Fourth Gospel.
developing its doctrine of Christ. He says, the *Memra* “is a kind of vice regent of God himself. From this it was but a short step toward considering him a partner and peer of the Almighty, as was done by the Church with its doctrine that the Word has become flesh in Christ, the son of God.”

Therefore, Kohler understood how the New Testament church appropriated the targumic *Memra* to prefigure the hypostatic nature of Jesus.

Whereas Kohler viewed the *Memra* as a “vice regent of God,” he presented the *Shekinah* as the premier mediating power of God. Kohler followed the early rabbis, who pushed *Memra* and *Yeqara* to secondary importance, but continued to esteem the *Shekinah* as the manifest presence of God in the world. Kohler says,

> Thus in the view of the rabbis *Shekinah* represents the *visible part* of the divine majesty, which descends from heaven to earth, and on the radiance of which are fed the spiritual beings, both angels and the souls of the saints. God himself was wrapped in light, whose brilliancy no living being, however lofty, could endure; but the *Shekinah* or reflection of the divine glory might be beheld by the elect either in their lifetime or in the hereafter.

For Kohler then, the *Shekinah* was the visible presence of God that man could bear to see. Although he fails to assign personhood to the *Shekinah*, to say that the *Shekinah* is a “visible presence” and “mediating power” at least implies agency and/or manifestation.

Joshua Abelson began his chapter on intermediaries by saying, “The view commonly taken that the *Memra* is an expedient for avoiding the ascription of anthropomorphism to the Deity, is only half the truth.” For Abelson, the *Memra* is the “immanent manifestation of God in the World of matter and spirit.”

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82Ibid.

83*Kohler, Jewish Theology*, 198 (italics added).

84*Abelson, The Immanence of God in Rabbinic Judaism*, 151.

85Ibid., 153. Abelson includes in his appendix how the *Yeqara* and *Shekinah* correspond to the *Memra*. He concludes that these additional targumic terms are “to an extent synonymous” and that they “denote aspects of the teaching covered by the larger and more comprehensive term, ‘Memra’” (*Abelson, The Immanence of God*, 382). Abelson points to Acts 22:11 where he says that “glory is undoubtedly materialized” in a similar way as the Targums use this terminology (ibid., 381).
Memra is a “manifestation” does not require personification, and yet Abelson agrees that John used targumic language to describe Jesus. As Abelson assessed John’s use of Logos, he said that John is more Jewish in his presentation of the Word than even Philo. In John’s gospel, where Jesus functions as an intercessor between God and man, he is portrayed with a “decidedly Rabbinic colouring.” In Abelson’s view, John not only employed “the theological import of the Targumic Memra” in the prologue, but this theological import permeated the body of his gospel as well. Moving beyond the gospels, Abelson contends, “In some of the most striking declarations of Paul there is the very same conception in regard to the Messiah (Christ).” Although Abelson takes a decidedly Jewish nuance on what it means to be an “immanent manifestation of God in the World,” he shows how the New Testament authors appropriated this targumic language to speak of Christ. In addition, he says that the New Testament authors have understood the targumic Memra correctly even if he believes they have appropriated the term incorrectly to refer specifically to Jesus.

Israel Abrahams provided further insight into the use of Shekinah specifically. In his book, The Glory of God, Abrahams explains why he thinks rabbinic literature only carried over the term Shekinah into the Mishnah and Talmud rather than continuing with all three terms; Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara. He concluded that the Shekinah was the

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86 Ibid., 160.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid. Abelson cites Rom 11:36; 1 Cor 15:45; Col 1:15, 17; and Col 3:11 as examples.
90 Ibid., 161. Regardless of how the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara are used in the Targums, when the inspired New Testament authors appropriate these terms, they take on a decidedly different nuance. To say that the New Testament authors understood the Memra correctly probably means that they understood it to be an agent of God. Abelson simply disagrees that this premier agent is Jesus.
term that represented both the invisible presence of God in man (Memra) and the visible appearance of God in the world (Yeqara). For Abrahams, the Shekinah was both the Memra and the Yeqara. After arguing from Saadia Gaon’s Arabic translation of the Hebrew Bible that the Shekinah is closely related to “light,” Abrahams concluded, “Yet, however interpreted, the Glory of God, visualized spiritually as well as physically as the Light of the Shekinah, plays much the same role in Rabbinic Judaism as the logos does in Philonean or Johannine theology.” Therefore, Abrahams approves that John understood these targumic terms similarly to the Rabbis. Abrahams was unwilling to say that John’s appropriation of the Shekinah accorded with traditional Jewish theology. However, he recognized how John arrived at his conclusion given the targumic presentation and function of the divine Glory and Light represented as the Shekinah (cf. John 1:4–5, 9; 3:19; 8:12; 12:35–36).

Alfred Edersheim preferred the term “self-revelation” when speaking of the Memra, and yet he freely used the term hypostasis. He says, “Rabbinic theology has not preserved to us the doctrine of Personal distinctions in the Godhead. And yet, if words have any meaning, the Memra is a hypostasis, though the distinction of permanent, personal Subsistence is not marked.” While Edersheim admits rabbinic theology failed to elaborate on a personal doctrine of Memra, he readily ascribes personality to the Memra. In an appendix, he lists the targumic passages that “undoubtedly” ascribe “Divine Personality” or God’s “Personal Manifestation” using Memra. His use of the

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92Ibid., 51–52. One must keep in mind that these terms are often so interchangeable that scholars disagree as to which one represents the visible and invisible working of God. Abrahams views the Memra and Shekinah differently than Abelson, but both scholars see the connection to the New Testament presentation of Jesus.

93Ibid., 56.

94Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1:48.

95Ibid., 2:661–64.
terms “hypostasis” and “personality” led him to compare the Memra to Philo’s Logos. In this comparison, Edersheim concludes that the Memra is not represented in Philo’s Logos since the Memra is theological and Philo’s Logos is philosophical in nature.\(^96\)

After rejecting a connection between Memra and Philo’s Logos, Edersheim discusses John’s gospel and the Christological implications of Memra. He concludes that John’s gospel is “more Palestinian” than the others in its “modes of expression, allusions, and references.”\(^97\) For Edersheim, John’s “Bereshith” is theological, representing a Jewish background, rather than a philosophical background as in Philo’s Logos. He says, “John strikes the pen through Alexandrianism when he lays it down as the fundamental fact of New Testament history that ‘the Logos was made flesh.’”\(^98\) For Edersheim, the Memra represents personality and hypostasis, and the Apostle John further defines its Christological implications.

For Shekinah and Yeqara, Edersheim argues that these terms imply “God as revealed” rather than God in the act of revealing himself. The Yeqara is God’s “excellent glory” while the Shekinah is his “abiding Presence.”\(^99\) In both cases, the terms suggest God’s manifestation of himself in the created order and the Targums employ theological terminology to soften the idea of God’s physical presence in creation. Edersheim further divides the meaning of Shekinah and Yeqara although these terms are nearly synonymous at times. Yeqara indicates the “inward and upward” while Shekinah represents “the outward and downward.”\(^100\) The former is the inner glory of God, a display of his heavenly nature, while the latter is his earthly presence as in the tabernacle. Edersheim

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96Ibid., 1:48.  
97Ibid., 1:56.  
98Ibid., 1:56–57.  
99Ibid., 2:660.  
100Ibid.
points out the Christological implications of these terms in 2 Peter 1:17 and John 12:41 (cf. Tg. Isa 6:1–8).

B. F. Westcott continued the idea of a “mediating power by which God makes himself known.”\textsuperscript{101} Westcott understood these terms to refer to God’s agents similar to the Angel of the Lord. He also commented on the Christological implications of the Memra by discussing its relation to the philosophical Logos. Westcott distinguished between the Memra and the Logos by concluding that the Memra indicates a divine person subordinate to God, and Logos indicates a twofold personality in God’s being. Westcott’s distinction here seems quite arbitrary, especially since the New Testament teaches ontological unity and functional subordination within the Godhead.\textsuperscript{102} In broader systematic theological categories, Westcott unintentionally affirmed that the Memra (functional subordination) is the Logos (ontological unity). Although Westcott’s argument is difficult to follow at times, he believes the Memra is God’s manifest agent and that the term has Christological implications.

With the discovery of Targum Neofiti in 1956, Alejandro Díez Macho reenergized the discussion of these terms.\textsuperscript{103} He commented that in Neofiti, the Memra appears as distinct, or at least distinguishable from Yahweh.\textsuperscript{104} As a distinct agent, Díez Macho highlighted the targumic evidence demonstrating the Memra’s role in the created order. Díez Macho set out in his study to show that the Memra was a background to John’s Logos doctrine, so he readily saw the Christological import of the Memra,


\textsuperscript{102}See Wayne Grudem, 	extit{Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine} (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 251, where he uses the term “economic subordination.”


\textsuperscript{104}Diez Macho, “Una Copia de todo el Targum jerusolimitano en la Vaticana,” 393.
especially in the newly discovered Neofiti marginal glosses.

A student of Diez Macho, Domingo Muñoz Leon, once again used the disputed term “hypostasis” in his discussion. Muñoz Leon said that Memra contains “some hypostasis, as attributing a certain attribute to God, that which the biblical text ascribes to God.”\(^{105}\) He suggests hypostasis is a part of the Memra, but not the whole. In this sense, Muñoz Leon could at least reintroduce the Memra’s mediating function: The Memra is “a description of God which has been specialized to designate the God who creates, reveals Himself, and works in the history of salvation through the mediation of His Word.”\(^{106}\)

After the discovery of Neofiti, Martin McNamara also brought to light many insights regarding the mediating function of the Memra. McNamara argues that the evidence from the Targums points to the Memra as another way of saying “God” or “the Lord.” At the same time, he holds that the targumic Memra has a broader theological meaning, particularly in relation to John’s Logos theology.\(^{107}\) McNamara agrees that within the targumic evidence, the Memra does not appear as a hypostasis.\(^{108}\) The targumists regularly move between the divine name, God, and Memra without a clear logic. The terms appear interchangeable. Although McNamara quickly moves toward a broader theological meaning of the Memra, he affirms that the Targums, on their own terms, do not require a hypostatic Memra.

A second assertion made by McNamara is that the use of Memra in the Targums may have developed over time, pointing to the theological richness of the

\(^{105}\)Muñoz Leon, Dios-Palabra, 632.
\(^{106}\)Ibid., 139.
\(^{108}\)McNamara, Targum and Testament, 101.
Referring to George Moore’s work, McNamara points out that Moore only researched the evidence of the *Memra* within *Targum Onqelos* and *Targum Jonathan*, and he therefore came up with limited conclusions. However, once Diez Macho discovered *Targum Neofiti*, the interlinear and marginal glosses opened a new door to understanding the various uses and development of *Memra*. For McNamara, the marginal glosses in *Targum Neofiti* reveal targumic readings from complete manuscripts that have since been lost. At the time McNamara was writing *Targum and Testament*, Robert Hayward’s article, researching the development of *Memra* in *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, was not yet published. However, in McNamara’s introduction to the English translation of *Targum Neofiti* Genesis, he claims that the *Memra*’s “origins, development, and antiquity as used in [an anti-anthropomorphic] sense are a matter of speculation.” Therefore, although he allows for development in the term, McNamara claims that to understand the development sheds no further light on the subject. McNamara allows for development in the *Memra* because the term has more theological significance than merely the development of a translational technique.

The third, and perhaps most influential, proposal by McNamara is that the Apostle John was heavily influenced by the targumic *Memra*. Even though McNamara admitted that the *Memra* is a substitute term for the divine name, he simultaneously argued that the Targums influenced John when he designated Jesus as the Logos. McNamara said, “John got his doctrine on the nature of the Logos from New Testament revelation. The question at issue for us is the sources from which he drew the concepts

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109Ibid., 102.


and terms in which he expressed it.” McNamara distinguished between the targumic evidence alone and the influence the Targums had on John’s use of a related term (Logos). In other words, he affirmed that the Memra represents a typical interpretive technique while simultaneously recognizing its theological substance when John re-interprets the actions of the Memra in the incarnate Logos.

To illustrate his understanding of Memra, McNamara connects John’s Prologue and the Poem of the Four Nights presented in the Palestinian Targums to Exodus 12:42. The poem in Neofiti Exodus 12:42 speaks of the night “when the Lord was revealed over the world to create it.” Neofiti Exodus 12:42 reads,

The First Night: When the Lord was revealed over the world to create it.
The world was formless and void, and darkness was spreading over the face of the deep, and the Memra of the Lord was light and shone. So he called it the First Night.

Some accuse McNamara of unnecessarily emending this text. However, McNamara’s adjustment to the text in Targum Neofiti seems justified based on the evidence of the other extant Targums.

In Targum Neofiti, the manuscript has a vav-copulative (bracketed in the

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113 Ibid., 103.
114 The same poem occurs in the other Palestinian Targums with minor (but important) variations.
115 Emphasis added.
116 See Hayward, Divine Name and Presence, 135. Hayward translates Tg. Neof. Exod 12:42, “The first night, when the Lord was revealed over the world to create it . . . and the Memra of the Lord was there, and there was light, and it shone” (ibid.). Even though Hayward thinks the emendation is unnecessary, he still concludes, “St. John probably used the Memra as one of the background ideas to his Logos-doctrine. Nothing stands in the way of this conclusion, and it will be seen that certain positive advantages accrue to an interpretation of Logos which takes Memra into account” (ibid., 136).
117 The Frg. Tg. V and CTg. FF both omit the vav. McNamara also cites Walton’s London Polyglot and the Paris MS 110 as those texts that omit the vav. See McNamara’s discussion in “Logos of the Fourth Gospel and Memra of the Palestinian Targum,” 116.
Aramaic above) that is absent in the other Palestinian Targums. McNamara understands this *vav* to be a scribal error and removes it from *Neofiti* in order to obtain the translation quoted above. If the *vav* remained, one could translate the passage such that “the light” (נלהום) is the grammatical subject that shone (והה). In the translation above (omitting the *vav*), the *Memra* of the Lord is the light and shines into the darkness. This language is strikingly similar to John’s description of the *Logos* (John 1:5, 3:19; 8:12; 1 John 1:6; 2:8–9, 11). The poem in *Neofiti* Exodus 12:42 concludes with the new creation on the Fourth Night at the advent of the Messiah. Commenting about the relationship between this Fourth Night and John’s Prologue, McNamara claims, “This new creation, described in Jn 1 as the counterpart of the first creation, began when the Word was made flesh. The light then began to shine in the darkness of the non-messianic age.”

McNamara suggests that John understood the link between the Light (*Memra*) who created on the First Night, and the incarnation of the *Logos* to begin the work of the new creation of the Fourth Night.

The above evidence, along with McNamara’s view that John was heavily influenced by Jewish liturgy, indicates, “it is legitimate to assume that John is very much under the influence of the Targums in the formulation of his doctrine of the Logos.” McNamara hesitates to identify the *Memra* with the *Logos* directly, but he also allows for theological substance in the term.

After examining the uses of *Memra* in targumic texts, Bruce Chilton concludes,
Memra is not simply a metonym for God, or even for God understood as speaking, but it is the term which conveys the sense of God’s distinctively vocal, deliberative, creative, and worshipped aspects in Neophyti, and his distinctively active, demanding, and resisted aspects in Pseudo-Jonathan.¹²¹

Chilton provides two insights here. First, he suggests that Memra represents God’s agent who speaks, creates, and demands within the created order. Secondly, he affirms that the presentation of Memra is not uniform in all of the Targums. Therefore, all of the extant Targums are helpful to determine the full meaning and function of these terms. For Chilton, the Targums never fully develop a “concept of God’s מימרא,” but they provide a “theological manner of speaking of God.”¹²² These metonyms for God’s active presence in the world contain theological substance that Chilton carries into his study of Isaiah and John’s gospel.

In his study of Memra in Targum Isaiah, Chilton expounds the theological substance of Memra. The Memra is an agent of punishment (Tg. Isa 30:27–33), demands obedience (Tg. Isa 1:19–20), speaks (Tg. Isa 6:8), protects (Tg. Isa 17:10a), and acts as an intermediary (Tg. Isa 48:3; 65:1).¹²³ This theological depth leads Chilton to pursue the theological implications in the New Testament.¹²⁴ Chilton argues that whether the Memra represents a hypostasis should not be an issue in the discussion. With the Memra as God’s agent, he says, “The Targumic theologoumenon of the memra as God’s activity of commanding has influenced the sense of logos in the fourth Gospel.”¹²⁵ Chilton’s


¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Bruce Chilton, The Glory of Israel, 57–63.


¹²⁵Ibid., 93. For Chilton, the way the Targums use Memra theologically should lead scholars to further discussion of the Memra rather than limiting the notion to a mere circumlocution for Yahweh.
understanding of the relationship between the Memra, Logos, and Jesus is obscure, but he concludes, “The logos in John is simply a development of conventional notions of the memra in early Judaism.”

Roger Le Déaut provides a helpful balance to the discussion of intermediaries in the Targum and their relation to the New Testament. He says, “Between an uncritical confidence and a total skepticism there is therefore room for a prudent and fruitful use of the Targumic literature for NT exegesis.” Regarding the Memra specifically, he says that it is the “privileged substitute for the divine Name,” but the personification of the Memra was a “subsequent development of Christian theology.” After discussing John’s use of Memra and Yeqara throughout his gospel, Le Déaut makes one of the strongest statements about exegesis in general as it impacts the Christological implications of these targumic terms. He says, “When the NT presents us with a perplexing exegesis of the OT, the biblical versions—which are actually the earliest interpretations of Scripture—may sometimes suggest what was the perspective of the Christian authors, intent on finding in it a sense allowing him to re-read the Bible in light of its fulfillment.” For Le Déaut, the New Testament authors freely and rightly drew out the meaning of these “privileged substitute[s] for the divine Name.”

Craig Evans, a New Testament scholar, agrees that most occurrences of Memra

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Ibid., 100. To be fair to Chilton’s position, he does not necessarily equate the Memra or Logos with Jesus, nor does he indicate that scholarship should pursue this identification. Rather, he shows how these three overlap in meaning within their independent historical and interpretive settings. Memra belonged to Targum, Logos belonged to Philo, and Jesus belonged to John. Even so, Chilton pursues further theological (Christological?) substance to Memra apart from a periphrasis for the divine name.


Le Déaut, “Targumic Literature and Interpretation,” 268.

Ibid., 288 (italics original).
are periphrastic. However, he also says, “sometimes memra is an independent agent.”

The Memra feels (Tg. Amos 4:11) and acts as an intermediary (Tg. Isa 65:1). As an independent agent, Evans argues that John’s Logos provides further theological significance for Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara, even if John’s appropriation of these targumic terms overstepped the targumic presentation in its own right. Evans agrees with the majority of scholarship that Memra stands for a periphrastic way to speak of God. And yet he also understands the theological depth inherent in the Memra, which leads him to the overt Christological implications found in the New Testament.

**Conclusion**

Throughout these background studies on Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara, scholars have sought to understand the targumic translational method for these terms as well as their inherent meaning. Nearly all scholars in this field conclude that although these terms represent periphrastic ways to speak of God, they still function as God’s agents, representing the Lord himself as active and manifest in the world. That Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara represent agency and manifestation suggests that these terms carry theological meaning beyond their translation without the necessity of hypostasis. Similarly to how the Spirit of God or the Angel of the Lord are separate from God in the Old Testament, so also, Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara appear to be separate agents who stand in the place of God himself.

Even so, a clear line can be drawn between those scholars who see Christological implications in these terms and those who do not. For some scholars, these terms mean nothing more than God’s activity in the world without bearing on the person and work of Christ. For others, the obvious next step to understand the Memra,

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131 Ibid., 128–29.
Shekinah, and Yeqara is to extend targumic conclusions into the New Testament and find where the New Testament attributes these same roles to Jesus. In the words of Strack and Billerbeck, Jesus would be the “word *par excellence*” since he fulfills the roles of divine agent for God and manifestation of God.

132 See footnote 37 in this chapter for those scholars who see Christological implications in these terms and those who do not.
CHAPTER 2

THE MEANING OF MEMRA, SHEKINAH, AND YEQARA AND THEIR THEOLOGICAL USE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction

Although targumic scholars may not use agent-terminology to describe Memra, they present the Memra as performing the works of God in the world and at least imply his role as God’s agent. Similarly, scholars present the targumic Shekinah and Yeqara as manifestations of God. The primary division regarding these terms occurs because many scholars neglect their Christological implications. Scholars like Paul Billerbeck, Kauffman Kohler, and Robert Hayward, who may not agree with the Christological appropriations of these terms in the New Testament, still affirm that John’s Logos is similar to the targumic Memra, if not identical. Indeed, the New Testament authors explain biblical and theological concepts about Jesus by using terminology and concepts similar to the Targums. They explain Jesus’ deity by connecting his person and work to Old Testament portrayals of God sometimes using targumic concepts. The New Testament authors explain God’s work in the world through his preeminent agent, Jesus (Col 1:15–17). In addition, the New Testament authors use terms similar to the Targums to speak of Jesus as the Son through whom man sees the Father (John 14:9). Jesus is God dwelling among men, displaying the glory of God as the visible manifestation of the Godhead (John 1:14). By employing these targumic terms (Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara) and by expanding the targumic concepts of divine agency and manifestation, the New Testament authors provide an exegetical pattern by which one can find Christ in the Old Testament.
Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara: Meaning and Old Testament Theological Significance

Within the targumic traditions, Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara have meaning independently from their New Testament appropriation. Understanding these terms in their targumic context provides a basis to discover how the New Testament authors used similar terms and concepts. In their targumic context, these terms seem to have originated from theological concepts already found in the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara represent more than an exegetical or translational invention. Indeed, they are theological interpretations of God’s active presence in the world.

Memra (מימרא)

Fundamentally, Memra means “word,” “decree,” “command,” or “speech.” Memar (מרא) sometimes translates Hebrew contexts with a voice, either of God or of man (Tg. Onq. Gen 3:17; 4:23), and carries this basic meaning. Hayward and Vermes agree that Memra essentially means “word” or “speech,” but they argue exegetically that Memra represents God’s active presence in speaking. They combine the אמר word group with the Divine Name (אהיה) from Exodus 3:12, 14 to say that God’s Memra is his אהיה, namely his audible, active presence. As such, Memra represents more than just God’s “speech” or “command.” Instead, Memra alludes to God’s actual presence invoked through his name. Hayward and Vermes introduce the idea that the basic lexical

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definition of Memra has further theological meaning and implications.

Some scholars provide additional meanings for Memra that highlight the theological development of the term as it is used in the Targums. Marcus Jastrow gives the secondary meaning, “hypostatized,” when the term is used in the phrase דִּיָּמִימְרָא (‘Word of the Lord’), and he further defines this hypostatization as “the Lord.”\(^3\) Gustav Dalman points to a secondary meaning, “person,” but he separates this definition from the phrase דִּיָּמִימְרָא, which he lists as a third meaning, citing Onqelos Numbers 11:23.\(^4\) For Dalman, the phrase דִּיָּמִימְרָא represents “God (as speaking or acting in the world).”\(^5\) Jacob Neusner also extends the meaning of Memra beyond its lexical basics. Although he refuses to ascribe hypostasis or personal subsistence to the Memra, he says, “It designates the active attribute of God—usually linked to commanding. Under that general rubric, it can be used to describe him speaking, creating, acting, punishing, or receiving worship.”\(^6\) These scholars recognize that the Memra reflects a theological meaning determined by its use in the Targums.

Indeed, the Targums present the Memra as more than just a “word” or “decreet.” Neofiti Genesis 1–2 attributes the creation of the universe to the Memra. Neofiti Exodus 14:30 says that the Memra redeemed Israel from Egypt. Likewise, the Memra fought Israel’s battles as they entered the promised land in Targum Joshua 10:14. In the Abrahamic narrative, Onqelos Genesis 15 suggests that the Memra was God’s

\(^3\)Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim*, 775. Although Jastrow’s dictionary entry is minimal, he equates the דִּיָּמִימְרָא with “the Lord” similarly to how many scholars would equate the angel of the Lord with Yahweh (see, e.g., Stephen L. White, “Angel of the Lord: Messenger or Euphemism?” *TynBul* 50, no. 2 [1999]: 299–305). Where the angel of the Lord is active, most evangelicals would say that is the Lord acting in time and space. Jastrow makes the same assumption regarding the Memra. Where the Memra of the Lord is active, it represents God’s activity in the world.


\(^5\)Ibid. Dalman’s definitions align him with Jastrow and others. The Memra is “God (as acting or speaking in the world).” In addition, Dalman points out the aspect of “person” in the Memra.

agent to communicate the covenant to Abraham and to mediate the covenant sign.\textsuperscript{7} In each of these cases, the Memra carries out a role beyond verbal speech or declaration from God. In fact, the Memra functions as God’s agent in the Targums by doing the work that the Hebrew Bible ascribes to God.

These uses of Memra as an agent in the Targums seem to be derived from Old Testament theology rather than a translational invention of Rabbinic Judaism. Since the Targums were the official interpretation of the Hebrew Bible, the Memra stands as a term used to explain God’s active presence in Israel’s history. God often used agents to carry out his purposes in the Old Testament.\textsuperscript{8} Indeed, Scripture equates some of these visible agents with God similarly to how Targum equates דְּיֵי מִמְרָא with יהוה.\textsuperscript{9}

While these visible agents help one see how God works in the world, some Old Testament passages even suggest that God’s Word functions as an agent. Psalm 33:6 says that that heavens were created “by the word of the Lord” (בְּדַבֵּר יהוה), where the ב functions as an instrumental ב.\textsuperscript{10} The phrase “breath of his mouth” (בַּרְעָר פִּי) in Psalm

\textsuperscript{7} Cf. the Noahic covenant (\textit{Tg. Onq.} Gen 9:12–15, 17) and the Sinai covenant (\textit{Tg. Onq.} Exod 31:13, 17), in which the Memra functions as the agent and mediator of the covenant signs of the rainbow and Sabbath respectively.

\textsuperscript{8} See, for example, the fourth man in the fiery furnace (Dan 3:25, 28); Angel of the Lord (Gen 16:9–11, 22:11; Exod 3:2; 14:19; Num 22:22–27); Spirit of God (Exod 31:3; Num 24:2; Ps 143:10); and Wisdom (Prov 3:19). Cf. \textit{Tg. Judg} 6:12 where the Angel of the Lord appears to Gideon. The Angel of the Lord identifies himself as the Memra of the Lord when he speaks to Gideon.

\textsuperscript{9} E.g., in Gen 18–19, “the Lord” appears to Abraham (Gen 18:1), and yet Abraham sees “three men” standing before him to deliver the message from the Lord (Gen 18:2). The Lord speaks with Abraham in this interchange (Gen 18:10, 13), but later only two of the men (now called angels) enter Sodom (Gen 19:1). The third man was seemingly a manifestation of the Lord, while the other two agents to carry out God’s vengeance against Sodom. Likewise, in Gen 32:22–32, Jacob wrestles with “a man” (עָנָשׁ איש ויאבק) who is later identified as God (יהוה, Gen 32:28, 30; cf. Hos 12:3–4). Even the Old Testament identifies them as visible agents while simultaneously calling them “God.”

33:6b may suggest that the “word of the Lord” in 33:6a only means his speech. However, some targumic manuscripts translate Psalm 33:6 as the Memra of the Lord indicating that Jewish exegetes understood this passage to be speaking of God’s agent rather than his verbal speech only.\footnote{David M. Stec, Targum of Psalms, The Aramaic Bible 16 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 22–23, 73rn. The vast majority of the occurrences of מָרַע in the Hebrew Bible are translated in the Targums as מֵלֶלמ or מְלַלמ, not מִלַּמ. Even if the Targum interpreted this verse to be God’s speech only, the tradition still indicates God using an agent to accomplish his work. That agent/instrument is his speech. The targumist then could extend this idea theologically into the rest of the Targums when God acts in the created order through an agent.} Psalm 107:20 highlights the role of God’s word as an agent of healing, while Psalm 147:15 portrays God’s word as running across the earth. Furthermore, in Psalm 103:20, God’s word is personified as having a voice that should be obeyed. This authoritative “voice” is God’s דבר. In Psalm 105:19, the Word (אמרָת) of the Lord refined Joseph, where אמרת stands as the subject of the verb. In other words, the “Word of the Lord” (אמרת יהוה) performed God’s work of testing Joseph. Here, the Targum translates אמרת as Memra suggesting the interpretation of agency in this passage, not “command.” Although the Old Testament phrase “word of the Lord” typically denotes God’s message or speech to the prophets, the passages just listed suggest that God’s Word also functions as an agent or takes on anthropomorphic characteristics in the Hebrew Bible. Since God’s דבר implies his presence, the Targums extend the theology of the Hebrew Bible throughout their interpretations of Scripture. Where God is present and active, the Targums often interpret that it is God’s agent, his Memra, who acts.

\textit{Shekinah (שכינה) and Yeqara (יְקָרָא)}

In general, Shekinah and Yeqara allude to different nuances of the same basic meaning, namely God’s manifestation. At times, the Shekinah stands as God’s presence with his people, while at other times, the Yeqara functions as the manifestation of God to Israel. Both words indicate God’s manifestation, and they are often used interchangeably...
or even in tandem. Onqelos Numbers 14:14 illustrates this tight connection. The Hebrew Bible says that the Lord (יהוה) was among his people, he was seen face to face, and his presence stood over them as a pillar of cloud at day and fire at night. Onqelos Numbers 14:14 interprets that the Shekinah dwelled amongst Israel. Rather than Israel seeing God face to face they saw “with their eyes” the “Shekinah of the Yeqara of the Lord,” which was the cloud that overshadowed them. Passages like this demonstrate the difficulty of separating the “dwelling presence” of God (Shekinah) from the “weighty/glorious presence” of God (Yeqara). One often implies the other. Because these terms are so closely related, they will be considered together.

The term Shekinah, built on the Semitic root שכן, denotes “dwelling” or “settling.” In later rabbinic literature, it carried the meaning of “royalty,” or a “royal residence,” often being used to describe God’s presence in the temple or his “Holy Abode.” In the Targums, Shekinah represents God’s “divine presence” manifested in the world. Shekinah often represents God’s presence dwelling among the people of Israel (Tg. Onq. Num 35:34), or his presence in the tabernacle and temple (Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 40:34–35; Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 31:15; Tg. Isa 4:5). Sometimes, Shekinah is accompanied by a cloud of glory (Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 13:21; 20:21; Tg. 2 Sam 22:12).

Combining the theological meaning of God’s presence with the basic lexical meaning of

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12 To say that Yeqara is the “weighty presence” of God highlights its relationship to the Hebrew כבוד. Yeqara is the awe-inspiring presence of God that demands and elicits awe, worship, and honor.

13 Dalman, Aramäisch-Neuherbräisches Handwörterbuch, 423.


“dwelling,” the Shekinah represents the “dwelling presence” of God among his people.\(^\text{16}\) Being derived from the Hebrew שְׁכִּינָה, Shekinah developed its meaning from the Old Testament. The glory of the Lord dwelled (יְהֹוָהַכֹּכָב) on Mount Sinai in Exodus 24:16. God dwelled with his people in the exodus and wilderness, leading them by a pillar of cloud at daytime and fire at night (Exod 13:21–22; Num 35:34). The presence of God dwelled in the tabernacle throughout the wilderness journeys (Exod 33:9), and then settled in the temple after Solomon had completed it (1 Kgs 8:10). In Exodus 15:17, Moses says that God will bring Israel into the place he has made for his own abode, indicating his promised presence with Israel in their land. God also promised his covenantal presence with Israel in Leviticus 26:12, promising to walk in their midst (בתוכם יהוה והתהלכת) as their God. Numbers 5:3, describes God as a “dweller” in the camp (אִשֶּׁר אֲנִי שָׁכֵן).\(^{17}\) In Deuteronomy 16:6, the place where God has chosen for his name to dwell indicates his presence, and the Targums translate this verse as the place where God’s Shekinah dwells.\(^{18}\) In each of these Old Testament examples, God’s presence is explicit or he is described as “dwelling” with his people. Therefore, the Targums accurately extended the term Shekinah to interpret and explain biblical passages indicating God’s presence.

While the Shekinah represents the nuance of God’s dwelling presence, the

\(^{16}\)The Shekinah presence of God is often similar to the New Testament notion of the Holy Spirit’s presence among believers. A visible manifestation typically is not present, and yet God’s presence is a legitimate reality. Another parallel would be Jesus’ teaching in Matt 28:20 that he will be with the disciples even to the end of the age. Even as he is preparing to ascend, Jesus says that his presence will be with the church. Although physical manifestation may be rare or unnoticed after Jesus’ ascension, his presence in the church is a reality.

\(^{17}\)The grammar of Num 5:3 uses a Qal participle as an accusative of situation to describe a “habitual or abiding state or activity” (Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax: A Traditional Semitic Approach* [Grand Rapids: Kregel, forthcoming], §16a, §16l). The participle functions as a descriptor of who God is rather than a verb indicating his action. In his nature, God is a “dweller” with his people in Old Testament theology.

\(^{18}\)Tgs. Onq., Neof., and Ps.-J. all interpret the place where God’s name will dwell as the promise of his Shekinah presence.
Yeqara represents God’s “weighty” presence, often seen as the cloud of God’s glory (Tg. Onq. Exod 40:38; Tg. Onq. Num 10:34). Yeqara is often used to translate the Hebrew כבוד and means “weightiness” or “heaviness.” Like the Hebrew מספר, כבוד highlights God’s “honor,” “dignity,” and “glory.” The Yeqara often appears in heavenly visions, where the presence of God is seen at its very essence rather than in the created world (Tg. Isa 6:1). However, the Yeqara also represents God’s manifest glory in the world. In Onqelos Exodus 16:7, Moses and Aaron warn the people that they will see the glory of the Lord, namely, a weighty manifestation of God in judgment because of Israel’s grumbling. Onqelos Exodus 20:18 interprets the “thick darkness” where God dwelled at Sinai as “the dark cloud where the Yeqara of the Lord” dwelled. In Onqelos Genesis 28:13, the Yeqara “was standing” before Jacob and spoke with him as a manifestation and agent of God. Likewise, the cloud of the Yeqara, which covered Mount Sinai, “called out to Moses” (כָּלַמְךָ אֱלֹהִים) as the agent of God to deliver the Lord’s message (Tg. Onq. Exod 24:16). Like the other terms, Yeqara implies a deeper meaning based on its theological use in the Targums.

Just as Memra and Shekinah developed from Old Testament theology, Yeqara also finds its theological grounding in the Old Testament. God’s glory (כבוד) is often manifested to God’s people as a visible, weighty presence. The glory of the Lord dwelled on Mount Sinai in a thick cloud, and its appearance was like a “devouring fire” that all could see (Exod 24:16–17). At the completion of the tabernacle, the cloud of the glory of the Lord settled on the tabernacle, and Moses was unable to enter due to the

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20Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, 593; Dalman, Aramäisch-Neuherbräisches Handwörterbuch, 187; Sokoloff, Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic, 54; idem, Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, 541.

21In Tg. Onq. Exod 24:16, Yeqara is not the subject of the verb K̄rib. However it is the nearest antecedent and should be understood as the one who “called out” to Moses.
heaviness of God’s presence (Exod 40:34–36). Exodus 40:38 says that the cloud of God’s glory would settle on the tabernacle by day and fire would be visible there at night. In both cases, the weighty glory of God’s presence was evident in the tabernacle. Just as the “glory” of God (יהוה כבוד) was seen in the temple, so also the Yeqara was the manifestation of God’s honor and dignity in the temple (Tg. 1 Kgs 8:11). Like Shekinah, the Targums interpret these passages from the Hebrew Bible that God’s Yeqara was the weighty manifestation of God.

The basic meaning of these terms, along with their subsequent theological development within the Targums, provides the grounding to pursue the use of these terms outside of the Targums. Indeed, where other literature suggests God’s use of an agent, one could probably find references to the Memra functioning similarly. Likewise, where God manifests himself in the world, a parallel to the Shekinah or Yeqara could often be made in the Targums. Since the Targums were the official, synagogue interpretation of Scripture, the New Testament documents become a fascinating place to find the use of similar terms and concepts as those in the Targums. In fact, the New Testament authors appear to use these three targumic terms, as well as their theological concepts, to speak of Jesus as God’s divine agent and manifestation. If, according to New Testament revelation, Jesus functions analogously to the Memra, Shekinah, or Yeqara, one can return to the Targums and probably find Christ in the Old Testament through these terms.

Apostolic Use of Terms Similar to Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara

Using terms similar to the Targums was an exegetical method possibly used by the New Testament authors. Specifically, they used terms similar to the definitions of Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara just discussed, and yet the New Testament authors extended the theological ramifications of these targumic terms by applying them to Jesus. In the New Testament, Jesus is the agent of God and the premier manifestation of God.
just as the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara represent the same theological concepts in the Targums. The discussion of how the New Testament authors may have used the Targums can be separated into how they used similar terms and how they applied similar targumic concepts behind those terms. The following examples indicate how the New Testament authors may have used terms similar to Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara.

The Memra and Yeqara in John’s Prologue

John began his gospel with the statement that the Word (Logos, Memra) was in the beginning with God and that the Word was God.²² Using terminology similar to the Targums, John immediately identified Jesus as “the Word” (λόγος). According to John, Jesus is God and he is distinct from God similarly to how the Targums describe the Memra.²³ After establishing Jesus’ nature as God, John said that Jesus was God’s agent in creation. “All things were made through him” (John 1:3, 10, πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο).²⁴ John reminded his audience of Genesis 1 with “In the beginning,” and

²²The discussions in this dissertation accept that John’s Logos was derived primarily from the Aramaic Targums. Since the Targums explained God’s actions in the created order using terminology derived from a theology of the Hebrew Bible, one could also say that John’s Logos is derived from the Hebrew עֲmışָא. However, other arguments exist regarding the background of John’s Logos terminology, and few scholars conclude that it was derived from the Targums. For surveys of various views and arguments, see Ronning, The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology, 1–9; Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of John (Peabody, MS: Hendrickson, 2003), 339–63; E. L. Miller, “The Johannine Origins of the Johannine Logos,” JBL 112, no. 3 (1993): 445–57. For the targumic parallels specifically, see Craig Evans, Word and Glory: On the Exegetical and Theological Background of John’s Prologue, JSNTSup 89 (Sheffield: JSOT Press), 1993), 114–24.

²³Part of the difficulty defining Memra is the debate about whether the term implies personality, personhood, or hypostasis. This debate has dominated the discussion of Memra because the Memra stands in the place of יהוה grammatically, but is often presented as distinct from God. Therefore, like the Logos, the Memra is distinct from God, but also identified as God.

identified Jesus as the same God who created all things ex nihilo.

In Genesis, the Targums interpret the Memra as God’s creative agent similarly to how John describes Jesus. In Neofiti Genesis 1, Memra occurs nineteen times related to creation.\(^\text{25}\) At times, the Memra only speaks and yet his speech effects creation (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11). The Memra “creates” the two great lights that rule the day and night (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:16; תבולה מפירה דוד). The Memra also authoritatively named the created order, calling the dry land “earth” and the waters the “seas” (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:10; תבולה מפירה דוד). Furthermore, when the Hebrew Bible says, “and it was so” (כן וייהי), Neofiti and Fragmentary Targum P interpret this to mean “it was so according to his Memra” (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:7).\(^\text{26}\) In each of these verses, the Memra was active in creation as the agent of God.

Several passages in Targum Isaiah indicate that God created “by his Memra.” Targum Isaiah 44:24 says, “Thus says the Lord, who redeemed you and who established you from the womb: I am the Lord, Maker of all things. I suspended the heavens by my Memra, I completed the earth by my power.” Targum Isaiah 44:24 limits the Memra’s activity in creation to suspending the heavens. However, the tradition agrees with Neofiti’s creation narrative that the Memra decreed the creation of the firmament and it was so “according to his Memra (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:6–9). Targum Isaiah 45:12 also indicates that God created “by his Memra.” The Targum interprets the repetition of the

\(^\text{25}\) Ronning, The Jewish Targums, 21. This way of speaking of the Memra could indicate a command or decree of the Lord rather than a personal agent. However, Ronning points to other passages in Tg. Neof. and Frg. Tg. P Gen 1 that indicate that the creation occurred “according to the decree of his Memra” (Tg. Neof. [mg.] Gen 1:3; Frg. Tg. P Gen 1:7). In addition, Tg. Neof. Gen 1:3 says there was light “according to the decree of his Memra, while Frg. Tg. P Gen 1:3 says, “there was light through/by his Word” (במימה נחר תבולה), indicating agency more than mere decree.

\(^\text{26}\) Ronning, The Jewish Targums, 21. In 17 of the 19 occurrences of Memra in Tg. Neof. Gen 1, Memra is the subject of verbs indicating an active participation in creation. Also, the Frg. Tg. P Gen 1–2 has Memra as the subject of verbs 25 times. See John Ronning, The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 21.
pronoun אֲנָכי in the Hebrew Bible as a reference to the Memra. The Targum reads, “I, by my Memra, I made the earth and I created mankind upon it.” Targum Isaiah uses the instrumental ב to indicate the Memra was the agent/instrument through whom God created the earth and established man upon it.

Finally, the targumic tradition in the Psalter points to the Memra as the Creator. Targum Psalms 124:8 says, “Our help is in the name of the Memra of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” Here, the Targum links the “name of the Memra” with יהוה, and ascribes the action of “making” the heavens and earth to the Lord’s Memra.

As mentioned previously, some targumic manuscripts of Psalm 33:6 interpret the דבר as the Memra as the Memra. In some of the Targums, the Memra creates, and John directly links this vocabulary to Jesus, the Logos, through whom all things were made.

In addition to the Memra functioning as God’s agent in creation, Neofiti presents the Yeqara as active in creation as well. The Yeqara set the two great lights in

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27. The Hebrew would read, אֲנָכי עָשִיתֶה עַלָּה וַאֲנָשָׁה אֵֽרֵעַ ("I, I made the earth, and man upon it, I created").

28. In Tg. Isa. 45:12b, the parallel structure interprets God’s “hand” in the Hebrew Bible as his “strength” in the Targum. That the pronoun, “I,” is interpreted in the targumic tradition to refer to an agent of God (Memra) whereas his hands refer to an attribute (strength) suggests that the Memra is equal to God. This interpretation does not require hypostasis in the Targums, but the apparent gulf that stands between John’s Logos and the Memra diminishes when the Memra is identified with God by carrying out the actions of God alone. Likewise, the verbs “to create” (ברית) and “to make” (עבדית) are interpreted to refer to the Memra’s actions whereas God’s hand “stretched out” (נטו) the heavens.

29. The grammar here suggests an instrumental ב instead of a ב of agency. Even so, the distinction between instrument and agency is miniscule. See Williams, Williams’ Hebrew Syntax, §243 (instrumental ב) compared to §245 (ב of agent).

30. The Targum maintains the divine name, יהוה, rather than using the typical targumic rendering.

31. Stec, Targum of Psalms, 22–23, 73ng.

32. While John does not directly ascribe creation to the “glory,” he describes Jesus as having a visible glory from the Father (John 1:14). The “Word” who created all things displays the “glory” from the Father. That the Targums attribute creation to the Yeqara as well is indeed striking, especially when John combines these targumic terms in his prologue.
the heavens after the Memra had created them (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:17) indicating the active participation of the Yeqara in creation. The Targums also connect the Yeqara to the act of creation in Neofiti Genesis 2:3. The Yeqara “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” because it was a Sabbath on which he rested “from all his work that the Yeqara of the Lord had done in creating” (למעבד דייי איקרהברהדי עיבידתיה כלמן של תבשיה די ברה בי ליימנה דה ליימנה). In these verses, the Yeqara represents God’s agent in creation similarly to the Memra. In John 1:1–14, John labels Jesus as the creative Word and the one in whom the glory of God clearly resides.

**The Shekinah and Yeqara in John 1:14**

In John 1:14, John uses terminology similar to the targumic Shekinah and Yeqara. John recalls the title “Word” (corresponding to Memra), but describes the incarnation by saying that Jesus became flesh and “dwelt” (corresponding to Shekinah).

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33A similar phrase is used of the Memra in Tg. Neof. Gen 2:2. The Memra of the Lord “completed his work that he had created” (בראדי עיבידתיה די ברה) and then rested “from all his work that he had created” (בראדי עיבידתיה כלמן של תבשיה די ברה). Tg. Neof. Gen 1–2 parallels the work of the Memra with the Yeqara. John, therefore, had no reason to distinguish between the creation work of the Logos and the visible “glory” shining from God’s agent. Both are represented in the targumic tradition.

34Some have seen in the Targums a reference to God creating the universe “with/by wisdom.” This interpretation is understandable, especially with the references to wisdom in Prov 8:25–31 (see also Ps 104:24; Prov 3:19). Wisdom “was beside him, like a master workman” (Prov 8:30). The simile used in Proverbs seems to indicate that wisdom was God’s agent in creation, and even the Targums agree with this conclusion to some extent. Tg. Neof. Gen 1:1 says, “From the beginning, with wisdom, the Lord created and finished the heavens and the earth.” The prepositional phrase, בחכמה, is an intentional targumic expansion that upholds God’s unity and yet allows for another creative agent. However, Tg. Neof. explicitly identifies the agent(s) through the rest of the creation narrative as the Memra and the Yeqara, and yet in the first verse of the targumic literature, the synagogue leaders carefully upheld Jewish monotheism.

The New Testament primarily presents God’s wisdom as wisdom related to salvation, not creation. In God’s infinite wisdom, he sent Jesus to save. The New Testament also identifies Jesus as “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:24; Χριστὸν θεὸν δύναμιν καὶ θεὸν σοφίαν; cf. Col 2:3). The appositive phrases in 1 Cor 1:24 suggest that Jesus is the wisdom of God. Certainly this text is unrelated to Jesus as the Creator, and yet when combined with the Old Testament and targumic evidence, one could conclude that God created through Jesus as the wisdom of God. Therefore, the phrase in Tg. Neof. Gen 1:1 that God created “with wisdom” should not lead one to limit God’s creative activity only through the agency of wisdom. Indeed, God created through the agency of Wisdom, who is Jesus, the Memra.
among men.\textsuperscript{35} This manifestation of God in Jesus Christ displayed God’s glory, a “glory as of the only Son from the Father.” In this verse, John says that Jesus is the manifestation of divine glory that has made his dwelling among men. Mary Coloe says, “These terms from the Targums used in the Jewish synagogue worship may have provided the Johannine author with the theological tools to express the divinity they saw, heard, and experienced in Jesus.”\textsuperscript{36}

Regarding \textit{Shekinah} and \textit{Yeqara} in John 1:14, Köstenberger says this language is reminiscent of the tabernacle scene in Exodus 40:34–35.\textsuperscript{37} In this passage, God’s glory (יְהוָה כְבוֹד) filled the tabernacle. Köstenberger refers to this scene because of John’s use of ἐσκήνωσεν to say that the Word “tabernacled” among his people. That Jesus “tabernacled” among men refers to the \textit{Shekinah} presence of God. In addition, Neofiti Exodus 40:34–36, 38 says that it was the “\textit{Yeqara} of the \textit{Shekinah} of the Lord” that descended upon the tabernacle.\textsuperscript{38} Similar to targumic terminology, John refers to the presence of God in the tabernacle to speak of Jesus as the manifestation of God. God, in Christ, dwelled among men and manifested his “weighty” presence through the glory of the Son.

Further targumic evidence behind John’s use of \textit{Shekinah} and \textit{Yeqara} is in...

\textsuperscript{35}The association of \textit{Shekinah} with “dwelt” is not intended to argue that John wrote in Aramaic. Indeed, the Aramaic \textit{Shekinah} and the Hebrew \textit{shakan} are related (see pgs. 41–42 above). The inclusion of \textit{Shekinah} with “dwelt” terminology in John 1:14 is intended to show the similar language John uses rather than argue that he wrote in Aramaic.


\textsuperscript{38}Exod 40:34–36 is an example of the close relationship between \textit{Shekinah} and \textit{Yeqara}. Although these terms have distinct nuances in meaning, they often indicate the same concept, namely the manifestation of God in the world.
Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 33:9.39 The cloud that descended on the tent of meeting and spoke with Moses was the “cloud of the Glory” (יוֹעֵר). The targumic interpretation of God’s manifest presence was that his Yeqara was visibly present in the tent of meeting. With this scene in mind, it is not surprising that John says the Word has tabernacled among men and “we have beheld his glory” (John 1:14). Jesus is both God’s agent and also his physical manifestation on earth. In order to explain Jesus’ ontological identity as God, John used terminology similar to the Targums to teach that Jesus was God’s glorious presence dwelling among men.

A final passage that connects Shekinah and Yeqara to John 1:14 is Exodus 34:6. In Onqelos, Neofiti, and Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 34:6, the Targums interpret Moses’ exclamation of God’s “steadfast love and faithfulness” as his “abundantly doing kindness and truth.” Combining the idea of God “doing truth” with him being a God, “ gracious and merciful,” some scholars see this passage as the impetus for John saying that the visible glory of God in Christ was “full of grace and truth.”40 In Onqelos and Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 34:6, God caused his Shekinah to pass before Moses eliciting Moses’ exclamation of God’s grace and truth. In Neofiti Exodus 34:6, God caused the Yeqara of his Shekinah to pass before Moses. John used language similar to the Targums of Exodus 34:6 to indicate that Jesus manifests the Father’s glory, “full of grace and truth.”

The Memra in Revelation 19:13

Another passage in which John uses terms similar to the Targums is Revelation


19:13. In John’s eschatological vision, he sees the rider on the white horse coming to wage war against God’s enemies. The rider is called, “the Word of God” (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ), the familiar agent of the Targums (יִדְיוֹם יָהַּנָּן). As the Word of God, Revelation 19:11–21 portrays Jesus as God’s agent to execute justice through warfare. Jesus, who is faithful and true, sits upon his white horse to judge (κρίνει) and make war (πολεμεῖ; Rev 19:11; cf. Rev 3:14). To illustrate God’s justice and warfare through the Word, John says that Jesus wears a robe dipped in blood, and he will tread the winepress of the wrath of God the Almighty (v. 15; cf. Matt 21:33). He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (v. 16; cf. 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 17:14), who alone has authority to execute justice. In John’s vision, the “Word of God” leads God’s army in the final battle against Satan and the forces that oppose God’s people (Rev 19:13b). All of these descriptions indicate that Jesus is God’s agent to save God’s people by distributing justice on their enemies. While the title “Word of God” may seem arbitrary, God’s use of an agent to carry out warfare and justice is evident. Jesus sits atop the white horse poised to execute justice over his enemies as God’s divine agent. According to John, the Word of God is none other than the Memra who is God’s agent for justice and warfare in the Targums.

**Memra and judgment.** Similarly to how Jesus is God’s agent to carry out justice (John 12:48; Rom 2:16), the Memra also executes retributive justice in the Targums. *Pseudo-Jonathan* Genesis 19:24 says that the Memra of the Lord poured out sulfur and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah as an act of judgment.41 *Neofiti* Exodus 15:1 attributes to the Memra the punishment delivered to Egypt at the exodus. The Targums suggest that God will deliver covenantal curses through the Memra as retribution for their

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41 Cf. *Tg. Neof.*, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, and *Frg. Tg. PVNL* Gen 19:24. *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Frg. Tg. PVNL* all interpret “raining down” of the Hebrew Bible as God’s favorable opportunity for repentance followed by the fire and brimstone of judgment. *Tg. Neof.* Gen 19:24 omits the “favorable rains” and declares that “the Memra of the Lord made sulfur and fire come down upon Sodom and Gomorrah from before the Lord, from the heavens.”
disobedience in *Pseudo-Jonathan* Deuteronomy 28:20–22. Eschatologically, the *Memra* will destroy the nations in judgment according to *Targum Isaiah* 33:11. In each of these passages, the parallel between Jesus and the *Memra* as God’s agent(s) to deliver judgment is clear. In John’s final scene of God’s active judgment in history, John used similar targumic language to portray Jesus as God’s agent to deliver that judgment.

Several other targumic passages suggest that John may have understood Jesus as the *Memra* in his vision of divine judgment. *Targum Isaiah* 11:4 provides the background for several of the themes from Revelation 19, but attributes God’s smiting judgment to the *Memra* rather than the “rod” from the Messiah’s mouth.

Isaiah 11:1–4

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.

*Targum Isaiah* 11:1–4

And the king will come forth from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah will be raised up from his sons’ sons. And a spirit will rest on him from before the Lord, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a spirit of counsel and power, a spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And the Lord shall bring him near to the fear of him. And he shall not be judging by the sight of his eyes, and he shall not be reproving by the hearing of the ears. And he will judge poor ones in truth, and he will reprove the poor of the people in faithfulness. But he will smite the sinners of the land by the *Memra* of his mouth, and by the speech of his lips he will kill the wicked.

*Targum Isaiah* interprets the “shoot” and “branch” from the Hebrew Bible as the “king” and “Messiah” to be raised up from the sons of Jesse. The Spirit-filled Messiah in Isaiah 11 will “smite the sinners of the land by the *Memra* of his mouth.”

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42 The phrase “rod of his mouth” in Isa 11:4 parallels Rev 19:15 that Jesus rules with a “rod of
The Targum interprets a personal agent in the place of the “rod of his mouth.” Isaiah 11:4, in both the Hebrew Bible and the Targum, presents a parallel construction in verse 4b.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew Bible</th>
<th>Targum Isaiah</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT Isaiah 11:4b</td>
<td>And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips, he shall kill the wicked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targum Isaiah 11:4b</td>
<td>And he shall smite the sinners of the land by the Memra of his mouth and by the decree of his lips, he will exist as one who kills the wicked.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Hebrew Bible, the “rod of his mouth” is parallel to the “breath of his lips,” both of which are involved in judging the wicked. Using the ב preposition, both of these phrases serve as instruments of judgment. The Targum highlights the Memra’s agency in judgment by inserting Memra in place of “the rod of his mouth,” and then corroborates this idea with a parallel instrument, “the speech of his lips.”

Where the Hebrew Bible parallels the instrument of judgment (שבט) with the decree of judgment (רוח), so also the Targum parallels the instrument/agent of judgment (מימר) with the decree of judgment.

43 All Hebrew and Aramaic texts are from Accordance Bible Software modules, BHS-W4, TARG-T, TARG2-T, TARG3-T, and TARGF-T. The passages designated as “MT,” in this chart and others, assume the pointing of the Masoretic Text even though the provided text is unpointed.

44 The phrase “speech of his lips” does not have to be understood as a decree only. Second Thess 2:8 says that when the lawless one appears, the Lord Jesus will kill him with the “breath of his mouth.” Even in 2 Thess 2:8, this phrase could be understood metaphorically to refer to the effectual decree of judgment, and yet grammatically, the instrumental dative seems more likely. By interpreting 2 Thess 2:8 in this way, Paul’s language is similar to Tg. Isa 11:4b, where Jesus stands as the personal agent/instrument of God to judge, but he does so by the “breath/speech of his lips.” Alec Motyer connects “lips” and “mouth” in Isa 11:4 to Rev 19:15, 21 without any reference to the Targums indicating that he sees divine agency in this passage over mere speech. He says, “The king needs no other weapon than his word (Rev 19:15, 21), because his word is annexed to his breath, literally ‘spirit’ (as Ps. 33:6).” In J. Alec Motyer, Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary, TOTC 20 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1999), 118.
In the Targum, one instrument of God’s judgment is the Memra. In Revelation 19, the agent of God’s final judgment is called “the Word of God.”

The context of Targum Isaiah 11:4 also connects the Memra with Jesus in Revelation 19:11–16. Targum Isaiah 11:4 says that the Memra “will judge the poor ones in truth” and “reprove the poor of the people in faithfulness.” These phrases refer to the Messiah judging the poor favorably in order to care for them, and yet the descriptors “truth” and “faithfulness” parallel the names of the rider on the white horse in Revelation 19:11. He is “called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.”

The word used in the Targum for “truth” (קושטא) translates “righteousness” in the Hebrew Bible (צדק), and often means “righteousness” itself in the Targums. That Revelation 19:11 says the one sitting on the white horse judges and makes war “in righteousness” (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ) affirms a connection between the targumic agent and Jesus. Just as the Memra will judge in truth and faithfulness, so also Jesus will judge as the one who is called Faithful and True. John’s use of “Word” in Revelation 19:13 once again seems to have a probable targumic background.

Targum Isaiah 63:1–8 also portrays the Memra in the context of judgment, and provides the background for other judgment themes found in Revelation 19:11–16. In Targum Isaiah 63:1, the Lord swore “by his Memra” to execute justice on the nations. Targum Isaiah 63:3 describes this judgment sworn by the Memra as “stamping” (מתבעיט) the nations as in a winepress. In Revelation 19:13–15, Jesus’ robe is red with blood because he has trodden the winepress of the wrath of God. Jesus, the Word of God, will carry out the judgment sworn by the Memra.

The broader context of Isaiah 58–63 suggests that God’s agent will be Israel’s

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45 Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, 1429.

Savior by defeating their enemies in judgment. Not only is the Memra God’s agent to execute this justice, but by doing so, the Memra also becomes Israel’s Savior. Because no one was found righteous to execute justice (Isa 63:4), God’s own arm brought salvation and his wrath upheld him (Isa 63:5).\(^{47}\) Targum Isaiah 63:5 interprets God’s wrath in the Hebrew as “by my pleasing Memra, I helped them” (ב מפני רעתיו (Memra)). In other words, God’s Memra will help Israel by being the very wrath that slaughters the nations who oppose Israel. As Israel’s Savior-Judge, Targum Isaiah 63:8 says, “Indeed they are my people, children who will not deceive, and my Memra has become their Savior.”\(^{48}\) Targum Isaiah 63:1–8 provides the background that the Memra of the Lord would execute justice by stamping God’s enemies under foot. By doing so, the Memra graciously helps God’s people and becomes their Savior. John describes Jesus similarly when he calls him the Word of God in Revelation 19:13.

**Memra and warfare.** Further evidence that John used concepts similar to the targumic Memra in Revelation 19:13 is that the Memra is God’s agent in warfare. Not only do the Targums present the Memra as the eschatological judge, but they also portray the Memra as the divine warrior who fights for Israel (cf. Rev 19:11b). When Israel was

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\(^{47}\)Commenting on the Hebrew text of Isa 63:5, Alec Motyer says, “The whole work of judgment, like the whole work of salvation, is exclusively, uniquely, individually his” (Moyer, *Isaiah*, 434). In this sense, Motyer points out God’s unilateral decision to uphold the salvation of his people by exacting justice on the nations who oppose them. In the Targum, the Memra decreed this judgment. This theme lines up well with Rev 19:11–16 in which Jesus, the Word, is God’s agent to carry out the justice that the Memra decreed to carry out unilaterally. In addition, when one looks to the cross, again staining blood is involved and salvation comes to God’s people through judgment on the Son, God’s agent. See Grant Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 682–83, for the arguments that the blood on Jesus’ robe in Rev 19:13 refers to the blood of the cross.

\(^{48}\)The Aramaic of Tg. Isa 63:8 employs a *peal* participle as an accusative of situation to indicate occupation or perpetual behavior. In this sense, the Memra’s occupation is a “Savior.” Tg. Neof. Lev 22:32–33 combines this same terminology and grammar equating the Lord with the Memra, who “saves/redeems” (פרקע). Tg. Neof. Lev 22:32–33 says, “And you should not desecrate my holy name, so that my honorable name may be sanctified among the children of Israel. I am the Lord who sanctified you, who redeemed you (פרקע) and brought you out of the land of Egypt redeemed (פרקע) so that my Memra might be to you a redeeming God (פרקע). I am the Lord who redeemed your fathers and will redeem you.”
about to enter the promised land, Moses told them that the Lord’s Memra will fight for them similarly to how he fought for them in Egypt (Tg. Onq. Deut 1:30). In Targum Joshua, the tradition indicates that the Memra fought the conquest battles for Israel (Tg. Josh 10:14). Likewise, Targum Joshua 23:3, 10 recounts the conquest by describing the Memra as the “fighter” for Israel.49 Targum Isaiah 10:16 says “the Master of the Universe, the Lord of Hosts, will send a blow to his princes.” In Targum Isaiah 10:17, God’s “Holy One,” namely his agent, is appositionally defined as “his mighty Memra” (וֹדֵיהוּ הַקּדֶשֶׁיָּהוּ מִימֶרֶהוּ).50 The Memra “will be like fire” and “slaughter and destroy” the Assyrians (Tg. Isa 10:17b; cf. Rev 19:12). After the defeat of Amalek in Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 17, Moses built an altar and named it “The Memra of the Lord is my miracle” ascribing the miraculous defeat of the Amalekites to the Memra (Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 17:15).51 In Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 17:16, Moses says that Memra swore by his glorious throne that he would “wage war” (גוֹיַנְתּמַר) against Amalek “from the generation of this world, and from the generation of the Messiah, and from the generation of the world to come.” The targumic tradition not only identifies the Memra as the one who wages war for Israel, but also the one who will act as God’s agent in warfare and judgment in

49The Aramaic construction of Tg. Josh 23:3, 10 uses an apophel participle (וֹדֵיהוּ הַקּדֶשֶׁיָּהוּ מִימֶרֶהוּ) as an accusative of situation. The grammar here suggests regular action or occupation. That the participle occurs in a nominal clause also highlights the role or “occupation” of the Memra.

50תקיף מימריה is an explicative appositional construction to קדישיה, further defining it. See Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §26; Williams, Williams’ Hebrew Grammar, §70; Kautzch, Gesenius’ Hebrew Grammar, §131f–g; and Joüon, Grammar of Biblical Hebrew, §131h–k. One could possibly argue that this is “substitution apposition” (Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §27) based on Tg. Isa 10:20 in which the apposition is flipped (מימרא דרי קדישא יוי ד). This construction could suggest an “all-for-all substitution” (ibid., §27b) in which these terms could be used interchangeably while not losing the meaning of either. Indeed, God’s “Holy One” is “his Memra.” For Jesus as the “Holy One of God,” see John 6:69; Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14; 1 John 2:20; Rev 3:14.

51The Aramaic in Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 17:15 interprets “the Lord is my banner” (יֵ💘ֶוהוּ הַנֶּשֶׁא) as “this Memra of the Lord is my miracle” (דילי ניסא דידי דייי מימרא). The Targum preserves the same Semitic root (赀), but with different meaning than the Hebrew. In this way, the Targum interprets Moses’ altar as a reference to the miraculous and decisive battle the Memra won against Amalek.
the future generations, indeed into the eschaton.

In each of these examples, the Targums indicate that God will execute final judgment and warfare through his agent, the Memra. Just as the Memra fought for Israel during the conquest, so also, he will fight for God’s people in the final eschatological war that brings judgment on the nations and salvation for those who follow the “Word of God” on the white horse. Using similar targumic terms, John described Jesus as the “Word of God,” who acts as God’s agent to bring salvation through active warfare and judgment.

The Yeqara in John 12:41

The New Testament authors also speak of Jesus using a term similar to Yeqara (יִצְרָא). In John 12:41, John says that Isaiah spoke of Israel’s unbelief because “he saw his [Jesus’] glory and spoke of him.” John refers to two Isaiah passages, Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 to point out Israel’s inability to believe. John likely says that Isaiah saw Jesus’ glory because Targum Isaiah 6:1 says that Isaiah saw the Yeqara of the Lord seated on the throne.

Targum Isaiah 6:1 says, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Yeqara of the Lord dwelling on a throne, high and lifted up in the highest heavens, and the temple was filled with the splendor of his Yeqara.” In standard targumic method, the


53 Isa 6:1–10 and John 12:41 show a close connection between John and the Targums. John quotes Isa 6:10 in his explanation of why people will not believe the Son of Man. In Tg. Isa 6:8–10, the Targum indicates that the Memra of the Lord is the one speaking to Isaiah. With this in mind, the Targum explains that Isaiah saw the Yeqara of the Shekinah of the Lord as the manifestation of God’s presence. Additionally, the Memra functioned as God’s agent to prophesy his purposes and intentions for those who would not believe the Son of Man. John may have understood this connection and when the Jewish leaders failed to believe the Son of Man, he referenced Isa 6 to say that Isaiah saw the glory of the Son and heard God’s purposes from the mouth of the Son. When John sees this prophecy fulfilled in Christ, he describes it using terminology similar to Tg. Isa 6. In addition, Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 4:7 quotes Isa 6 to explain the difference between Yahweh and the gods of the nations. In this quote, Tg. Ps.-J. Duet 4:7 says, “The Memra of the Lord sits on his throne, high and exalted . . . .” Indeed, Isaiah prophesied about Israel’s inability to believe because he saw the Son’s glory in the heavenly throne room.
tradition explains how Isaiah saw the Lord directly. Isaiah saw his “glory” (כרות דניי). God’s revelation was a weighty manifestation of his glory according to the Targum. Similarly, Targum Isaiah 6:5 says that Isaiah saw the “Yeqara of the Shekinah of the King of eternity, the Lord of Hosts” (כרות שכניה מלך עלם לי בכאות). To explain how Isaiah saw God, the Targum substitutes that Isaiah saw the weighty manifestation of the King, his Yeqara.

After seeing God’s Yeqara, Isaiah is told that he will go to a people who hear but do not understand (Isa 6:10). Like the people to whom Isaiah prophesied, the people John refers to in John 12:37–38 also failed to hear and believe Jesus’ message. Although Jesus manifested God to the world through his miracles, the people still would not believe. Their eyes were blinded and their hearts were hardened (John 12:40). According to John, Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus’ glory (John 12:41).

The Yeqara in 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul uses terminology similar to Yeqara to speak of Jesus. He calls Jesus the “image of God,” which suggests the manifestation of God. As God’s premier image, Christ displays a “glory” (τῆς δόξης τοῦ Χριστοῦ) that can be found in the gospel. In 2 Corinthians 4:6, Paul elaborates on what he means by the glory of Christ in 4:4. In the gospel, God shines into the hearts of believers so that they clearly see “the glory of God” (τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ). However, this glory is not just ethereal honor or dignity; rather, it is the manifest radiance of God found “in the face of Jesus Christ” (ἐν προσώπῳ Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ). In Paul’s understanding of the gospel, God causes people

\[54\] In the Aramaic cited, Yeqara does not have the definite article because it is a construct form. However, the final noun in the entire construct package is definite (עלמא) making the whole package definite.

\[55\] Thomas Schreiner explains the centrality and supremacy of Christ in 2 Cor 4:4–6, but he also says that the focus on Christ fails to “push God to the margins, for God’s glory is maximized ‘in the face of Jesus Christ’” (Thomas R. Schreiner, New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008], 307). In this sense, Jesus is not just a manifestation of God; rather, he is the premier
to see Christ for who he really is. Jesus is the image of God who displays the manifest glory of God in the world. When God shines the light of the gospel into human hearts, the glory of God radiates from the face of Christ.

The Targums do not provide a specific Old Testament parallel to 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6 as in Targum Isaiah 6:1 and John 12:41, and yet the overall meaning and context of Yeqara developed previously suggests that Paul may have understood Jesus to be the manifestation of God’s Yeqara.\(^{56}\) Just as the Yeqara was revealed to Israel when God gave them the Law (Tg. Onq. Exod 20:17–18), so also, in the New Covenant, Jesus manifests God’s visible glory in the gospel. Indeed, Jesus is the glory of God in the gospel.

The Yeqara in Hebrews 1:3

The author of Hebrews also uses terminology similar to Yeqara when speaking of Jesus. In Hebrews 1:3, the author says that the Son through whom God has spoken to the world is “the radiance of the glory of God.” As “the exact imprint of his [God’s] nature,” Jesus manifests God’s character and radiates the divine glory of God. Commenting on the word ἀπαύγασμα in Hebrews 1:3, Donald MacLeod concludes that as the “radiance” of the glory of God, Jesus manifested the glory of the Father to the world.\(^{57}\) Jesus sometimes is given the title, “Glory” (e.g., Jas 2:1), but here, the author of Hebrews says that Jesus reflects or displays the glory of God to the world. MacLeod

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56To say that Paul certainly had in mind the targumic Yeqara is impossible to prove. Indeed, Paul may have had in mind the Hebrew זבוב. However, previous arguments showed that Yeqara was theologically derived from the Hebrew idea of God’s weighty glory (זבוב), and so the words could be thought of interchangeably for Paul, a Pharisee, who was likely familiar with the targumic traditions on the Hebrew Bible. In addition, Yeqara of the Shekinah seems to exhibit a specific role to manifest God’s activity in the world rather than an ethereal “glory.” Indeed, the functional roles of Jesus and the Yeqara bear striking similarities.

57Donald MacLeod, The Person of Christ (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998), 80.
concludes,

Christ is the Light from that Light, God’s glory radiated and was made accessible to men, so that they were able to see his glory: glory as of an only begotten from a father (Jn. 1:14). He is the glory made visible; not a different glory from the Father’s but the same glory in another form. The Father is the glory hidden: the Son is the glory revealed. The Son is the Father repeated, but in a different way.58

As in 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6, the author of Hebrews uses “glory” vocabulary similar to the Targums. The Yeqara is God’s weighty glory just as Jesus is the “radiance of the glory of God.”

Shekinah in the New Testament

Unlike Memra and Yeqara, where New Testament terms like “Word” and “glory” correspond well, the New Testament authors do not use Greek equivalents to the term Shekinah often. However, the New Testament regularly speaks of Jesus as being God in the flesh (e.g., John 1:14; Phil 2; Col 1:20), indicating God’s manifest presence in the world. Whereas Memra and Yeqara had specific Greek parallels, Shekinah must be understood according to its targumic meaning as the dwelling presence of God. Even so, a few New Testament passages use the language of “dwelling” to show that Jesus is the Shekinah presence of God (e.g., John 1:14, ἐσκήνωσεν).

Paul uses “dwelling” terminology in Ephesians 3:17 to illustrate the idea of Jesus “dwelling” in the hearts of those who put their faith in him. Paul prays that God’s Spirit will strengthen believers “so that Christ may dwell (κατοικῆσαι) in [their] hearts through faith.” Jesus certainly manifested God’s presence among men while he was living on earth, but even after his ascension, Paul indicates that Christ continues to dwell in the hearts of believers as God’s perpetual presence with his people.

As in Ephesians 3:17, Colossians 1:27 also points to the indwelling of Christ

58Ibid.
after his ascension. Paul describes the glory of God’s mystery, that the Gentiles would receive the same blessing of salvation as the Jews. This mystery is not just that Gentiles would receive a message of salvation, but that they would receive the very presence of God through Christ dwelling in them. Paul further defines the mystery as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

While no direct transliteration of Shekinah exists in Colossians 1:27, Paul uses parallel targumic language to say that Jesus is the Shekinah. Indeed, Jesus indwells believers as the presence of God with them.

Using “dwelling” terminology, Revelation 21–22 also suggests that Jesus is the Shekinah presence of God. In the new heavens and the new earth, God will dwell (σκηνώσει) with his people because his dwelling place (ἡ σκηνή) is with man (Rev 21:3). As John continues to describe his vision, he says that the new Jerusalem will have no temple because the presence of God and of the Lamb will be in the city. The glory of God will provide the city with its light (Rev 21:23), but the lamp from which this light shines is the physical manifestation of God, the Lamb (Jesus). Revelation 22:3–4 says that “the throne of God and of the Lamb” will be in the city and that God’s people will see his face. In Revelation 22:5, John once again says that there will be no need for light of a lamp because the radiant glory of God found in the face of Christ will be the city’s light. Although the grammar indicates that God’s presence is among men, John’s context points to the presence of God in Christ dwelling among men throughout eternity. The Shekinah presence of God will be forever displayed in the person of Jesus Christ.

In addition to “dwelling” terminology, the New Testament also speaks of Jesus as “light,” another reference to the Shekinah. The Jewish Encyclopedia points to Ongelos Numbers 6:25 as a reference to the Shekinah “shining” (לבה) as visible light. Ongelos

59 The relative clause, δέσμων Χριστός ἐν ὑμῖν, ἔλθεις τῆς δύναμος, further explains the mystery in Paul’s discussion. See Wallace, Greek Grammar, 336–37, 659–61 for relative pronouns and relative clauses respectively.

60 Ludwig Blau, “Shekinah,” in The Jewish Encyclopedia: A Descriptive Record of the History,
Numbers 6:25 says, “May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you—May the Lord make his Shekinah to shine upon you and may he have mercy on you.” Here, the Shekinah represents God’s presence manifested as light. Using this targumic analogy of the Shekinah as visible light, one can find more explicit references to Jesus as the Shekinah in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews describes Jesus as the “radiance” (ἀπαύγασμα) of the glory of God, highlighting the brightness of God’s glory in Jesus (Heb 1:3). In John 8:12 and 9:5, Jesus called himself “the Light of the world.” John says in his prologue, “The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world” (John 1:9). As mentioned previously, the light that illumines the new heavens and new earth is from the Lamb (Rev 21:23; 22:5). Using “light” terminology, John labels Jesus as the Shekinah of God. Jesus is not a distant manifestation of God; rather, he is the Memra made flesh (cf. John 1:14).  

Although a consistent Greek equivalent for Shekinah is not used in the New Testament for Jesus, these examples show the range of meaning of Shekinah applied to Jesus. As the God-Man, Jesus dwells among and in his people, displaying the visible light of God’s presence, just as the Shekinah in the Targums.

The Targumic Concepts of Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara Corresponding to the Offices and Roles of Jesus

In addition to using terminology similar to the Targums, the New Testament authors also employed similar concepts to speak about Jesus. The New Testament

61 The consistency and diversity of John’s use of these targumic terms in the prologue further highlights the connection between these terms and the New Testament. John was able to move from Memra to Yeqara to Shekinah using various nuances of each term. Jesus is the Memra made flesh, who dwells (Shekinah) with his people as the Yeqara of God. He shines as light (Shekinah) in the world, displaying God’s active, manifest presence. John employs these terms as if they were the normal background images anyone would use to speak of God’s manifest agent in the world.
authors spoke about Jesus’ role as God’s agent and manifestation similarly to how the Targums portray Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara.

Divine Agency

Divine agency in creation. In the previous section, the targumic passages in which the Memra and Yeqara act as God’s agent(s) in creation were discussed. Neofiti Genesis 1:3–31 interpreted the Memra as God’s agent in creation, whereas Neofiti Genesis 1:17 and 2:3 highlighted the Yeqara's role in creation. The New Testament demonstrates how the authors expanded the concept of an agent in creation to refer to Jesus. While John may have used targumic terminology (Memra, ‘Word’) to teach that Jesus created all things (John 1:3, 10), the other New Testament authors employed the similar targumic concept of God creating through an agent in order to describe Jesus’ role as Creator. In the New Testament, God’s agent in creation is Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul recalls Malachi 2:10 to argue that Jesus is “the Lord” through whom all things exist. The structure of 1 Corinthians 8:6 is split by the conjunctive, καί, and all that follows the conjunctive refers to Christ. With this structure, 1 Corinthians 8:6b teaches that God the Father is the source of creation and Jesus is the agent. Paul, like John, uses δι’ plus the genitives οὗ and αὐτοῦ respectively,

62 1 Cor 8:6 reads, “yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.” Mal 2:10 says, “Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?”

63 Gordon Fee says, “Although Paul does not here call Christ God, the formula is so constructed that only the most obdurate would deny its Trinitarian implications. In the same breath that he can assert that there is only one God, he equally asserts that the designation ‘Lord,’ which in the OT belongs to the one God, is the proper designation of the divine Son.” In Gordon Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 375.

to indicate intermediate agency. Paul highlights Jesus’ ontological identity with the Father, especially since Malachi 2:10 teaches there is “one God who created us” (אֱלֹהִים אֵחָכֵל). Paul seems to apply Malachi 2:10 to Jesus, as God’s agent who brought all things into existence. In this passage, Paul suggests that the “one God” from Malachi 2:10 created through his agent, Jesus.

In Colossians 1:16, Paul affirms more directly that Jesus created all things. Early in the verse, Paul uses the instrumental dative (ἐν αὐτῷ) rather than the typical διά plus a genitive. To distinguish between instrument and agent is quite unnecessary, especially in this passage. Paul clarifies that Jesus is God’s agent when he says, “all things were created through him and for him” (tὰ πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται) using the typical construction of agency, δι’ αὐτοῦ. Using the instrumental dative and...

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67Mark 1:8 and 1 Cor 12:13 are possible examples of ἐν plus the dative indicating agency. However, these examples are uncertain, and the distinction between agency and instrument related to Jesus’ work in the world is unnecessary (see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 373–74). F. F. Bruce argues that ἐν αὐτῷ in Col 1:16 refers to the sphere in which God created, referencing a parallel construction in Eph 1:4 (Bruce, *Epistle to the Colossians*, 61). However, because of the proximity of διὰ αὐτοῦ in Col 1:16, the instrumental dative is more likely. See the discussion in Peter O’Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, WBC 44 (Waco, TX: Word, 1982), 45–47 for the various arguments between sphere and agency in the use of ἐν αὐτῷ.


69Other examples of διὰ plus the genitive indicating agency with a passive verb include Matt 1:22 (τὸ γρηγορὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου, ‘what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet’), John 3:17 (σωθῆναι ἐκ γένους διὰ αὐτοῦ, ‘the world might be saved through him’), Gal 3:19 (ὁ νόμος . . . διαταγεῖς διὰ ἀγγέλων, ‘the law . . . was put in place through angels’), and Eph 3:10 (ὅνα γνωρισθῆ . . . διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἡ πολυποικίλος σφαίρα τοῦ θεοῦ, ‘in order that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church’). For a discussion of διὰ plus the genitive with a passive verb indicating intermediate agency, see Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 433–34.
διὰ plus the genitive, Paul intensifies his description of Jesus’ role as God’s agent in creation. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the cosmos, and yet he created and sustains through the Son.

The author of Hebrews, like John and Paul, also introduces Jesus as God’s agent in creation. In Hebrews 1:2, the author affirms that God created the world “through” the Son (ἐν υἱῷ . . . δι’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας). In this first chapter of Hebrews, the author highlights Jesus’ supremacy over angels and other messengers so that the church would pay close attention to what they have heard from Jesus through the apostles and prophets (cf. Heb 2:1). Part of Jesus’ supremacy above angels is that he was not created like them. Instead, he is their Creator. At the beginning of his epistle, the author of Hebrews shows that Jesus was God’s agent in creation similarly to the Memra and Yeqara of the Targums.

While these New Testament passages teach about Jesus’ role in the original creation (Gen 1–2), the New Testament also extends Jesus’ creative agency into the eschaton. In the book of Revelation, heavenly visions allude to Christ’s work as Creator of new heavens and a new earth (Rev 3:12; 21:1; cf. 2 Pet 3:13). In Revelation 3:14, Jesus is given the title “the Amen,” probably alluding to Isaiah 65:16–17, where God is called the “God of truth” (בַּבְלֵית אֱמֹן). Isaiah indicates that the “God of truth” will “create new heavens and a new earth,” while Revelation 3:14, teaches that Jesus, who is

70 As the divine Creator, Jesus also upholds the created order as God’s agent in preservation (Col 1:17). Paul uses another instrumental dative in Col 1:17 to indicate agency in preservation. As before, a strict distinction between the instrumental dative and personal agency is unnecessary. Both highlight Jesus’ role as God’s agent/instrument in creation and preservation.


72 Osborne, Revelation, 204–5.
the Amen, is the “beginning of God’s creation.”⁷³ The New Testament clarifies and explains the creation process through an agent by ascribing creation to Jesus, the new “Amen.” Grant Osborne argues that Laodicea would have been uniquely familiar with this language since their sister church, Colossae, was given the same message regarding Christ and creation (cf. Col 1:15–16, 18).⁷⁴ What was once an adjectival modifier for God the Father (אֱמִינָה) has become a title for the Son of God (ὁ ἀμήν).⁷⁵ From Jesus, God’s agent in the first creation, will come the second creation as he continues his role as God’s creative agent.

Divine agency in redemption. The Targums often describe the Memra with the title “redeeming God” (פריק אלה).⁷⁶ Neofiti Genesis 17:8 says that God will be for Israel a redeeming God by his Memra (האורי בהמרל נהל אלהי פראיר).⁷⁷ Neofiti

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⁷³Grant Osborne says, “God’s truthfulness is particularly seen in his control of creation, and here this is also a major attribute of Jesus as the Son of God” (ibid., 204). The phrase ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ is somewhat problematic regarding whether it is temporal or indicative of source or origin. Osborne draws from the similar meaning of ἡ ἀρχή in Colossians 1:18 to refer to preeminence, but he continues, “Ἀρχή means not only preeminence or ruler but also “source” or “origin,” and that is a likely connotation here” (ibid., 205). David Aune refers to the temporal aspect of ἀρχή, to say that Jesus has temporal priority over creation (David Edward Aune, Revelation, WBC 52A [Dallas: Word, 1997], 256). However one takes the idea of “beginning,” that it is linked to Col 1, John 1, and Gen 1 suggests that Jesus, the Amen, is the faithful Creator who was formerly identified as אֱמִינָה אֶלֹהִי in Isa 65:17.

⁷⁴Osborne, Revelation, 205.

⁷⁵Osborne says, “Jesus is the beginning and source of ‘God’s creation’” (ibid.). If Jesus is the source (headwaters) of creation, then he is the preeminent Son from whom the creation poured forth. When one combines this idea with economic subordination within the Trinity, Jesus must be understood as an agent. Jesus is the source of creation ontologically as God; and yet he is the agent of creation functionally as the Son of God.

⁷⁶The Aramaic construction here is again the peal participle indicating occupation or divine title. To exist as a “Redeemer” is part of the Memra’s nature in this sense.

⁷⁷The title “Redeemer God” (פריק אלה) functions as an accusative of situation. With the participle (פרך), this phrase suggests God’s regular and repeated behavior or occupation. To link this title to the Memra, Tg. Neof. Gen 17:3 indicates that the Memra was the one speaking with Abraham, describing himself as “existing in the status of a Redeemer God” for future Israel. The ה attached to בהמרל could be understood as an instrumental ה or a ה essentiae (Williams, Williams’ Hebrew Syntax, §249; GCK, §119; JM, §133c.). The instrumental ה would indicate that God exists as a Redeemer God through his Memra. The ה essentiae would suggest that God exists as a Redeemer God as the Memra, namely God’s nature
Leviticus 22:33 and 25:38 both suggest the purpose of God redeeming Israel from Egypt was “so that my Memra would exist in the status of a Redeemer God for you” (Tg. Neof. Lev 25:38, תפוקלאלהפרוקלומרי). In addition, Targum Psalms 55:17 [MT Ps 55:16] says that the psalmist’s confidence is that the Memra of the Lord will redeem him (אמרההדחיהפורוק). Here, the Memra is the grammatical subject of the verb, תפוק, highlighting his role as God’s agent to redeem. Targum Psalms 143:9 interprets the psalmist finding refuge in the Lord as reckoning the Memra to be a redeemer (פורך). Finally, the prophets also explain the Memra as a redeeming agent for Israel (Tg. Hos 3:2; Tg. Joel 2:17; Tg. Zech 10:12). Whether using the participle to indicate occupation or the Memra as a grammatical subject of the verb תפוק, the Targums show that God used an agent in redemption.

The exodus event stands as God’s great redemption of his people in the Old Testament, and the Targums attribute this rescue to the Memra. In Neofiti Exodus 14:30–

(essence) actively involved in the created order. In either case, the targumic interpretation suggests that God redeems through his Memra.

Tg. Neof. Lev 22:33 includes the ב before Memra indicating more directly the idea of “by” or “as.” It reads, מימראללאלהפרוק, ויביאלתלמלאיםלך. 79 Tg. Neof. Lev 22:33 includes the ב before Memra indicating more directly the idea of “by” or “as.” It reads, מימראללאלהפרוק, ויביאלתלמלאיםלך.

In this sense, the Memra is Israel’s Savior similarly to how Jesus is the Savior of the world (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14).
31, targumic tradition summarizes the exodus event by saying,

On that day, the Memra of the Lord redeemed (פרק) and delivered (שזיב) Israel from the power of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dying, cast upon the shore of the sea. And Israel saw the mighty hand that the Lord acted with in Egypt, and the people feared from before the Lord. And they believed in the name of the Memra of the Lord and in the prophecy of Moses his servant.

Neofiti says that the Memra was God’s agent to redeem Israel from the hand of the Egyptians by substituting יהוה מימרא יהוה for יהוה as the subject of the verbs. When God promised Moses that he would redeem Israel out of Egypt, he said that the Memra would be Moses’ help (Tg. Onq. Exod 3:12). Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 13:8 says the Memra performed signs and wonders when Israel came out of Egypt, and Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 29:1 specifically ascribes the plagues against Pharaoh to the Memra. (cf. Tg. Neof. Deut 6:22; 11:4). In Onqelos Deuteronomy 4:37, Moses told Israel that because of God’s love for them, the Lord brought them out of Egypt “by his Memra.”

Targum Ezekiel 16:8 says that the Memra “protected” (אגינית) and “redeemed” (קיימית למסרס) Israel during the exodus event. In each of these examples, the Memra fulfilled various roles as God’s agent to bring about Israel’s redemption from Egypt. As such, the Memra is God’s divine agent to redeem.

In the New Testament, Jude may have used terminology similar to the Targums to say that Jesus was God’s agent in the exodus redemption. In Jude’s appeal for believers to stand firm in their faith, he reminds his audience that Jesus “saved a people out of Egypt, and afterward destroyed those who did not believe” (Jude 5). The manuscripts vary on whether Jude wrote “Jesus” saved God’s people from Egypt or whether it was “the Lord,” but good evidence exists for Ἰησοῦς as the favored reading.

81 The Hebrew of Deut 4:37 says that God brought Israel out of Egypt “by his own presence.” The Targum interprets this phrase as “by my Memra” indicating that God’s presence in Egypt to deliver Israel was his agent. In this passage, the Memra is both God’s agent and manifest presence, demonstrating how closely the Targums viewed Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara.

82 For Ἰησοῦς in Jude 5, the manuscript evidence includes A B 33 81 322 323 424 665 1241 1739 1881 2298 2344 vg cop 26. Origen Cyril Jerome Bede (Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on
If “Jesus” is the correct reading, Jude may have applied the redemptive work of the *Memra* to Jesus (cf. *Tg. Neof.* Exod 14:30).

The broader context of Jude’s statement in Jude 5 also fits well with *Neofiti* Exodus 14:30–31. *Neofiti* Exodus 14:31b highlights Israel’s belief in the *Memra* as an important part of their rescue and continued preservation in the wilderness. Jude highlights the requirement of Israel’s faith by saying that those who *did not believe* were destroyed.\(^{83}\) The Old Testament passages Jude possibly refers to are Numbers 14 and 20, both of which have targumic traditions that indicate Israel’s grumbling was due to a lack of belief in the *Memra* (*Tg. Onq.* Num 14:11–12; *Tg. Onq.* Num 20:12).\(^{84}\) The exodus generation failed to enter the promised land because of their lack of faith. Jude teaches that in spite of Jesus redeeming Israel from Egypt, grumbling revealed their lack of faith and caused their demise. Jude warns believers of falling away from the “faith that was once for all delivered to the saints” by providing an example of the great work of redemption God’s agent performed at the exodus. Jude appropriately identifies God’s agent as Jesus.

Like Jude, Paul also identifies Jesus as God’s agent in redemption. In

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\(^{83}\) Several targumic passages also attribute the judgment on the wilderness generation to the *Memra* (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Num 16:11, 26; *Tg. Neof.* [mg.] Num 16:30; *Tg. Neof.* [mg.] 21:6).

\(^{84}\) *Tgs. Onq.* and *Ps.-J.* Deut 9:23 combine several metaphors for Israel’s lack of faith. *Tg. Onq.* Deut 9:23 says, “And when the Lord sent you up from Reqem Geah, saying, ‘Go up and inherit the land that I have given you,’ then you refused the *Memra* of the Lord your God, and you did not believe him, and you did not receive his *Memra.*” Refusing the *Memra*, not believing the *Memra*, and failing to receive the *Memra* all have parallels in the wilderness journeys that indicate the generation destroyed in the wilderness failed to believe just as Jude affirms.
Ephesians 1:7, he says “in [Christ] we have redemption through his blood” (Ἐν διὰ τῆς ἀπολύτρωσιν διὰ τοῦ αἵματος αὐτοῦ). Paul uses the typical construction for agency, διὰ plus the genitive, to teach that believers have redemption through the blood of God’s agent.\(^{85}\) The pronoun, αὐτοῦ, refers to “the Beloved” of Ephesians 1:6, and therefore, God redeems “through” the Beloved’s blood.\(^{86}\) Therefore, Jesus is God’s agent of redemption as Christians are united by faith “in Christ.”

Whereas Ephesians 1:7 links Jesus’ blood and redemption, Colossians 1:14 implies that Jesus’ blood functionally secures redemption. In order to convince the Colossian church that they have the ability and motivation to “bear fruit in every good work,” Paul reminds them that God the Father has delivered them “from the domain of darkness and transferred [them] to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13). The Colossians stand as passive recipients of this transfer, and Paul attaches the prepositional phrase, εἰς διὰ τῆς ἀπολύτρωσιν, to further define the Son’s work in this transfer. God transfers believers into the kingdom of Christ by means of redemption in Christ (ἐν διὰ τῆς ἀπολύτρωσιν).

\(^{85}\)Col 1:20 and Heb 13:12 provide further examples of διὰ plus the genitive to suggest agency through Jesus’ blood. Col 1:20 relates reconciliation “through the blood of his [Jesus’] cross” (διὰ τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ σταυροῦ αὐτοῦ). Heb 13:12 connects sanctification to the agency of Jesus’ blood saying, “Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify a people through his blood” (Διὸ καὶ Ἰησοῦς, ἵνα ἐγέρῃ διὰ τοῦ ἱδίου αἵματος τὸν λαόν, ἐξω τῆς πύλης ἐπαθεν). For agency in Eph 1:7 specifically, see Peter T. O’Brien, The Letter to the Ephesians, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 106.

\(^{86}\)Eph 1:6–7 alludes to an intricate relationship between Jesus’ person and blood. The Scriptures couple blood and redemption regularly, especially in the exodus narrative. The Old Testament describes the exodus from Egypt using redemption language (Exod 6:6; Deut 7:8). That the redemption from slavery in Egypt is closely connected to the blood on the doorposts and lintels of Israelite houses is no coincidence. God rescued Israel from the destroyer during the Passover when he “saw” the blood of the paschal lamb (Exod 12:13, 23). Therefore, the Old Testament prefigures redemption by means of blood, and the New Testament makes the connection to Jesus’ person clear (1 Cor 5:7). In God’s redemptive plan, he redeems by means of blood. Similarly to how God redeemed Israel from Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb, God has redeemed believers who are integrally related to Jesus’ blood by faith. Jesus’ person provides the blood that is the means of redemption, and without the person, there would be no blood. Since Jesus’ blood and his person are so closely related, one can see that when Jesus’ blood functions as a grammatical agent, the implication stands that Jesus is the agent. J. Behm says, ‘The interest of the NT is not in the material blood of Christ, but in His shed blood as the life violently taken from Him. Like the cross, the ‘blood of Christ’ is simply another and even more graphic phrase for the death of Christ in its soteriological significance.” In Johannes Behm, “αἷμα,” in TDNT, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:174.
Although Paul omits διά plus the genitive as grammatical agency of Christ’s blood in Colossians 1:14, the Colossian church likely knew this connection to redemption, especially with “blood of the cross” later in Colossians 1:20. Like Ephesians 1:7, Paul once again implies that the Son is God’s agent in personal redemption. To be “in Christ,” means that believers are in the “sphere” of his care through his redemptive work on the cross. However, since this redemptive work required a person, Paul implies that Jesus functions as God’s active agent to secure redemption through his blood.

Like Paul’s arguments above, the author of Hebrews also teaches Jesus’ redemptive agency in Hebrews 9:12. Jesus entered the holy places “by his own blood” (διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἱδίου αἵματος), not by the blood of bulls and goats from the Old Covenant. The result of Jesus entering the holy places by means of his blood is that he secured an “eternal redemption” (αἰώνιαν λύτρωσιν) for those united to him by faith (Heb 9:12c). According to Hebrews, Jesus secured redemption through his own blood. Slavery to sin has been abolished and God’s people have been redeemed through Jesus’ blood. Christ, God’s agent, secured an eternal redemption for those united by faith to his work.

**Divine agency in judgment.** Just as the Memra was God’s agent in creation and redemption, he also functioned as God’s agent in judgment. Several targumic passages were discussed earlier to show that John used targumic terminology to describe Jesus as the “Word of God” in the context of judgment (Rev 19:13). Other targumic passages indicate that the Memra was God’s agent to exact justice, and the New Testament authors expanded this concept to speak of Jesus’ role as God’s agent in retributive justice. Neofiti Genesis 19:24 attributes the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah to the Memra. Although God heard Moses’ prayer on Israel’s behalf and

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87 Speaking of the English translations of Heb 9:12, which seem to distinguish Jesus’ blood from his person, Ellingworth says that these translations “should not be misunderstood as distinguishing between Christ’s blood and Christ himself.” In Ellingworth, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 452.
relected from his anger, Neofiti Deuteronomy 9:19 indicates that the people feared the wrath that the Memra of the Lord had against them to destroy them. Several passages in Targum Ezekiel suggest that the Memra decreed retribution on Israel because of their sins (e.g., Tg. Ezek 28:10; 38:19). These passages, combined with the ones discussed earlier, confirm that the Memra was God’s agent to deliver justice.

Throughout the Old Testament, readers are reminded that Yahweh is the judge (Deut 32:4; 1 Sam 2:10; Ps 7:8, 11; 9:8; 96:13; Isa 3:13; 33:22), and yet Jesus fulfills this role in the New Testament. Jesus indicates in John 12:48 that the words he has spoken will judge men on the last day (ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα ἐκεῖνος κρινεῖ αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ). Jesus proclaimed the words that will judge those who reject him similarly to how the Memra decreed judgment in the Targums (e.g., Tg. Jer 4:28; Tg. Ezek 5:15; 21:22; 38:19). According to Paul, God will judge the secrets of men’s hearts through Jesus’ agency (Rom 2:16, διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). These two passages affirm that Jesus is God’s agent to judge, and other New Testament passages refer to Jesus as the authoritative King who will judge the nations in the eschaton.

In Jesus’ discussion of eschatological judgment (Matt 25:31–46), he draws attention to Joel’s prophecy of judgment on the nations (Joel 3:1–12). Whereas Joel indicates that Yahweh will gather the nations for judgment (Joel 3:2; 12), Jesus says that the Son of Man sits on his throne and judges the nations (Matt 25:31–32). In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus is the King who rightly executes justice from his throne. Paul combines these two categories of justice/judgment when he tells the church that Jesus has been raised and seated far above all rule and authority and has had all things placed under his feet (Eph 1:20–21; cf. Dan 7:13–14). Jesus is God’s agent who accomplished justice, confirmed by his resurrection, and will eventually judge the nations from his throne (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10; Rev 20:11–15).

Paul draws attention to the day of Jesus’ final appearing as a day of
In Paul’s letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians, Paul speaks of the “day of the Lord” referring to Jesus’ second coming. Because the day of the Lord Jesus will be a day of judgment (2 Cor 1:14; 5:10; 2 Thess 1:7–10), Paul prays that God will keep the church blameless so that judgment will be mild, or perhaps God will even offer a reward (1 Thess 3:13; 5:23b). Either result indicates that Jesus is the judge who distributes both recompense and commendation. In 1 Corinthians 4:4–5, Paul states that judgment will come from God through an agent. Paul teaches that it is “the Lord who judges” (1 Cor 4:4), likely implying it is Yahweh who judges. Because Yahweh is the judge, Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to judge him “before the Lord comes” (1 Cor 4:5). Paul means that the Corinthians should not judge before Jesus comes to execute justice. When Jesus comes to “disclose the purposes of the heart,” “each one will receive his commendation from God” (1 Cor 4:5b). In this section of the letter, Paul indicates that Jesus (the Lord) is God’s agent through whom men are judged and will receive their commendation. God is the source of judgment; Jesus is his agent.

In these examples, Jesus functions as God’s agent to deliver justice. Just as the Memra was God’s agent to deliver justice, so also Jesus sits on his heavenly throne ready to execute judgment on God’s enemies on the final day of the Lord (Rev 5:1–14).

**Divine Manifestation**

**Jesus as the divine manifestation.** In the Targums, Shekinah and Yeqara represent different nuances of God’s self-manifestation. The Shekinah is God’s dwelling presence, while the Yeqara is God’s weighty glory revealed to men. The New Testament demonstrates that Jesus is the manifestation of God by using terminology like σχηματίζω

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(e.g., John 1:14) and δόξα (e.g., Heb 1:3), which is similar to the Targums. In addition to using terms similar to the targumic Shekinah and Yeqara, the New Testament also employed the theological concept of divine manifestation to speak of Jesus as the premier revelation of God (cf. Heb 1:1–2). Jesus performed the works that God sent him to do as well as exhibiting divine characteristics that were ascribed only to God in the Old Testament. By using concepts similar to the targumic Shekinah and Yeqara, the New Testament shows that Jesus was God’s presence, indeed his very nature, dwelling among men.

In several passages, the New Testament teaches that Jesus is the revelation of God. Matthew says that as the authoritative representative of the Father, Jesus actively chose to reveal him (Matt 11:27 [Luke 10:21–22]). After affirming that no one has seen the Father (John 5:37; 6:46), John says those who have seen the Son have also seen the Father (John 12:45; 14:9).90 In 1 John 1:1–4, John reiterates several themes from the prologue to his gospel, indicating that Jesus (the Life) had been heard (ἀκηκόαμεν), seen (ἐωράκαμεν), looked upon (ἐωράκαμεν), and touched (ἐψηλάφησαν). The Life, who was with the Father, was made manifest so that the world would know the fellowship believers have with the Father (1 John 1:3–4).91 John Frame says, “Even apart from his humanity, the Son is the perfect reflection of his Father and therefore the Father’s perfect representative . . . . Jesus is the supreme theophany of God.”92 As the “supreme

90In this twist of literary irony, John expresses both strict monotheism and Jesus’ agency in manifesting the Father. God the Father is transcendent, and yet the Son, as the divine manifestation, perfectly reveals the Father’s nature to the world. In this sense, no one can see the Father, and yet the whole world sees the Father’s nature through/in Christ.

91Colin Kruse notes that the Word of life here focuses on a distinct notion of the Word in John 1 that existed with the Father in eternity past. Here, John focuses primarily on the Word of life that has been revealed through flesh and blood in the person of Jesus Christ rather than the Son of God in relation to the ontological Trinity of eternity past. In Colin Kruse, The Letters of John, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 51–52.

theophany of God,” Jesus manifested God through his incarnation.

Jesus also manifested the Father by appealing to his ontological identity with God. Jesus’ claims to divine status indicate that he displays the nature of God to the world. In John 10:30, Jesus said, “I and the Father are one,” pointing his disciples to the display of the Father’s attributes through his person and work. Likewise, Jesus claimed to have existed eternally as and with God in John 17:24, having a glory identical to the Father. Jesus’ “I AM” statements also imply a claim to deity, and therefore, suggest that he is the manifestation of God by means of the incarnation. As God in the flesh, Jesus manifested God’s ontological nature to the world. Jesus and the Father share identical natures just as Jastrow equates יהוה יִהְויֶה הָיְh

In addition to ontological identity, Jesus manifested divine attributes that were exclusive to God in the Old Testament. Jesus is described as eternal (John 5:26; Rev 1:8; 22:12–12; cf. Ps 90:1–2; Isa 9:6), immutable (Heb 1:5, 10–12; 13:8; cf. Ps 102:25–27), omnipotent (Phil 3:20–21; Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; cf. Gen 18:14, Matt 19:25–26), omniscient (Mark 2:8; John 1:48; 6:64; 16:30; cf. Isa 41:21), and omnipresent (Matt 18:20; 28:20; cf. Jer 23:23–24). In all of these attributes, Jesus expressed the very nature of the Father (Heb 1:3; χαρακτήρ).

Finally, Jesus manifested God through his work in the world (Acts 2:22). The New Testament teaches that Jesus accomplished works that were previously attributed to God in the Old Testament. Creation (John 1:3; Col 1:16; cf. Gen 1:1), preservation (Col 1:17; Heb 1:3; cf. Neh 9:6), giving eternal life (John 10:28; 17:2; 1 John 2:25), and

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forgiving sins (Mark 2:5–7; Luke 7:47–49; Col 1:14; 3:13; cf. Isa 43:25) are various works of God alone that Jesus performed according to New Testament revelation. Not only was Jesus God’s agent in these works, but also, by performing these works, he manifested the nature and character of God. Jesus encouraged his disciples to believe the works that he had done so that they would understand that he and the Father are one (John 10:38; cf. John 14:10). In these works, Jesus made the Father known.

The title “Image of God” indicative of divine manifestation. The New Testament picture of Jesus as the “image of God” provides a helpful summary of many of the conclusions drawn so far. In passages where Jesus is described as the “image of God,” he also acts as God’s agent or manifests God through his agency. In his humanity, Jesus is the fulfillment of the imago Dei instilled in Adam and Eve. Furthermore, in his deity, Jesus is the “image of God,” who perfectly displays the Father to the world by carrying out the work the Father sent him to do. In the passages where Jesus is the “image of God,” one will find similar targumic themes to those delineated previously regarding divine agency and manifestation.

In Colossians 1:15, Paul provides the most explicit reference to Jesus as the image of God. Here, Paul calls Jesus the “image of the invisible God” (cf. 1 Tim 1:17). Judaism’s God, who is transcendentally invisible, is now conspicuously clear in the person of Jesus Christ. In addition to recalling the “image of God” theme from Genesis 1:26–27, Paul also refers to Jesus as the “firstborn of all creation.” Using these epithets for Jesus, Paul identified Christ as the quintessential human, who expressed the image of God perfectly (Ps 89:27; cf. Gen 1:26–27; 9:6). Whereas humanity failed, Christ displayed all the perfections of rule and authority indicative of God’s character. In doing

so, Jesus displayed to the world God’s intent for mankind as the image of God. Jesus perfectly displayed the Father’s “image,” a task that humanity failed to accomplish. In this way then, Jesus is the premier manifestation of God, the image to which all humanity should strive (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49).

In the surrounding context of Colossians 1:15, Paul highlights the roles that Jesus accomplished as the “image of God.” In Colossians 1:13–14, Paul declared that God “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” As the image of God, Jesus is God’s agent in redemption much like the pillar of cloud and fire was at the exodus (Tg. Onq. Exod 13:21; 14:19). Paul continues in Colossians 1:16–20, that Jesus is God’s agent in creation, preservation, and reconciliation. All things were created “through him” (Col 1:16b, ἐν αὐτῷ), “in him” (ἐν αὐτῷ) all things hold together (Col 1:17), and “through him” (δι’ αὐτοῦ) God reconciled to himself all things (Col 1:20) because in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell (Col 1:19). These aspects of Jesus’ roles are similar to the roles of the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara previously discussed in this chapter. Using terms and concepts similar to the Targums, Paul taught that Jesus is God’s agent and manifestation with the title “image of God.”

In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul again identifies Jesus as the “image of God.” The god of this world, Satan, has blinded the minds of those who fail to believe in Christ, and they are unable to see the “light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” (2 Cor 4:4). Using the relative clause, ὅς ἐστιν ἐκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ, Paul further explains Χριστοῦ, calling Jesus

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95 Paul’s title of Jesus as the “image of God” and his teaching that in Jesus, all the fullness of deity dwells are the grounds for Jesus’ work as God’s agent. Where God’s agent is active, God is manifest. Therefore, in this short section of the letter to the Colossians, Paul teaches that Jesus is both God’s divine agent and the preeminent divine manifestation using the title, “image of God.”

the “image of God.” In verse 6, Paul indicates that Jesus’ glory is a reflection of the glory of God. For Paul, Jesus is the “image of God” because he reveals God’s glory to the world. Just as the Memra and Shekinah shine the radiance of God in the Targums (Tg. Neof. Exod 12:42; Tg. Onq. Num 6:25), so also Jesus has shone “the light . . . of the glory of God” in the hearts of Christians. The glory of Christ in the gospel is the glory of God because Jesus is the image of God.

Finally, the author of Hebrews teaches that Jesus is the image of God using a parallel term, χαρακτήρ. According to Hebrews 1:3, Jesus is “the exact imprint (χαρακτήρ) of his [God’s] nature.” While this term refers to Jesus’ ontological identity with the Father, the author of Hebrews also points to Jesus’ fulfillment of functional roles. As the χαρακτήρ of God, Jesus “upholds the universe by the word of his power” (Heb 1:3b). The Son, who created the world (Heb 1:2), also preserves it. Like Paul, the author of Hebrews relates these agent-roles to Jesus as the image of God. Using different theological terminology than Paul, the author of Hebrews portrays the same functional aspects of Jesus’ person as in Colossians 1:15 and 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6. Jesus, the image of God, displays the Father’s χαρακτήρ to the world as God’s agent in creation, preservation, and salvation.

Belief in God’s agent as divine manifestation. One aspect of divine manifestation that appears in the Targums is that people believe in the Memra when he manifests God’s active presence. In Onqelos Genesis 15:6, Abraham “believed in the Memra of the Lord” after God appeared to him. Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis 21:33

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97Ellingworth relates χαρακτήρ to εἰκών indicating that these terms have a similar range of meaning. He concludes, “In the present verse, χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ reinforces ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης in describing the essential unity and exact resemblance between God and his Son” (Ellingworth, Epistle to the Hebrews, 99, italics added). See also, Bruce, Epistle to the Hebrews, 48, and Lane, Hebrews 1–8, 13, who says, “In v 3a he used the word χαρακτήρ to convey as emphatically as he could his conviction that in Jesus Christ there had been provided a perfect, visible expression of the reality of God.”
interprets Abraham planting a tamarisk tree as his setting up a garden in which he would implore others to believe in the name of the Memra of the Lord who appeared to him. In Pseudo-Jonathan Exodus 14:31, Israel believed in the name of the Memra of the Lord who appeared to fight against the Egyptians during the exodus (cf. Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 14:25; cf. Tg. Ps 106:12). King Hezekiah “trusted” (נתراحץ) in the Memra of the Lord who was his help (Tg. 2 Kgs 18:5, 7). In Targum Jeremiah 2:2, God remembers the faith of Israel’s fathers, “who believed in my Memra” during the years they followed Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The belief Jeremiah refers to was due to the manifestation of the Memra during the wilderness journeys (Tg. Onq. Exod 13:21; 17:1; Tg. Onq. Num 9:18–20, 23). Finally, the Ninevites “believed the Memra of the Lord” (Tg. Jonah 3:5). Each of these examples shows that belief in the Memra was the result of the Lord’s action through the Memra or a manifestation of God in the Memra.

In the same way that the Memra manifests God and elicits faith, so also Jesus is God’s agent in whom men should believe. According to Paul, Scripture makes people wise unto salvation “through faith in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim 3:15; διὰ πίστεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Elsewhere, Paul teaches that one is justified by faith in Christ Jesus apart from works of the Law (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16). Additionally, God deflects his wrath away from those who have faith in Jesus so that God would be just and the justifier of those united to Christ (Rom 3:25–26). God imputes righteousness to believers, not because of their deeds, but through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22, 4:5; Phil 3:9).

98 Tg. Jonah says that a “word of prophecy” (פתגם) from the Lord was with Jonah so that he would go preach repentance to the Ninevites. Upon going, the people believed in the Memra. What was once a פתגם (‘word’) of prophecy elicited belief in God’s agent, the Memra, similarly to how the word of God (Scripture) elicits belief in God’s agent, the Word of God.

99 In many of these passages, faith is grammatically defined as “faith of Christ.” See Daniel Wallace’s discussion of the objective/subjective genitive specifically regarding πίστις Χριστοῦ (Wallace, Greek Grammar, 114–16). Wallace argues ultimately that these texts should be read as subjective genitives referring to Jesus’ faithfulness. However, he also says, “the faith/faithfulness of Christ is not a denial of faith in Christ as a Pauline concept, but implies that the object of faith is a worthy object, for he himself is faithful” (ibid., 116). For a sampling of the literature related to πίστις Χριστοῦ, see Michael R. Whitenton,
produces eternal life (John 3:16, 36; 6:40), and John links faithful obedience (sanctification) to the gift of the Spirit received by faith in Jesus (John 7:38). Finally, Paul links the believer’s perseverance to faith in Jesus (Gal 2:20; cf. Rev 14:12). As God’s manifest, active agent, Jesus is the one in whom men should believe. His manifestation and ministry on earth, recorded in Scripture, illustrates the mighty works of God by which men put their faith in Jesus.

The πιστεύω word group in the New Testament further demonstrates that Jesus is the appropriate object of faith. Those who believe in Jesus’ name are given the right to become children of God (John 1:12). Indeed, Jesus came into the world to bear witness about the light so that all would believe through him (John 1:7; ἵνα πάντες πιστεύσωσιν δι’ αὐτοῦ). Because of faith in Jesus, Peter calls Christians “believers in God” (1 Pet 1:21; cf. John 12:44; 14:1). Finally, belief in Jesus is often what heals the sick and the lame in the gospels and Acts (Matt 9:22; Mark 10:52; Luke 18:42; Acts 3:16).100

Other passages imply faith in Jesus but without a direct vocabulary (Rom 5:1–2; Gal 3:14, 26; Col 2:12; Jas 2:1; 1 Pet 1:21). Some New Testament authors indicate the importance of faith in Jesus as a commendation for those who believe, or as a warning if one does not believe in Jesus. Paul encouraged the churches because he had heard of their faith in Jesus (Eph 1:15; Col 1:4; 2:5; Phlm 5). Alternatively, Jesus reviled his

100 In many of the healing instances, faith/belief is referred to generally rather than specifically as faith in Jesus. However, the implication is that those in these stories are healed because they believed that Jesus was the one who could heal them. They had faith in Jesus, the proper object of such a religious affection, and their faith healed them.
audience for *not* believing that he was the one sent by the Father to reveal the Father (John 5:38; 10:37–38). Elsewhere, Jesus taught that the “work” people should do was to believe in the one the Father had sent (John 6:29). Jesus taught that he came into the world as light so that those who live in darkness would believe in him while they had the light with them (John 12:36, 46). Finally, in the book of Acts, the apostles preached the gospel by exhorting people to believe in Jesus (Acts 16:31; 19:4) similarly to how Abraham exhorted those in Beersheba to believe in the Memra (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 21:33). In all of these instances, faith in Jesus is acceptable, effectual, and encouraged. Just as the manifestation of God through the Memra required faith, so also the manifestation of God in Christ requires faith.  

**Worship of God’s agent as divine manifestation.** Worship of the Memra is similar to belief in the Memra of the previous section. When God manifests himself through his Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara, people worship. Neofiti Genesis 21:33 says that Abraham would “worship and pray in the name of the Memra of the Lord, God of eternity” (פלה אלוהים ממרייה, דני אלהים שלמה) at Beersheba.  

Neofiti Leviticus 9:4 provides instructions for a peace offering “because today the Memra of the Lord is about to be revealed to you.” Pseudo-Jonathan Leviticus 9:23 elaborates on the worship in the tent of meeting saying that the “Yeqara of the Shekinah was revealed over all of the people.” God’s manifestation in the tent of meeting elicited worship. In Targum Psalms 63:5, David will bless the Lord in this age and “in the name of your Memra I will spread my hands in prayer in the age to come.” These pictures of Old Testament worship were a result of God’s agent(s) acting on behalf of Israel or

101 For a survey of other links between believing in the Memra and believing in Jesus, see Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology*, 174–93.

102 Tg. Onq. Gen 21:33 says that Abraham “prayed” to the Lord at Beersheba.

103 Tg. Ps.-J. Lev 9:4 says that the “Yeqara of the Shekinah was about to be revealed” to Israel.
manifesting God to Israel.

As God’s agent and manifestation, Jesus also elicits and accepts worship.104 When the wise men visited Jesus, they desired to worship him, and Mary and Joseph did not object (Matt 2:2, 11). The wise men recognized Jesus as a unique manifestation of the God of Israel and that realization elicited worship. When Jesus manifested the power of God over creation by calming the storm, those in the boat realized that he was the Son of God and worshipped (Matt 14:23). On several occasions, people and spirits knelt before Jesus indicating a posture of worship (Matt 9:18; 15:25; 20:20; Mark 3:11; 5:6; Rev 5:8). When Jesus rode into Jerusalem during his final week, the crowds met him with great exuberance of praise (Matt 21:9; Mark 11:9–10; John 12:13), and after Jesus’ resurrection, the disciples worshiped him (Matt 28:9, 16–17; Luke 24:52). When Jesus manifested the power of God by healing the blind man, he believed and worshiped (John 9:38). Just as Targum Psalms 63:5 suggests worship of God’s agent in the future, so also, at the eschatological judgment, every knee will bow to Jesus and worship him (Phil 2:10–11). Likewise, in the book of Revelation, many scenes portray worship of the Lamb (Rev 5:9, 11–14; 7:10). In each of these verses, Jesus freely receives worship and never objects as the angels do (Rev 19:8–10; 22:8–9; cf. Acts 10:25–26; 14:11–15).

In addition to specific vocabulary indicating worship, several New Testament doxologies are addressed to Jesus as worship. In Romans 9:5, Paul elaborates on who Christ is, namely, “God over all, blessed forever.” Peter ascribes similar honor and glory to Christ in 2 Peter 3:18. What is normally a general expression of blessing, Peter specifically ascribes to “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” These passages are somewhat ironic since the Old Testament claims that God alone should be worshiped (Exod 34:14; 20:5). Jesus himself affirmed that only God should be worshiped when he quoted Deuteronomy 6:13 in the wilderness temptation pericope. However, as the previous passages indicate, Jesus freely accepted worship (Matt 2:11; 21:9–16; 28:9–10, 17; John 9:35–39). Indeed, even God commanded that Jesus be worshiped (Heb 1:6; cf. Deut 32:43).

Conclusion

The way in which the New Testament authors spoke about Jesus shows a usage of terms and concepts similar to the targumic presentation of the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara. Indeed, Jesus fulfills offices and roles similar to the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara as God’s agent and manifestation. By understanding the meaning of these targumic terms in their original context, one can see how the New Testament authors may have appropriated these ideas to speak of Jesus in the New Testament. Like the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara, Jesus is God’s agent in the world, and he is the manifestation of God’s nature. Once the New Testament authors apply similar targumic concepts to Jesus, they provide an exegetical method by which one can approach the Targums to find Christ in the Old Testament. Where the Memra, Shekinah, or Yeqara function as God’s agent(s) or manifestation(s), one can probably find Christ, God’s premier agent and manifestation.

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CHAPTER 3
FINDING CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
THROUGH THE ARAMAIC MEMRA

The New Testament authors’ use of targumic terms and concepts suggests that the Aramaic Memra (מימרא) exhibits Christological implications. However, not all targumic references portray Christ with the same clarity. The Memra as God’s agent does not necessarily imply a one-to-one relationship between the Memra and Jesus. Rather, where the Memra carries out similar functions to Jesus’ offices or roles, one may find Christ in the Old Testament. Although some passages point to Christ more clearly than others, when the targumic Memra functions as God’s agent or manifestation, one may find Christ in the Old Testament.

Some targumic passages seem to highlight Christ in the Old Testament clearly. The Memra functions as God’s agent or manifestation, and one can often draw a clear connection to the New Testament offices and roles of Jesus. In the targumic passages where the Memra is God’s agent and a direct connection to Jesus exists, these passages certainly refer to Jesus and are discussed in the first category below.

While some passages clearly refer to Jesus, others probably refer to Jesus.  

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1Often, the similarities between the Memra and Jesus fall into the categories of Jesus’ offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. For example, the Memra functions as the “help/aid” ( услуг) of Israel, and these occurrences imply an agent-mediator, i.e., a priest. When the Memra functions as Israel’s agent in redemption (office of Priest, Tg. Neof. Exod 18:4; Tg. Jer 15:15–20; 30:11; cf. Eph 1:7), agent of revelation (office of Prophet, Tg. Neof. Gen 17:1; Tg. Neof. Exod 19:9; cf. Col 1:19), or agent-King (office of King, Tg. Neof. Deut 26:17–18; cf. John 1:49) one can probably find references to Christ. In addition to Christ’s offices, the Memra often carries out roles similar to Jesus. The Memra functions as God’s agent-warrior in battle (Tg. Zech 10:5; cf. Rev 19:13), he is Israel’s provider (Tg. Josh 6:27; cf. John 6:25–26), and he serves as the stumbling block for Israel (Tg. Isa 8:14). Each of these passages highlights similarities in role between the Memra and Jesus.
These passages are discussed as passages that presumably refer to Christ because the 
Memra functions as God’s agent or manifestation, but a connection to the New Testament 
may not be as direct. In other words, the role of the Memra may point to a conceptual 
role or office of Jesus, but the connection to the New Testament is more indirect. 
Nevertheless, these passages presumably help one find Christ in the Old Testament because 
the Memra functions as God’s agent or manifestation similarly to Jesus. 

The third category of the occurrences of Memra includes those that do not refer 
to Jesus. Generally, these passages fail to use מימר as an agent or manifestation 
altogether. Many of these occurrences include the words of a human being or refer to 
another euphemism that clearly is not Jesus. Therefore, final category in this chapter 
discusses those passages in which Memra does not refer to Jesus. 

Based on the previous chapter, the New Testament authors have provided a 
paradigm by which to read the Targums in order to find Jesus in the Old Testament. The 
New Testament authors did not intend to provide a singular method for finding Christ in 
the Old Testament. Even so, they seem to have used terms and concepts similar to the 
ancient synagogue to teach about the Messiah, who functioned similarly to the targumic 
Memra. This targumic character, which represented God’s agent and manifestation, may 
point to Christ in the Old Testament. 

**Occurrences of Memra That Certainly Refer to Jesus**

The targumic passages in this section depict the Memra of the Lord as God’s 
agent or manifestation. In addition, these passages portray the Memra in a role similar to 
an office or role Jesus fulfilled as God’s premier agent. Therefore, these targumic 
passages help one find Christ in the Old Testament. 

*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 21:8–9: 
God’s Agent as the Object of Faith* 

Numbers 21:8–9 And the Lord said to Moses, “Make for yourself a fiery
serpent and set it on a standard, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.” So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look to the bronze serpent and live.

MT Numbers 21:8–9

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make for yourself a poisonous serpent of bronze, and put it on a high place. And it shall come about that all whom the serpent bites should look at it and live, if he turns his heart to the name of the Memra of the Lord. Then Moses made the serpent of bronze and put it on a high place. And it came about when the serpent would bite a man, and he would look at the serpent of bronze, and set his heart on the name of the Memra of the Lord, then he would live.

Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 21:8–9

The bronze serpent passage in Numbers 21 connects to the New Testament at multiple points. In John 3, Jesus teaches that he will be lifted up similarly to the bronze serpent. In 1 Corinthians 10:9–10, Paul draws attention to those who grumbled against Christ in the wilderness and were destroyed by the serpents. Finally, the author of

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2Tg. Ps.-J. Num 21:8–9 highlights the Memra’s association with the bronze serpent passage and connects to 1 Cor 10:9 that says Israel put Christ to the test by grumbling against him. Tg. Neof. Num 21:5 is reminiscent of the broader context of 1 Cor 10 by saying, “And the people spoke against the Memra of the Lord” ( множה אל ממעה בתר ממאב דידי). Gordon Fee says, “Paul once again, as in v. 4, is purposely tying the situations of Israel and Corinth together christologically. It was Christ whom Israel was testing in the desert. At the same time it is Christ whom the Corinthians were putting to the test by trying to eat both at his table and at the table of demons” (Gordon D. Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, NICNT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 457). The targumic background to 1 Cor 10 continues in Ps.-J. Num 20:11 where “Moses raised his hand and smote the rock with this staff twice: the first time blood dripped, but the second time much water came forth, and he gave the congregation and their livestock water to drink” (cf. John 19:34). The whole of Paul’s argument in 1 Cor 10 possibly finds its background in the targumic wilderness narratives. See also the discussion in John Ronning, The Jewish
Hebrews used the wilderness rebellion as an illustration so that those who believe would enter God’s rest (Heb 3–4). These connections to the New Testament provide a broad precedent to examine this targumic passage to find Christ in the Old Testament.

In Numbers 21:8–9, Moses fashioned a bronze serpent in order to save those who had been afflicted by the fiery serpents. *Pseudo-Jonathan* Numbers 21:8–9 explains that looking at the bronze serpent was insufficient to save. The Hebrew Bible says that “looking at” (ראה) or “seeing” (הביט) the bronze serpent provided life for the wounded. However, the Targum states that in order to be healed, one must “turn his heart to the name of the Memra of the Lord.” According to *Pseudo-Jonathan*, the Memra functions as God’s agent to save because he is the one in whom men must believe.

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3That the idea of faith is central to Hebrews’ illustration is clear from Heb 3:19 where he states that the reason Israel was unable to enter God’s rest was from unbelief rather than grumbling. Grumbling was the outward behavior demonstrating unbelief.

4Robert Hayward, “A Targumic Interpretation in the Mishnah? Or a Case of Mistaken Identity?” *Aramaic Studies* 11, no. 2 (2013): 197–210. Hayward points to the interpretation of the necessity of faith in this passage and in Exod 17:11, and he shows how *The Epistle of Barnabas* draws the same connection as the Frg. Tg. and the Mishnah (*m. Roš Haš. 3:8*). Hayward only devotes one sentence of his article to the Memra, merely mentioning that the other Targums say that the required faith should be “in the name of the Memra of the Lord.”

5Jacob Milgrom points to the Targum to say that faithful obedience was required for healing (Jacob Milgrom, *Numbers*, JPSTC [Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 174). Looking to the bronze serpent was the command, and obedience to the command would elicit healing. However, he also cites the Mishnah, which says, “Could the snake slay or keep alive? It is, rather, to teach you that whenever the Israelites directed their thoughts on high and kept their hearts in subjection to their Father in heaven, they were healed; otherwise, they pined away” (*m. Roš Haš. 3:8*). Although the Mishnah does not include faith in God’s agent in this tradition, it still teaches that the crux of the matter in Num 21:1–10 was Israel having hearts that trusted their Father in heaven.

6Even though and understanding of the Deuteronomic “Name” theology has shifted in recent years (see Michael Hendley, “To Be or Not to Be: A Reexamination of Name Language in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic History,” *VT* 59, no. 4 [2009]: 533–55; Roberto Ouro, “Divine Presence Theology versus Name Theology in Deuteronomy,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 51, no. 1 [2014]: 5–29), the Targums suggest that God’s name implies presence. For example, *Tg. Onq*. Deut 12:11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11, all explain the dwelling place of God’s “name” as the place where he caused his Shekinah to dwell. In other words, the “name” of God represents his divine presence in these passages. Therefore, in *Tg. Ps.-J*. Num 21:8–9, one may rightly conclude that to believe in the “name” of the Memra is to believe in the Memra. Likewise, Acts 4:12 says, “And there is salvation in no one else (person), for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” David Peterson adds that “The Greek
Similarly, the New Testament presents Jesus as God’s agent in whom men must believe for salvation. In his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:14–15), Jesus refers to Numbers 21 because the Son of Man would be lifted up similarly to the bronze serpent. Nicodemus, a Pharisee (John 3:1) and “the teacher of Israel” (John 3:9), approached Jesus to learn of his identity and power. Jesus concluded that belief in the Son of Man is how one gains eternal life just as the Targums teach that one must turn his heart to God’s agent in order to survive the serpent bite (John 3:15). Salvation was conditioned upon turning one’s heart to the Memra in Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 21:8–9. Likewise, the New Testament conditions salvation upon belief in Jesus (e.g., John

includes the expression en anthrōpois (KJV, NKJV, ESV ‘among men’), perhaps to indicate that behind the name stands a person, who lived among us as the agent of God’s salvation” (David G. Peterson, The Acts of the Apostles, PNTC [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 192n27). Indeed, to believe in Jesus’ name is to believe in his person similarly to believing in the name of the Memra is believing in the Memra.

Köstenberger and Hollis draw attention the use of נשא (‘lifted up’) in Gen 40:13, 19 and Gen 40:19–22 to show the use of υψωθηναι in John 3:14 as a reference both to exaltation and death by hanging on a tree. See Andreas Köstenberger, John, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 127n40; and H. Hollis, “The Root of Johannine Pun—Υψωθηναι,” NTS 35, no. 3 (1989): 475–78. John Ronning also connects the “lifted up” language of John 3:14 to the Isaiah Targum to show that God will wage war by being “lifted up” (Ronning, The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology, 127–30). Likewise, Tg. Onq. Deut 21:23 interprets that the man who is hanged on a tree is “cursed” because he has sinned against the Lord. Paul connects this passage to Jesus being “hanged on a tree” because he “became a curse for us” (Gal 3:13). The purpose of Jesus’ becoming a curse is so that by faith (Gal 3:8), he would bring the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant to the Gentiles (Gal 3:14), an exaltation as Lord and Savior of the world. For others who see the dual meaning to “lifted up,” see Thomas R. Schreiner, New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 282–83; G. R. Beasley-Murray, John, WBC 36 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 131–32; and D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 345.

In John 3:10, Jesus calls Nicodemus “the teacher of Israel” (ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραήλ) suggesting that Nicodemus was a significant leader (cf. 3:1, ἄρχων τῶν Ἰουδαίων) in the Jewish community. The bronze serpent passage that Jesus refers to would have been well known by “the teacher of Israel.”

According to the grammar, turning one’s heart toward the Memra was not just the act that saved the Israelites, but it was the condition to gain life in v. 8. ינ is used in Targums to Psalms and Job to introduce a conditional clause (e.g., Tg. Ps 7:4). See also y. Mak. 2:3d; y. Naz. 6:54d; Qoh. Rab. to 10:5 (Marcus Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005], 52). The particle ינ often translates the Hebrew particles יא or י (e.g., Tg. Ps 7:4; 11:3; 27:3), which also introduce conditional clauses (Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax: A Traditional Semitic Approach [Grand Rapids: Kregel, forthcoming], §77a–f).
3:36; 14:1), indeed belief in his name (cf. John 1:12; Acts 4:12). Just as those who were wounded by the serpents in the wilderness gained life by turning their hearts to the Memra of the Lord, so also, all humanity gains eternal life by believing in the Son of Man.\(^\text{11}\)

The similarities between Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 21:8–9 and Jesus’ teaching in John 3 appear to point to Christ in the Old Testament. According to Jesus, and even targumic tradition, the requirement for God’s people to attain life is faith in God’s agent. In the targumic tradition, belief in the Memra healed God’s people. In the New Testament, Jesus taught a Pharisee (Nicodemus) that God’s agent is now both the sacrifice to be lifted up and also the one in whom men believe for eternal life.

**Targum Neofiti Exodus 29:45:**

**God’s Agent as Savior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Hebrew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 29:45</td>
<td>I will dwell among the children of Israel and I will exist for them as God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neofiti Exodus 29:45</td>
<td>And I will put the Yeqara of my Shekinah in the midst of the children of Israel, and my Memra will exist for them as a Savior God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT Exodus 29:45</td>
<td>ושכנתי בחקור בני ישראל והייתי להם לאלהים</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{10}\)A similar expression to “believing in” Jesus is “receiving” Jesus (Matt 10:40, John 13:20; Mark 9:27; Luke 9:48; John 5:43; 12:44–45). In fact, John 1:11–12 juxtaposes the two ideas. The Jews did not receive Jesus, but “all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Similarly, Abraham is promised blessing because he “received” the Memra (Tg. Onq. Gen 22:18). Tgs. Onq. and Ps.-J. Deut 4:30 say that in times of distress, Israel should “receive” the Memra of the Lord, whereas Tg. Neof. Deut 4:30 says Israel should “obey the voice of the Memra of the Lord” (השמעון בחקור פקודת דידי).\(^\text{11}\)

\(^{11}\)Jesus highlights faith/belief in the Son of Man because merely looking at Jesus lifted up would be insufficient to grant eternal life. Jesus would be lifted up just as the serpent was lifted up and would provide life for those who would look to him for salvation. However, merely gazing on the serpent or Christ lifted up would not provide eternal life. Rather, faith in God’s agent, the Memra/Christ, would be required for eternal life. The Targum highlights faith in God’s agent, and Jesus teaches the same regarding his crucifixion. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and the teacher of Israel would have been familiar with this tradition, so it was appropriate for Jesus to appeal to the bronze serpent passage to highlight faith in God’s agent. Köstenberger does not refer to the Targums when commenting on John 3:14, but he still affirms the parallel between looking at the bronze serpent and faith in the Son of Man (Köstenberger, John, 128).
In Exodus 29:45, God uses covenantal language to affirm his presence with his people and his commitment to be the God of Israel.\textsuperscript{12} Neofiti Exodus 29:45 interprets God’s presence with his people as the Yeqara of his Shekinah dwelling with them, and explains that the Memra will be their God “in the status of” a redeemer.\textsuperscript{13}

The Targum expresses the ontological identity of the Memra with God by translating the implied אני as ממרי. Memra is the subject of the verb היה just as אני is implied as the subject in Hebrew. Neofiti equates the Memra with God, indicating an ontological identity between the two. Other targumic passages explain God’s active presence as a redeemer using the ב preposition to say that God exists “in/by His Memra” to redeem Israel (cf. Tg. Onq. Lev 22:33). However, Neofiti Exodus 29:45 translates Memra as the subject of היה without a ב preposition.\textsuperscript{14} In this targumic translation, the Memra is God.

The Targum highlights an ontological equality between God and the Memra similarly to how Jesus is ontologically identical to the Father in the New Testament (cf. John 10:30). As God, Jesus performed works that only the Father does, and he displayed

\textsuperscript{12}This covenantal language emphasizes divine manifestation through mighty acts and continual preservation (Gen 17:8; Jer 31:33; Ezek 11:20; 2 Cor 6:16). For a further discussion of the Memra related to the covenant oath, see Robert Hayward, Divine Name and Presence: The Memra (Totowa, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun, 1981), 57–70.

\textsuperscript{13}For the accusative of situation, see Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §16l. In Tg. Neof. Lev 26:12, an almost identical phrase occurs. In Tg. Neof. Lev 26:12, God says, “And I will cause my Memra to dwell among you, and my Memra will be to you for a Savior God.” This difference in translation between Tg. Neof. Lev 26:12 and Tg. Neof. Exod 29:45 equates the Memra with the Yeqara of the Shekinah, and emphasizes the Memra’s role as God’s manifest agent.

\textsuperscript{14}Several other passages use the same construction (אני ויהי מmary) to highlight the ontological identity between God in the Hebrew Bible and the Memra in the Targums. Tg. Onq. Gen 26:3 says, “My Memra will exist as your help” (אני ויהי מmary באשדד) whereas in the Hebrew, God says, “I will be with you” (אני ויהי שם). Similarly, Tg. Isa 63:8 identifies the Memra as Israel’s Savior, replacing “God” with Memra in a one-to-one correlation. Tg. Neof. Exod 6:7 also identifies Memra as God (אני ויהי מmary), using covenantal language similar to Tg. Neof. Exod 29:45.
attributes that only God displays.\textsuperscript{15} Jesus’ “I AM” sayings point to his ontological identity with the Father (John 8:12; 10:7, 11; 11:25; et al.), and Jesus shares an identical glory with the Father that has existed from before the incarnation (John 17).\textsuperscript{16} Similar to the Targums, the New Testament teaches that God’s agent is God himself, active and present in the created order. The New Testament, however, identifies this agent as Jesus.

Not only does this passage relate to Jesus by identifying the Memra as God, but it also connects to Jesus as God’s agent in redemption. In Neofiti Exodus 29:45, the Memra exists as Israel’s covenant God, indeed, he is Israel’s “Redeemer God” (אֱלֹהֵי תִּרְעֹם אָבַד). The participle (פריק) portrays repetitive action and specifies a characteristic of God’s Memra. In other words, the Memra is God specifically in his role as a “Savior.” This portrait of the Memra points to Jesus’ role as Savior in the New Testament. Jesus, who is God in the flesh, is the Savior of the world (John 3:17; 4:42; 1 John 4:14), and has brought redemption to those formerly enslaved to sin (Rom 3:24).

The final aspect of this verse that points to Jesus in the Old Testament is the covenantal language. Neofiti Exodus 29:45 interprets the Memra as God within the covenant declaration that God will be Israel’s God and they will be his people.\textsuperscript{17} In this sense, the Memra, who is God’s mediating agent in the world, is also the God of the

\textsuperscript{15}One such attribute is his eternal nature. In the Targums, the Memra is also eternal, an ontological characteristic of God that is also ascribed to Jesus. Tg. Isa 46:4 says, “Forever I am he, and for ever and ever my Memra is alive.” Tg. Hos 3:13 concludes the verse with the exclamation, “Your Memra endures forever” after declaring God’s revelation of himself to redeem his anointed. Tg. Hos 11:9 interprets that God is not a man as “my Memra exists forever.” The distinction that God is God and not a man is that his manifest agent, the one who fully displays the image of God, exists eternally. The attribute of eternality given to the Memra connects to Jesus in that he also has existed with the Father in eternity past (John 8:58; 17:24).


covenant. God says, “I will be their [covenant] God,” and the Targum translates, “My Memra will be their [covenant] God.” Therefore, the connection to Jesus as the “mediator of a New Covenant” (Heb 9:15; 12:24) seems reasonable.

Like Neofiti Exodus 29:45, other targumic passages teach that the Memra functions as God’s mediator of the covenants. Onqelos, Neofiti, and Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis 9:12–13 all indicate that the rainbow was a covenant sign “between my Memra and you [Noah].” In the Abrahamic Covenant, Onqelos Genesis 17:2, 7 says that God will establish his covenant (Tg. Onq. Gen 17:2 קימי ואיתין/Tg. Onq. Gen 17:7 ית ואוקים קימי) between Abraham and his Memra.¹⁸ God confirms the Abrahamic covenant with Isaac and Jacob, promising that the Memra will be with them (Tg. Onq. Gen 26:3; Tg. Neof. Gen 28:15). Regarding the Sinai covenant, targumic tradition suggests that the Memra was the vocal agent of God to deliver the covenant stipulations (Tg. Onq. Exod 19:17; Tg. Neof. Exod 19:9, 20; Tg. Neof. Lev 26:46). Likewise, targumic tradition in Deuteronomy teaches that the Memra spoke the words of the Sinai covenant to Israel (Tg. Neof. Deut 1:1; Tg. Onq. Deut 4:33). In the Davidic covenant, the Targums explain that the Memra will bring near a child from the house of David to establish his kingdom by the Memra (Tg. Ezek 17:21-22).¹⁹ In addition, Targum 1 Chronicles 14:2 explains that David “knew that the Memra of the Lord had established him as king over Israel.” Finally, Targum Ezekiel 37:14 translates that the Memra decreed God’s intention to put his Spirit within the New Covenant people.

Just as the Memra is closely associated with the covenants in the Targums, so also Jesus is central to the covenants. All of the covenant promises find their fulfillment

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¹⁸Like the Noahic covenant, a sign (circumcision) was given as evidence of a covenant between the Memra and Abraham (Tg. Onq. Gen 17:11).

¹⁹Tg. Ezek 34:24 says that the Davidic kingship had been decreed by the Memra. This interpretation is not as explicit as the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants, but still demonstrates the Memra’s role in establishing the Davidic kingship.
in Jesus (2 Cor 1:19–20), and he is the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15). Jesus established a New Covenant in his blood (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25) as the fulfillment of God’s covenantal relationship with his people. Just as Jesus is God’s agent-mediator of the New Covenant, so also the Memra was God’s agent-mediator in the previous covenants between God and his people.

In Neofiti Exodus 29:45, God affirms his presence with his covenant people as the promise of his redeeming agent being their God. The Memra is God similarly to how Jesus is ontologically identical to God and dwells among, and in, his people (Col 1:27). Just as Jesus was God’s agent to redeem, so also the Memra was Israel’s “Redeemer God.” The covenantal language that God would be the God of his people further affirms that God’s covenants have always been established through his agent. Therefore, the Memra of Neofiti Exodus 29:45 helps one find Christ in the Old Testament.

**Targum Isaiah 8:14:**

**God’s Agent as a Stumbling Block**

Isaiah 8:14 And he will exist as a sanctuary and as a stone of offense and as a rock of stumbling to the two houses of Israel, as a trap and as a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

MT Isaiah 8:14 והיה למקדש לארמונ בני גזר מכתול לשב לשביה ישראלו לם
ולמוך לארש וירושלם

Targum Isaiah 8:14 But if you do not receive it, his Memra will exist among you as an avenger, and as a stone of smiting and as a rock to stumble for the two houses of the leaders of Israel; as a defeat and as a stumbling block, because the house of Israel is divided against the house of Judah who dwell in Jerusalem.

Targum Isaiah 8:14 ואמ לא חכם ויהי ממכילה בתו לפרסת לארמונ בני גזר מתוכל לוה מתי ישראל לארש לא לושב וירושלם

The occurrence of Memra in Targum Isaiah 8:14 seems to point to Jesus almost immediately. The parallel to Romans 9:33 and 1 Peter 2:6–7 suggests that Jesus is this stone of stumbling for both houses of Israel. Furthermore, the broader targumic
theology of a stumbling stone also ascribes to the Memra the role of kingship and authority against those who fail to believe. The Memra, as a stone of stumbling, judges Israel through a kingly role just as Jesus’ kingship allows him to judge Israel by being “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.”

Isaiah 8:14 (MT) teaches that God will become a stone of offense and a reason for Israel’s stumbling. Paul applies this passage to Jesus in Romans 9:33 as a prophecy that Israel would not believe because salvation is by faith in Jesus instead of by works. Likewise, Peter integrates Isaiah 8:14 in a list of passages that include the stumbling stone, identifying Jesus as the stone.20 Targum Isaiah 8:14 clearly labels this “stone of smiting” and “rock that causes offense” as the Memra suggesting that God’s agent will carry out this role.21 Therefore the Targum explains that God’s agent will be the stone of stumbling rather than the Father.

In addition to identifying Jesus as the stumbling stone, the New Testament also teaches that Israel’s unbelief and stumbling were predestined to take place through God’s agent. Schreiner says that Paul’s patchwork citation of Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16 in Romans 9:33 is evidence of the predestined outcome for the Jews.22 Peter cites Isaiah 8:14 in the

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20Ronning, The Jewish Targums, 249–50. See also Thomas R. Schreiner, 1, 2 Peter, Jude, NAC 37 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2003), 103–14, who says, “The use of the Old Testament is significant Christologically since it demonstrates that what is true of Yahweh is also true of Jesus the Christ” (ibid., 103). Norman Hillyer cites Gen. Rab. 70:9 and Justin Martyr’s Dialogue with Trypho to argue that the “stone” was a Messianic title in Jewish circles (Norman Hillyer, “Rock-Stone’ Imagery in I Peter,” TynBul 22 [1971]: 59, 69).

21See Schreiner, Romans, 541, who is not persuaded by the targumic evidence only because of the late date of the written documents (see also Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB 33 [New York: Doubleday, 1993], 580). Schreiner, however, cites several scholars who point to a collection of written texts that connect the stone with Jesus, but argues that these point to “an oral collection at most.” Regarding these textual and oral connections of Jesus to the stone of stumbling, Schreiner says, “the messianic interpretation of the stone was quite common in rabbinc literature, and this suggests that the connection was pre-Christian” (Schreiner, Romans, 541; see also J. Jeremias, “λίθος,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Gerhard Kittel and trans. Geoffrey Bromiley [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964], 4:272–73).

same context saying, “They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do (1 Peter 2:8). The importance of this connection is that the Targums point to God’s agent as the one who will cause Israel to stumble as a predestined result. In fact, Targum Isaiah 6:8–10 says that the Memra of the Lord told Isaiah that he would preach to a people who hear but cannot understand. As history unfolds, this predestined result is, indeed, carried out by God’s agent, Jesus (e.g., Mark 4:12).

Since Targum Isaiah 8:14 identified the Memra as God’s agent causing Israel to stumble, one can also look to Targum Isaiah 28:16 for further connections to Jesus. Isaiah 28:16 says that God will lay a foundation stone in Zion that is tested and sure. The Targum interprets the foundation stone as a future King of Israel who will bring judgment on those who fail to believe. In targumic tradition, the stone that the builders rejected “was among the sons of Jesse; and he was worthy to be appointed king and ruler” (Tg. Ps 118:22). Jesus, the one who was to be ruler in Israel (Mic 5:2; Matt 2:6), is also the stone of stumbling that the builders of the house of Israel rejected. Israel’s King was the chief cornerstone, and as King, Jesus had the authority to judge their unbelief (Tg. Isa

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23 Cf. Matt 13:10–17; Mark 4:10–12; Luke 8:10; Acts 28:24–28; and Rom 11:7–8, which all seem to indicate that the unbelief of the Jews was a prophesied, predestined result.

24 On Jesus’ use of this idea in Mark 4:12, see Bruce Chilton, A Galilean Rabbi and His Bible: Jesus’ Use of the Interpreted Scripture of His Time (Wilmingon, DE: Michael Glazer, 1984), 90–98.

25 Tg. Isa 28:16 does not include the Memra in its interpretation, and yet because Tg. Isa 8:14 has already labeled the Memra as the stone of stumbling, the idea corresponds in Isaiah. This conclusion is especially supported by the way the New Testament authors combine all of the “stone” passages ( Isa 8:14; 28:16; Ps 118:22) in their writings on the subject. In their minds, these passages all seem to be related to God’s agent.

26 Tg. Mic 5:2 says, “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrath, you were as too small to be numbered among the thousands of the house of Judah. From you shall come forth before me the Messiah to be executing rule over Israel, whose name is uttered from former times, from the days of antiquity.” For other references to the Messiah related to the Davidic kingship in the Targums, see Tg. Onq. Gen 49:10 and Tg. Isa 9:6. In Tg. Isa 9:7, the “Memra of the Lord of Hosts” is the one who will establish the Davidic throne. In other words, the King, the stone, and the Messiah are all connected in the person of Jesus and the targumic tradition supports these conclusions regarding Jesus.

Just as the New Testament teaches Jesus was the stone of stumbling for Israel, the Targums identify the stone as God’s Memra to bring judgment on his people. Though one cannot prove the New Testament authors had the targumic tradition in mind, the similarities between the Targums and the New Testament are striking. God’s agent, the Memra, will be a stone of stumbling just as God’s agent, Jesus, was identified as the stone over which Israel was predestined to stumble. In both cases, God’s agent judges Israel according to his royal authority, because Israel failed to believe in God’s Messiah.

**Targum 2 Chronicles 7:12:**

*God’s Manifestation and Mediating Intercessor*

2 Chronicles 7:12 Then the Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him, “I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice.”

MT 2 Chronicles 7:12

וירא יהוה אל שלמה בלילה ויאמר לו שמיעתי את תפלחתך והחרתי למך הזה ולבית הזה

Targum 2 Chronicles 7:12 The Memra of the Lord was revealed to Solomon in the night, and said to him, “Your prayer has been heard before me, and I have chosen this place to exist for me as a house of the sacrifice of offerings.”

Targum 2 Chronicles 7:12

ואתגרל מימרא דידי לשלמה בלילה ויאמר לו הליה שמיעאת קדם ייزادיה ותחעטר בהתרעיאיה הודאי למקות ולביית דתי קוריבנא

Targum 2 Chronicles 7:12 provides examples of the Memra as God’s manifestation and as a mediating intercessor for Solomon. As God’s manifestation, the Memra “was revealed” (אתגרל) to deliver a message to Solomon.²⁷ In addition, the Memra spoke (נאמרא ליה) to Solomon suggesting the presence of a personal agent or

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²⁷To explain God’s visible manifestation, the Targums often use the passive ithpeel of גלה. In Tg. 2 Chr 7:12, the Targum substitutes God’s agent as well as the passive verb construction. Therefore, the “Memra of the Lord was revealed.”
perhaps even a personal being. The Targums do not always substitute the *Memra* when the Lord speaks, but *ואמר* מֶמְרָאָה... is the typical construction of God speaking through the manifestation of his *Memra*.\(^{28}\)

That Jesus is the premier manifestation of God has been rehearsed several times, and the Targums again point to God’s agent as his visible manifestation. Where God acts or speaks in time and space, he does so through his physical agent, Jesus. Therefore, the revelation of God’s agent in *Targum 2 Chronicles* 7:12 helps point to Christ in the Old Testament.

The message that the *Memra* delivered to Solomon may also point to Christ in the Old Testament. In *Targum 2 Chronicles* 7:12, the *Memra* tells Solomon that he has heard his prayer. In this sense, the *Memra* functions as an intercessor in prayer. As such, Solomon prayed to God through the *Memra*. In addition, the *Memra* told Solomon that the temple had become a place of worship “for me.” This translation follows the Hebrew literally, and yet having been spoken by the *Memra*, the implication is that the temple is a place to worship God’s agent, the *Memra*.

Like the *Memra*, Jesus also hears the prayers of his people, and intercedes for them before the Father (Rom 8:34). In the New Testament, Jesus is the mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5), and his mediation includes hearing prayer. Jesus said that if you ask anything “in my name” he would do it so that the Father would receive glory (John 14:13; 15:16; 16:24–24, 26).\(^{29}\) John also teaches that confidence in the Son comes because Jesus hears the requests of those who believe in his name (1 John 5:13–15). Paul

\(^{28}\)For examples that leave God speaking see *Tg. Onq.* Gen 3:13; *Tg. Onq.* Exod 3:15. For examples that have the *Memra* speaking on behalf of God, see *Tg. Onq.* Gen 8:21; *Tg. Neof.* Gen 12:7; 17:1; 20:3; *Tg. Neof.* Num 22:9; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Deut 32:39. The typical construction for the *Memra* speaking includes the *Memra* being “revealed.”

instructs the Ephesians to give thanks to God the Father “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:20), again teaching that God’s agent mediates the supplication of God’s people.

While the Memra received Solomon’s prayer, he also told Solomon that the temple had become a place of worship to the Memra. Just as the Memra accepted worship in the temple, Jesus accepted worship in the New Testament. Where Jesus’ miraculous signs were seen, people worshiped (e.g., Matt 14:23; John 9:38). Even into eternity, the nations will worship Jesus (Phil 2:10–11; Rev 5:9, 11–14; 7:10). As God’s agent, Jesus is the proper object of Christian worship just as the Memra was the proper object of temple worship. Since the Targums identify God’s agent as equal to God, worshiping God and worshiping his agent become one and the same. As God’s manifest agent, Jesus rightly accepted worship. Likewise, the Memra could tell Solomon that the temple was a place of worship for him.

In Targum 2 Chronicles 7:12, God manifested himself to Solomon through his agent, and the Memra audibly told Solomon that he heard his prayer and that temple worship was established to honor him. Similarly, Jesus manifests the Father, rightly receives worship, and mediates believers’ prayers to the Father.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
Deuteronomy 32:39: God’s Manifest Agent as Redeemer and Giver of Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew (MT)</th>
<th>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deuteronomy 32:39</td>
<td>ראה עתֶה כי אעֵדֵּנִי אחרון אֵלַֹחַם יַעַלְדֵּי עַמִּי אָמַת</td>
<td>See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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30In chap. 2, Jesus’ accepting worship was described as a result of divine manifestation. When the glory of God is manifest through Jesus, men recognize his majesty and must worship him. Similarly, the glory of the Memra in the temple required worship (Tg. Neof. Exod 25:22).
Deuteronomy 32:39

When the Memra of the Lord will be revealed to deliver his people, he will say to all the nations, “See now that I am he who is and was, and I am he who will be, and there is no other god apart from me. I, by my Memra, kill and indeed make alive the people of the house of Israel. And I will heal them at the end of days, and there will be none who can deliver Gog and his army from my hand, [Gog] who will come to arrange in battle array against them.

Pseudo-Jonathan

Deuteronomy 32:39 expands upon the Hebrew “I, even I, am he.” The targumic expansion explains that Yahweh alone is God because of his eternal nature. He is the only God who “is and was, and he who will be.” Pseudo-Jonathan also explains that this declaration will come when the Memra of the Lord is revealed to deliver (למפרוק) his people. Neofiti also interprets Deuteronomy 32:39 as a reference to the Memra, but provides an ontological identity between the Memra and God. Based on these two targumic traditions, the Memra is God, who when he is revealed to redeem his people, will be called the “one who is and was, and who is to come.”

The first connection to Jesus in Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 32:39 is that

31 The Hebrew text repeats the pronoun אני to emphasize monotheism and God’s exclusive ability to kill and make alive, wound and heal (for אני as a verbal corroborative, see Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §24b). Tg. Neof. Deut 32:39 identifies the second pronoun (אני) as the Memra, but still retains both pronouns as in the Hebrew. This construction explains the repetition of the pronoun as a reference to God killing and making alive through his agent. The who is likely an instrumental ב, but may be understood as a בessentiae. As an instrumental ב, Tg. Neof. Deut 32:39 would teach that God exists, manifested through his agent. As a בessentiae, Tg. Neof. Deut 32:39 teaches that God exists “in the person” of his Memra (for the בessentiae, see BDB, 88a, If; JM, 133c; GCK, §119f). In either case, the Targum equates the Memra with God suggesting that where God acts, the Memra acts. The ontological identity of the Memra with the Father is similar to the ontological identity of Jesus with the Father. Jesus said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30), and prayed that believers would be one just as he and the Father are one (John 17:11, 22). Jesus’ works were a reflection of the Father’s works, and the Son only does what the Father does (John 5:19). Finally, Jesus taught that whoever has seen the Son has seen the nature and essence of the Father (John 14:9). Indeed, the Jews sought to kill Jesus because he made himself equal with God (John 5:18).
the Memra will be revealed “to redeem” (לְמַפְרֹק). Similarly, Jesus delivered God’s people at the exodus (e.g., Jude 5) and will finally appear to rescue his people from a fallen world (cf. Rev 19:13). The reference in Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 32:39 to a future day when the Memra will be revealed perhaps points to the day of redemption when King Messiah will be anointed (Tg. Ps 61:9; Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 40:9; cf. Luke 4:18; Acts 4:26; 10:38).

Another connection to Jesus in Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 32:39, is that the Memra says, “I am the one who is and was, and I am he who will be.” This phrase interprets the first pronoun of the Hebrew text with an expansion not found in the Hebrew, and identifies the Memra as the eternal God (cf. Tg. Isa 44:6; Rev 1:4, 21:6; 22:13). Similarly, Jesus is the eternal God “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8). In Luke 7:19, John’s disciples ask if Jesus is “the one who is to come.” After healing many people, Jesus returns a message to John that he is the one who makes alive (‘the dead are raised up,’ Luke 7:22; cf. Tg. Neof. Deut 32:39). Jesus demonstrates that he is the one who is to come by healing and raising the dead similarly.

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32 For a discussion of this translation see Ernest G. Clarke, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Deuteronomy: Translated, With Notes, The Aramaic Bible 5B (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 95n139 and his references. See also Bernard Grossfeld, The Targum Onkelos to Exodus: Translated, with Apparatus and Notes, The Aramaic Bible 7 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 8n16, for his discussion of the translation (transliteration) of הָיָה אַשֶּר הָיָה in the Targums and ancient versions. In addition, see John Ronning’s discussion of how the “I am he” sayings of John’s gospel equate Jesus with God (Ronning, The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology, 194–223). In his discussion of Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 32:39, Ronning shows how John 8:24, 28, and 58 point to Jesus’ equality with God in the present (8:24), future (8:28), and past (8:58) using the phrase, “I am he” (ibid., 81–83). These New Testament references are striking when compared to Tg. Ps.-J.’s interpretation of the Memra as “he who is and was, and he who will be.” Ronning concludes, “Since this verse [Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 32:39] goes on to say, ‘there is no god besides me’, it is clear that in calling Jesus the Word as a way of stressing the full deity of the Son, John is not advocating belief in another god; rather, he is advocating the notion that Jesus is One with the Father” (ibid., 223). Furthermore, Tg. Neof. Deut 32:39 says, “I, I in my Word, am he,” again pointing to Jesus’ “I am he” sayings as evidence of his deity as the Word of the Lord.

33 Although his discussion is targeted at different verses, John Ronning’s discussions of “I am he” in Tg. Isa 43:10 prove helpful for the present context as well (John L. Ronning, “The Targum of Isaiah and the Johannine Literature, WTJ 69 [2007]: 247–78).
to how the Memra will “make alive” at his revelation. Indeed, Jesus is identical to the eternal God just as the Memra is “he who is and was and who is to come.” As such, Jesus healed the sick during his earthly ministry and will make alive at his final revelation.

A third connection to Jesus in *Pseudo-Jonathan* Deuteronomy 32:39 is that no one will be able to deliver Gog and his army from the Memra’s hand. He is God’s agent to judge Satan and his cohort. Likewise, Jesus will not allow the armies of Gog and Magog to escape the final judgment (Rev 20:7–10). Gog and Magog will arrange in battle array against Jesus (Rev 20:9a), and he will destroy them with fire from heaven (Rev 20:9b). Just as the Memra rained fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 19:24), Jesus is God’s agent to defeat Gog. Following the defeat of Israel’s enemies, Jesus will raise the dead (Rev 20:11–15) just as *Pseudo-Jonathan* Deuteronomy 32:39 implies.

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34Cf. *Tg. Neof.* Deut 32:39 in which God, by his Memra, heals (דמסי הוא ואנה) and makes alive in the world to come (דאתי בעלמאishi ומכחי).

35The idea of Jesus “making alive” is not limited to Jesus’ final revelation. Indeed, Jesus promised eternal life to those who would believe in God’s agent (John 3:15–16; 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 10:28; 17:2; Acts 13:48; Rom 5:21; 6:23; 1 Tim 1:16; 1 John 1:2; 5:11, 13, 20).

36Cf. *Tg. 1 Sam* 2:10 that says the Lord will execute vengeance on Gog in the context of the kingdom of the Messiah. Likewise, *Tg. Neof.* Num 11:26 and 24:20 place the triumph over Gog and Magog “at the end of days” and “in the hands of King Messiah.” *Tg. Ps.-J.* Num 24:17 looks forward to a “strong king [who] will reign from those of the house of Jacob, and the Messiah will be anointed . . . and will banish all the children of Seth, the army of Gog who will arrange in battle against Israel.” *Tg. Ps.-J.* Lev 26:44 highlights that the Memra will not reject Israel in the days of their exile, but will “have mercy” (רחדס ילאה) on them and will not reject them in the days of Gog. *Tg. Ps.-J.* Lev 26:44 similarly describes the vengeance of God’s agent against Israel’s enemies as an act of mercy toward God’s people in the days of Gog. Michael Maher, commenting on *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 40:11, points to rabbinic references to Gog, again with a connection to the Messiah at the end of days (Michael Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Exodus: Translated with Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 2 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1994], 273n27). *Cf. b. Sanh. 97b; b. Abod. Zar. 3b; Gen. Rab. 88:5.*

37This connection of Gog and Magog to *Tg. Ps.-J.* Deut 32:39 does not dismiss the prophecy of Ezekiel regarding Gog and Magog (Ezek 38–39). In fact, Grant Osborne rehearses Ezekiel’s prophecy to show the parallels to Rev 20 and lists *Tg. Ps.-J.* as a Jewish source that interprets Ezekiel’s prophecy messianically (Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 711–12.)
Not only is Jesus God’s agent to judge Gog, Magog, and Satan, but also, he is God’s agent to make alive in the age to come. Indeed, he is the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25, ἐγὼ εἰμί ὁ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωή).

In Acts 4, Peter and John upset the Sadducees by preaching “in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). In 1 Corinthians 6:14, Paul teaches that God will raise up believers by Christ’s power. Paul also taught the Corinthians that just as Adam brought death into the world, so also, Christ would effect the resurrection from the dead (1 Cor 15:21). As God’s revealed agent, Jesus will raise the dead just as the Memra will make alive the people of the house of Israel.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
Deuteronomy 32:43:
God’s Agent in Atonement

Deuteronomy 32:43
Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods, for he avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people’s land.

MT Deuteronomy 32:43
ה אתכם עמו יתמר ים עמו ומקה יושב לזרחים
הכפר עלימאו עפות

Pseudo-Jonathan
Praise his people, O peoples, for the blood of his servants

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39 See David G. Peterson, The Acts of the Apostles, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 188 for the discussion of “in Jesus” as an example of future resurrection or as the means of resurrection. Here, “in Jesus” is taken as means. Jesus is God’s agent in whom believers find life.

40 Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 749–51.

41 In Paul’s argument that “all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26), he tells the church that if Israel’s rejection of God meant salvation for the world, then their acceptance of the gospel will mean “life from the dead” (Rom 11:15). Paul appears to connect resurrection from the dead with the salvation of “the people of the house of Israel,” and their salvation and resurrection occur in Christ.
Deuteronomy 32:43  that was shed he will avenge and keep, and the
vengeance of retribution he will return on his enemies,
and he, by his Memra, will atone for the sins of his land
and his people.

_Pseudo-Jonathan_  
Deuteronomy 32:43  
שבות אפוריא צמיה בת ישרעלא אפור אמס עבדי
ואשתלדיה הוה פרף ונכפעו נופרונמעה יחוור על
בעל דבברי דחא בפורריא יכפר על חובי אראיה ועמא

_Pseudo-Jonathan_  
Deuteronomy 32:43 provides a targumic interpretation of a
poetic passage. Often, the poetry of the Pentateuch refers to future fulfillments, and the
Targums interpret these fulfillments accordingly. 

_Pseudo-Jonathan_ Deuteronomy 32:43 explains that God will avenge the blood of his servants. After he returns
vengeance on his enemies, God will atone for the sins of the land “by his Memra”
(במימריה). The ב preposition is most likely an instrumental ב indicating the means
through whom God will atone for the sins of the land. In addition, the explicit pronoun
(הוא) supports the use of the instrumental ב suggesting that God himself will atone for
Israel’s sins, but he will do so “through/by his Memra.” The Targums maintain that
God will rescue his people, but he works in the created order through his agent(s).

Whereas _Pseudo-Jonathan_ teaches that the Memra will atone for sins, the New

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_42_ For the idea of future fulfillment generally, Peter Craigie says, “Through the darkness of the
judgment expressed so vividly in the Song of Moses, there lay beyond a more distant hope of atonement,
and a restoration of the relationship between God, his people, and their promised land” (Peter C. Craigie,
The Book of Deuteronomy, NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], 389). Luyten described the
perspective of this verse as “eschatological” (J. Luyten, “Primeval and Eschatological Overtones in the
Song of Moses [Dt 32:1–43],” in Das Deuteronomium: Entstehung, Gestalt und Botschaft, ed. N. Lohfink

_43_ BDB, 89b III 2; Williams, _Williams’ Hebrew Syntax_, §243; GCK §119o; JM §132e. Another
interpretive addition of the Targums is the insertion of “sins” (חובי). The Hebrew indicates that God will
cleanse the land, but the Targums interpret this cleansing as a reference to God atoning specifically for the
sins of the people and the land. This addition shows that something specific existed in the people of Israel
that needed cleansing/atonement. Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 32:43 teaches that God’s vengeance and cleansing is a
necessary result of sin and that the corrective is the Memra’s atonement.

_44_ The use of the independent pronoun (הוא) with the imperfect (יכפר) is somewhat expected,
but can also be emphatic (Fuller and Choi, _Biblical Hebrew Syntax_, §19h; GCK §32b, k, §135a–c; JM
§146a). That the Aramaic adds the pronoun not found in the Hebrew text, in addition to the agent through
whom the pronoun works, points to the interpretive freedom to apply the work of atonement to God’s
agent. The one who atones indeed is God, but it is God through his agent.
Testament teaches that Jesus fulfilled the old sacrificial system in order to atone for sins. In the Old Covenant sacrificial system, blood was shed (Lev 8:15; 16:11; 17:11), and forgiveness extended (Lev 4:20, 5:16). These images find their fulfillment in Jesus, who offered himself as the atoning sacrifice once for all (Heb 7:27; 9:26; 10:10). The author of Hebrews (Heb 9–10) taught that the old system gave way so that the true fulfillment would come. Similar to the blood atonement in the sacrificial system (Lev 17:11), Jesus’ blood was poured out for forgiveness (Matt 26:28). The Old Covenant required repeated sacrifices for atonement (Heb 10:1), but “as it is, he [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” Through Jesus’ atoning sacrifice, he established a new and better covenant (Heb 8:6) in which forgiveness of sins leads to the cessation of the sacrificial system (Heb 10:18).

Although Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 32:43 fails to include the image of blood, that God will atone for the sins of his people “by his Memra” points to the future fulfillment when God will atone for the sins of his people through the blood of his agent, Jesus Christ.

While the comparison with the sacrificial system provides a sufficient portrait of Jesus’ role in atonement, Paul also uses atonement images in Ephesians 1:3–14. He teaches that all of the spiritual blessings given to those who believe come in/through Christ (Eph 1:3, ἐν Χριστῷ). Paul highlights the atonement theme in Ephesians 1:7 by saying that redemption and the forgiveness of sins comes “in him [Christ]” and “through his [Christ’s] blood” (cf. Rom 3:24; 1 Cor 1:30). Paul’s teaching is also similar to Neofiti Deuteronomy 32:43 with the phrase, “according to the riches of his grace” (Eph 1:7). Pseudo-Jonathan says that God will atone for the sins of his people “by his Memra,” whereas Neofiti teaches that God will atone for the sins of the people “by his good

\[45\text{For rabbinic references to blood that “effects atonement” see m. Zebah. 4.1; 8.11; m. Šebu. 1.4; m. Neg. 14.10.}\]
mercies” (ברחרומטיה טביה). 46 Paul, a Pharisee (Acts 26:5; Phlm 3:5), used language similar to the traditions of Pseudo-Jonathan and Neofiti, combining the ideas of God redeeming through his agent and according to the riches of his grace. Indeed, as God’s agent, Jesus atoned for the sins of his people “according to the riches of his [God’s] grace.” Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 32:43 teaches that the Memra will atone for the sins of his people. Similarly, Jesus stands as God’s agent offering atonement to those who will believe (Acts 10:43).

Targum Neofiti Deuteronomy 26:17–18: God’s Agent as King

Deuteronomy 26:17–18  You have declared today for the Lord to exist for you as God, so that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes, his commandments, and his rules, and will obey his voice. And the Lord has declared today that you exist for him as a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all of his commandments.

MT Deuteronomy 26:17–18  את היום האמרת יהוה לך ליהוה לך לאלהים לולכת
בדרכי לשהמרحك ומשפתי ומשפתי ולשפת בחק
ויהוה האמיך יהוה לך לולכת לעם סנגה יושב
לך ושלומך כל מצותיך

Neofiti Deuteronomy 26:17–18  Today you have made the Memra of the Lord to be king over you, to be your redeeming God, to walk in upright ways before him, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his legal decisions, and to heed the voice of his Memra. And the Memra of the Lord has made you kings today to be for the Name a beloved people as a treasure just as he spoke to you, and to keep all his commandments.

Neofiti Deuteronomy 26:17–18  היום ipad. דיי אלמכתיו עליכיס יושם עד מי למיד לי

46 In the Targums, God did other things did “by his good mercies.” He protected those who entered the ark (Tg. Neof. Gen 7:16), remembered Abraham after destroying the cities of the valley (Tg. Neof. Gen 19:29), remembered Rachel to give her children (Tg. Neof. Gen 30:22), and brought Israel out of Egypt, eliciting belief in the Memra (Tg. Neof. Exod 4:31). Moses prayed that God, by his good mercies, would overlook the sins of Israel, asking for atonement without the sacrifice (Tg. Neof. Deut 9:27; cf. Rom 3:25).
Neofiti Deuteronomy 26:17 interprets Israel’s decision to have the Lord as their God as Israel making the Memra king over them. As Israel’s king, God’s people should obey the Memra (וּלְמֵשָׁמְתָּה בְּכָל וּלְמֵשָׁם). Finally, as king, the Memra also makes Israel kings according to the Targum. As God’s final Davidic king, Jesus fulfills these roles attributed to the Memra.

First, the New Testament presents Jesus as the long-awaited king of Israel, just as Israel made the Memra king in Neofiti Deuteronomy 26:17. The wise men sought the one who had been “born King of the Jews” (Matt 2:1), and in John 1:49, Nathanael identified Jesus as a teacher of Israel (Rabbi), the Son of God, and the king of Israel. As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, he fulfilled Zechariah 9:9 pointing to the arrival of Israel’s king (Matt 21:5; John 12:15). During his interrogation, Pilate asked Jesus if he was the king of the Jews. Jesus answered, “You have said so” (Matt 27:11; cf. John 18:33). The crowds later mocked Jesus as the king of the Jews (Matt 27:29, 37, 42; John 19:19), not knowing that they were judging themselves by hailing their king. Paul exalted Jesus as the “King of the ages” in his letter to Timothy (1 Tim 1:17; 6:15). In the Song of the Lamb, God’s people will hail Jesus as the “King of the nations,” highlighting his just and true ways (Rev 15:3). At the precipice of God’s final battle, the Lamb is

47 Luke and John include that the crowds hailed Jesus as their king when they joyously exclaimed the refrain from Ps 118:26, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord” (Luke 19:38; cf. John 12:13).

48 The chief priests perhaps feared the people would begin to see Jesus as the king of the Jews and so they told Pilate not to write on the cross, “The King of the Jews,” but rather, “This man said, ‘I am the King of the Jews’” (John 19:21).
identified as “Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev 17:14; 19:16). Just as the Memra was made king over Israel, the New Testament abounds with references to Jesus as king over his people.

A second connection to Jesus is that the result of Israel’s making the Memra king over them is that they would heed the voice of the Memra (וֹלַדְמוֹד מִמְּרָא). The targumic expansion relates obedience to God in the Hebrew Bible to obedience to the Memra, God’s agent. Likewise, the New Testament teaches that Jesus should be obeyed. 49 Peter inferred that the elect exiles to whom he wrote existed “for obedience to Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1–2). The Apostle John equated the commandments of the Father (2 John 4, 6) with the “teaching of Christ” (τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ) in 2 John 9. 50 John rejoiced that the community was walking in the truth as they were “commanded by the Father” (2 John 4, ἐντολὴν ἐλάβομεν παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς). John commends obeying the commands of the Father because it is obedience to the “teaching of Christ.” Just as “heeding the voice of the Memra” was the proper response to his kingship, so also obedience to Jesus is the proper response from those who are members of his kingdom.

A third connection to Jesus in Neofiti Deuteronomy 26:17–18 is that the Memra has made Israel kings to be a “beloved people” and a “treasure” for God (עם سبحה היך חביבין). In Peter’s exhortation to remain obedient (1 Pet 1:13–2:12) in a “foreign land” (‘sojourners’ in 1 Pet 2:11), he affirms that the church is a “chosen race, royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his [God’s] own possession” (1 Pet 2:9). The purpose of God, in Christ, making his people a treasured possession is so that they

49 The New Testament connections to Jesus extend even to those passages in which Jesus should be “listened to” or one should “receive” his teaching (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; John 1:11–12; 10:16; 12:48). These passages imply obedience to Jesus as well.

50 Colin Kruse points out that whoever obeys the teaching of Christ “has both the Father and the Son.” He cites John 14:23, where Jesus equates love for him as obeying his teaching. To be found in God the Father and Christ the Son, one must obey the teaching of the Son. See Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 212–13.
would “abstain from the passions of the flesh” and “keep [their] conduct pure among the Gentiles” (1 Pet 2:11–12; cf. 1 Peter 1:2). Like the Targums, Peter teaches that God’s agent made his people kings so that they would be obedient rather than stumble over God’s chief cornerstone as Israel did (1 Pet 2:8). Just as the Memra made God’s people a royal, treasured possession, so also in Christ, believers are a people for his own possession.  

The New Testaments contains further reference to Jesus making God’s people kings. Revelation 1:6 teaches that the one who “freed us from our sins by his blood” also “made us a kingdom.” Before the Lamb opens the scroll, the living creatures and elders praise the Lamb as the one who “made them a kingdom and priests to our God” (Rev 5:10). In order to encourage the Corinthians to live out the fullness of the Christian life, Paul tells them that they have already become kings (1 Cor 4:8), and are therefore able to obey. Throughout the New Testament, those who are in Christ are encouraged to obey because they have a royal status in Christ’s kingdom. Likewise, the Memra made Israel kings so that they would heed the voice of God’s agent.

The abundance of these connections suggests that Neofiti Deuteronomy 26:17–18 refers to Jesus. As Israel’s “Redeemer God,” the Memra is king over Israel, and made God’s people to be kings as his beloved possession so that they would obey. Likewise, Jesus is God’s final king and agent through whom God purchased a royal priesthood as his treasured possession. As a result, God’s people should heed the voice of God’s agent.

Occurrences of Memra That Probably Refer to Jesus

Some targumic passages present the Memra as God’s agent or manifestation,

Exod 19:5 connects Israel’s obedience to their status as a treasured possession and Tg. Onq. Exod 19:5 interprets their obedience as “receiving my Memra.” In order to be God’s treasured possession, Israel must obey the Memra, an obedience that only comes to full fruition under the New Covenant, in the power of the Spirit, and with new hearts (cf. Jer 31; Ezek 36).
but do not have a clear connection to the roles of Jesus in the New Testament. These passages may refer to Christ.

Targum Onqelos Genesis 3:8:
God’s Manifestation

Genesis 3:8 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from before the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

MT Genesis 3:8 י RESPONDENT很喜欢وك cronos מאהまたはן בני ישראל והוה והוה

Onqelos Genesis 3:8 And they heard the sound of the Memra of the Lord God walking in the garden as the day was ending, then Adam and his wife hid from before the Lord God in the midst of the tress of the garden.

Onqelos Genesis 3:8 נשמעו ית על מעמרא דרי אלוהים internacional bềנהו קמה אויא שמעו גינתא ואגרים אדמ ואותיתית מי קדום יי אלוהים בכר אילן גינה

In Genesis 3:8, 10, Adam and Eve heard the sound (קול) of the Lord walking in the garden. As such, the passage presents the theophany of God and the appearance of a visible manifestation of the Lord. Onqelos Genesis 3:8 interprets the visible manifestation of God’s presence as the Memra of the Lord. According to Onqelos, the sound (קל) that Adam and Eve heard was the sound of the Memra, God’s manifest agent. Some may argue that Adam and Eve heard the “voice” (also קל in Hebrew) of the Lord. However, the idea of a “voice” walking (מָהלָל) in the garden seems untenable. Onqelos interpreted the meaning of Genesis 3:8 as God’s manifest presence, indeed his agent, existed in the status of a “walker” in the garden. Even the skeptic C. K. Barrett,

52 For קל as “sound” see BDB, 876.

53 For the textual variants in the targumic tradition to Gen 3:8, see Ronning, The Jewish Targums, 51.

54 The pael participle מָהלָל is best understood as an accusative of situation describing the status of the Memra rather than a verb indicating what he was doing. As such, the Memra existed in the
who said the Memra is “a blind alley in the study of biblical background to John’s logos doctrine,” points to Onqelos Genesis 3:8 as a passage that “might erroneously be taken as a hypostasis.”

In chapter 2, it was determined that Jesus is the final and ultimate manifestation of God in the created world. As such, Jesus is similar to the Memra in Onqelos Genesis 3:8 by being God’s manifestation. Likewise, scholars sometimes see christophanies in the Old Testament (Gen 18:2, 32:24–25; Dan 3:25), and Onqelos Genesis 3:8 may be one of these. However, because the Memra in Onqelos Genesis 3:8 does not exhibit any offices or roles of Jesus, this passage falls into the category of occurrences that probably refer to Jesus.

Targum Onqelos Exodus 32:13:  
God’s Agent is Closely Connected to the Covenants

| MT Exodus 32:13 | Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, “I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised, I will give to your offspring and they shall inherit it forever.” |
| Targum Onqelos Exodus 32:13 | Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, with whom you swore by your Memra, and with whom you spoke, “I will increase your children as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken, I will__________________________ |

status of a “walker” (see Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §16l).


give to your children that they might inherit forever.”

Onqelos Exodus 32:13

Onqelos Exodus 32:13 probably refers to Jesus because the Memra is closely associated to the covenant sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Onqelos Exodus 32:13 primarily refers to the Abrahamic covenant, leading one to ask about the Memra’s connection to God’s covenant with Abraham. In Onqelos Genesis 17:2, 7, 10, God told Abraham that the covenant was between his Memra and Abraham. In Onqelos Exodus 6:8, God confirmed his covenant with Moses, saying that he swore (pael perfect 1cs of קום) to all of the forefathers (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) that he would bring Israel into their land. Likewise, Targum Isaiah 48:15 says, “I, by my Memra, cut a covenant with Abraham.” These passages suggest that the Targums understood the Memra to be closely associated with the Abrahamic covenant.

Onqelos Exodus 32:13 probably refers to Jesus because the New Testament does not speak of Jesus as the mediator of the Abrahamic covenant. Jesus is, however, the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15; 12:24), and therefore one may see the Memra in Onqelos Exodus 32:13 as Jesus in the Old Testament. Indeed, the author of Hebrews teaches that the New Covenant is mediated through Jesus “so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15). In the New Covenant, the “promised eternal inheritance” is amplified beyond geographical land, but God’s agent still mediates the blessings of the covenant (Gal 3:14). God provides covenant...

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57 The term for “covenant” in Tg. Onq. Gen 17:2, 7, and 10 is from the root קום, which is the same root used for “swore” in Tg. Onq. Exod 32:13.

58 The word Memra explains the anthropomorphism of God “raising his hand” in Tg. Onq. Exod 6:8, see Grossfeld, Targum Onqelos to Exodus, 15n8. See also Heb 6:12–20, which suggests that believers have the “sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” because Jesus has become a mediating “high priest.” The author of Hebrews begins this section that God swore by himself since there was none greater to swear by, and it ends with Jesus as the mediating high priest of that oath just as in the Targums.
blessings to those who are Abraham’s offspring through Jesus Christ (Gal 3:29), but this is a New Covenant blessing. Certainly, Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant and offers an inheritance that Abraham’s covenant foreshadowed.

These passages in the New Testament teach that Jesus is the mediator and guarantor of the inheritance under the New Covenant. However, the New Testament fails to teach explicitly that Jesus mediated the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. These targumic passages may connect to Jesus as the one who swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob the blessings of offspring and land. However, without clear New Testament connections between Jesus and the Abrahamic covenant, Onqelos Exodus 32:13 probably refers to Jesus. And yet, Jesus certainly functions as the mediator for a covenant people initiated through Abraham (cf. Acts 3:25; 13:26; Rom 4:13, 16; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 3:16).

**Targum Neofiti Genesis 26:5:**

**Obedience to God’s Agent**

| Genesis 26:5 | . . . because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. |
| MT Genesis 26:5 | צָקַבְּךָ אֵשֶׁר שָמָעָא אֶבְרָהָם בְּכָלָּךְ וְשָמָרְךָ וְשָמָרְתָּ פָּתי הָקֹדֶשׁ וְתֹהיָא |
| Neofiti Genesis 26:5 | . . . because Abraham listened to the voice of my Memra and kept my charge, my commandments, my covenants, and my legal decisions. |
| Neofiti Genesis 26:5 | מִי בָּכֶל אֲבָרָהָם שָמָעְיָא דְיָא וְשָמָרְיָא מְסַמְּרַיָּא מְסַמְּרַתְיָא מְסַמְּרַהיָא וִיסָמְרַיָּא |

In Neofiti Genesis 26:5, the Targums interpret that Abraham’s obedience was due to his listening to the Memra. The same verb is used in both the Hebrew and Aramaic (שמעים), but the Targum highlights that Abraham obeyed God’s agent, the Memra. As mentioned before, the Abrahamic covenant was between God’s Memra and Abraham in the targumic tradition (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 17:2, 7, 10). Therefore, the Targums teach that Abraham’s obedience to the covenant was obedience to God’s agent, the
mediator of the covenant.

The idea of Abraham “listening to” the Memra does not portray agency or manifestation, and therefore, this passage falls in the category that probably helps one to find Christ in the Old Testament. Like the Memra, Jesus should be listened to/obeyed according to the New Testament. At the transfiguration, God’s voice from heaven gave the command to “listen to” (ἀκούετε) the Son (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). Jesus taught that his sheep would listen to his voice (John 10:16), suggesting a requirement, not an option. Jesus told Pilate that those who are of the truth (i.e. God’s people) “listen” to his voice because Jesus’ very existence was intended to bear witness about the truth of the Father (John 18:37). These passages at least indicate that God’s agent should be listened to and obeyed.

Peter’s sermon in Solomon’s portico (Acts 3:11–26) suggests that Jesus was the prophet of whom Moses spoke in Deuteronomy 18:15, and therefore the men of Israel should listen to Jesus. After Peter introduced the idea that the Christ would come (Acts 3:20), he referred to Deuteronomy 18:15, suggesting that Jesus was this prophet to whom men should listen. The consequence of failing to listen to “that prophet” (τοῦ προφήτου ἐκείνου) is that he will be destroyed from the people (Acts 3:23). The Targums also refer to the consequences of failing to listen to the Memra, and Peter relays these consequences accurately (Tg. Neof. Deut 8:20; Tg. Jer 16:12; 22:21; 43:7; Tg. Zech 1:3–4). As Peter continues, he suggests that the men of Israel are Abraham’s offspring according to the covenant and are even more accountable to obeying God’s servant whom God “raised up,” and “sent to you first” (Acts 3:25–26). God approved of Abraham because he listened to God’s servant, the same prophet whom Moses foreshadowed.59

59Lest these references seem anachronistic, the Abrahamic narrative in the Targums to Genesis 12, 15, and 17 suggests conversations with the Memra or a covenant between the Memra and Abraham. Therefore, one can say that Abraham obeyed God’s agent, who may foreshadow the same prophet Moses spoke of. As God’s premier agent and prophet (Heb 1:1–2), Jesus should be obeyed just as Abraham
Although New Testament parallels exist to connect Jesus to the *Memra*, these connections are not explicit. In *Neofiti* Genesis 26:5, the *Memra* does not function as an agent or manifestation of God. Instead, he is obeyed. While one could argue, through the various targumic connections, that Abraham listened to God’s agent, the Hebrew Bible does not necessarily require a reference to God’s agent. Indeed, the New Testament also teaches that *God* should be obeyed (e.g., Acts 5:29; 1 John 5:2). Even though connections exist to other passages in which the *Memra* communicates what *must* be obeyed, *Neofiti* Genesis 26:5 fails to portray agency or manifestation directly. Therefore this passage probably refers to Jesus.

*Targum Psalms 19:3: Creation Speaks of God’s Agent*

| Psalm 19:2[3] | Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. |
| MT Psalm 19:3 | יומ לומ יבין אמור ללילה ללילה יהוה דעת |
| *Targum Psalms 19:3* | Day to day tells more of the *Memra*; but night to night tells less knowledge. |
| *Targum Psalms 19:3* | יומל לומל אחרי מום מימה לילה ללילה מימה 못.blob |

Psalm 19 exclaims the glory of God found in the created order. Based on the New Testament interpretation that Jesus created the universe, one could argue that the heavens declare the glory of the Son (cf. John 1:3; Col 1:16). Indeed, according to *Targum Psalms 19:3*, the astronomical progression of days declares more of God’s agent, the *Memra*.60

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60 David Stec translates מימרא in *Tg. Ps 19:3* as “word,” but footnotes that the Aramaic is *mymr*’ (David M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms: Translated, With a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 16 [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004], 54n2).
Although the context of the Targum relates to creation and God’s agent, 
*Targum Psalms* 19:3 does not necessarily provide a reference to Jesus in the Old Testament. First, *Memra* translates “speech” in the MT literally. Second, the overall trajectory of the psalm portrays God’s activity without an agent. The heavens reveal a general knowledge of God rather than a personal aspect of his being (Ps 19:2; cf. Rom 1:10).Memra occurs again in *Targum Psalms* 19:4 but in construct with דחוורתעמהא (‘complaint’), clearly not God’s agent. “Speech” in 19:3 (MT) parallels “speech” in 19:4 (MT). Therefore, the “word” (מימרא) of 19:3 (*Tg.*) and “utterance of complaint” (דחוורתעמהא) in 19:4 (*Tg.*) are also parallel. Based on the grammatical structure, the parallel meaning of מימרא and דחוורתעמהא מימרא indicate that *Memra* of 19:3 (*Tg.*) may simply mean “word.”

Even with this evidence for why the *Memra* does not refer to Jesus in *Targum Psalms* 19:3, one could also argue that this occurrence does refer to Jesus. The definite article on מימרא in 19:3 could indicate more than just “speech.” Perhaps the psalmist has in mind a specific “Word” of which the days tell. Since the *Memra* was God’s agent to separate between night and day (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 1:5, מימרא דייי) and to create the two great lights to rule the day and night (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 1:16, מימרא דייי), the Targum teaches that each day declares more of God’s agent, the *Memra*. As the two heavenly luminaries, created by the *Memra*, proceed along their charted course, the astronomical progression of day and night declare the glory of God’s agent. The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 102:25 to say that the heavens were the work of the Son’s hands (Heb 1:10).61 Therefore, the heavens, though general revelation, indeed tell of God’s agent who created them.

Within the broader context of the *Memra’s* role in creation, *Targum Psalms*

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61*Tg. Ps* 102:25 maintains the anthropomorphic “hands,” and thus does not provide a reference to God’s agent in creation.
19:3 suggests that each day tells more about God’s agent through whom he created the universe. However, the main point of Psalm 19 refers to God’s general revelation rather than the revelation of God’s agent. Therefore, *Targum Psalms* 19:3 fits into the category of references that *probably* refers to Jesus.

**Occurrences of Memra That Do Not Refer to Jesus**

This final set of targumic references fail to portray the *Memra* as God’s manifestation or agent. מימר refers to the words of a human, a body of commands, or inner deliberation, but agency and manifestation are clearly missing. These targumic passages *do not* refer to Jesus.

**Targum 1 Samuel 15:1:**

*“Word” as a Command*

1 Samuel 15:1 And Samuel said to Saul, “The Lord sent me to anoint you as king over his people, over Israel; now therefore, listen to the sound of the words of the Lord.”

MT 1 Samuel 15:1 יאמר שמואל אל שאול אתים שלח יהוה למשחך מלך על עמליה על ישראל על דברי יהוה

*Targum 1 Samuel 15:1* Then Samuel said to Saul, “The Lord has sent me to anoint you to exist as king over his people, over Israel, but now receive the command of the word of the Lord.”

*Targum 1 Samuel 15:1* האמר שמואל לישראל יתי שלח יהוה למשחך למלך על עמליה על ישראל על דברי יהוה

In *Targum 1 Samuel* 15:1, the targumic tradition explains the uncertain Hebrew. In the MT, Samuel commands Saul to listen to the “sound of the words of the Lord” (שמע דברי יהוה). The Targum interprets this phrase as the מימר פתגמא, translating קול as מימר קול, translating קול as מימר קול in such a way that an agent could be implied (e.g., *Tg. Onq.* Deut 28:1–2). However, because the context implies a body of God’s commandments for the king, the use of *Mimra* likely
refers to the commandments of God rather than an agent.

Besides the lack of the definite article and the context, the plural construct of דבר יוהָּה in the MT also fails to indicate singular agency. The targumist translated יהוה דִּבְרֵי as the פָּתַגְמָא דוֹריי. Of the occurrences of דבר יוהָּה in the Hebrew Bible, nearly all of the Targums translate them using פָּתַגְמָא/פתגמיא indicating that the דבר יוהָּה were simply the “words” of the Lord (e.g., Exod 4:28; 24:3–4; Num 11:24; Josh 3:9; 1 Sam 8:10; Jer 36:4; Ezek 11:25; Amos 8:11). The only occurrence of חֶלֶל דִּבְרֵי יהוה is in 1 Samuel 15:1, and the addition of קֹל does not change the meaning of דִּבְרֵי יהוה. Elsewhere, the Targums translate קול as מימר, and it refers to the מימר (‘voice’) of a person rather than an agent of the Lord. Targum 1 Samuel 15:1 likely refers to a body of commands rather than an individual agent. Therefore, Targum 1 Samuel 15:1 uses common translational technique to refer to a general message from the Lord to which Saul should listen rather than a particular agent or personality. Just as God commanded Samuel to obey the קֹל העם (MT 1 Sam 8:7; מימר עמא [Tg. 1 Sam 8:7]), Samuel commanded Saul to listen to the דִּבְרֵי יהוה פָּתַגְמָא דוֹריי.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan
Deuteronomy 17:10–11:
“Word” of the Torah

Deuteronomy 17:10–11 Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place that the Lord will choose. And you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you. According to the instructions that they give you, and according to the decision, which they

62 See Tg. Onq. Gen 3:17, where מימר translates the קול of Eve. Tg. Neof. and Frg. Tg. P retain מימר in Gen 3:17 providing further evidence that מימר can refer generally to the “word” of a human. Similarly, Tg. Onq. Gen 16:2 says that Abram listened to the מימר of his wife, Sarai, where מימר is used to translate קול in the MT. These occurrences can be compared to Tg. Onq. Gen 3:8, where קול is a reference to the “sound” of the Lord walking in the garden. In Tg. Onq. Gen 3:8, the Targums translate קול מימרא דוֹריי using the definite article and with the inclusion of קל, likely referring to a specific personality who walked in the garden with Adam and Eve (cf. Tg. Onq. Deut 5:24). In Tg. Onq. Gen 3:8, מימרא implies agency as a manifestation of God whereas Tg. Onq. Gen 16:2 and Tg. 1 Sam 15:1 fail to include agency or personality.
pronounce to you, you shall do. You shall not turn aside from the word that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left.

MT Deuteronomy 17:10–11

And you shall do according to the word of the custom of the Torah that they declare to you from the place with which the Lord is pleased, and you shall diligently do according to all that they teach you. You shall act according to the word of the Torah that they teach you, and according to the custom of the judgment that they say to you; you shall not turn aside from the word that they tell you, to the right or to the left.

Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 17:10–11

In Deuteronomy 17:8–13, Moses addresses legal disputes involving homicide and assault. After the Levitical priests and judges make a decision, the person “shall do according to what they [the priests and judges] declare” (Deut 17:10). The assumption is that the Levitical priests and judges will judge according to the law, and therefore the Targum explains their judgment to be according to the “word of the custom of the Torah.”

Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 17:10–11 emphasizes the Torah in both verses. In verse 10, the Targums interpret the judgment given by the Levitical priests as “the word of the custom of the Torah” (אורייתא הילכת מימר). In verse 11, the Targum calls

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the source of judgment the “word of the Torah (תלמוד תורה).” The targumic emphasis on the written Torah shows that this passage does not indicate agency or manifestation with מימר.

In addition to the emphasis on the written Torah in Pseudo-Jonathan, the other Targums use vocabulary that indicates a non-agent use of מימר. Neofiti Deuteronomy 17:10–11 avoids altogether saying that the offender “shall do according to the word (משפט פה) that they tell you.” This construction is typical throughout the Hebrew Bible to indicate a command. Ongelos employs the construct phrase “word of the command” (מלמר פה), annexing מימר to the genitive פה, which limits and specifies the type of מימר. This construction indicates the close relationship between פה and מימר when used as a “word” or “command.” Finally, Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 17:11 uses מימר in the final exhortation, equating the מימר (‘word of the custom of the Torah’) and the מימר (‘word of the Torah’). The synonymous use of these Aramaic terms suggests that this use of מימר is a mere word or command for the offender to obey. Therefore, Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 17:10–11 does not help one find Christ in the Old Testament.

Targum Joshua 1:18: “Word” of a Human

Joshua 1:18 Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, according to all which you command him, he shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.

63 For as a reference to the written Torah, see Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, 34. He lists there ב. ג. 9:16a; י. ת’an. 3:66c; י. סנה. 1:18c; and others in rabbinic literature that use the term similarly.

64 For the use of the Hebrew דבר פי to indicate a command, see Gen 43:7 and Exod 34:27. For the use of על פי to indicate a command see Gen 41:40; 45:21; Exod 17:1; 38:21; Num 3:16 (cf. Num 3:39). These passages in the Targums use מימר and פה interchangeably without a clear distinction in meaning.

65 Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §12b.
In the first chapter of Joshua, people affirm Joshua’s leadership. In doing so, they declare that they will obey his commands (פיך), indicating that the context of this passage refers to human commands rather than an agent of the Lord. In Joshua 1:18, the people self-declare the consequences if anyone should disobey Joshua’s command. In the Hebrew, “commands” (פיך) and “words” (דבריך) are parallel terms with synonymous meaning. Thus, Joshua’s “commands” are the same as his “words” and both should be obeyed.

Targum Joshua 1:18 presents a similar construction, but with Aramaic vocabulary. Like פיך and דבריך in Hebrew, מימהר and פתמג are used interchangeably to mean a word or command. The parallel construction in the Targums mirrors the parallel of the Hebrew text, so מימהר and פתמג should be understood as synonymous terms, indicating Joshua’s command.

Not only are the terms grammatically synonymous, but the context also indicates that מימהר is the command of a human, not a divine agent. Israel affirms Joshua’s leadership by saying that they will obey his “word” similarly to how they obeyed Moses. Israel does not say that they will obey God’s Memra as other passages imply (Tg. Onq. Exod 15:26). The Memra was present at Sinai when Moses received the law (Tg. Onq. Exod 19:17), but the Memra at Sinai stood as the agent of God to deliver

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66Other passages in which the context implies the word(s) of a human include Tg. Onq. Gen 4:23 (words of Lamech); Tg. Onq. Gen 9:6 (words of human judges); Tg. Onq. Gen 16:2 (word of Sarai); Tg. Onq. Gen 26:35 (word of Isaac and Rebekah).
the law. In Joshua 1:18, Israel commits to obey this law under the leadership of Joshua. Even so, in Targum Joshua 1:18, the people commit to obey Joshua’s “command,” not God’s agent.

_Targum Neofiti Exodus 34:27:_
The “Utterance” of the Covenant Law

Exodus 34:27 And the Lord said to Moses, “Write for yourself these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

MT Exodus 34:27 רֹאשׁ יְהוָה צֶבֵּאת צוֹבָא צאַנֹאמָר כֹּל הָעֵדֻה הַאָלָה כֵּל עָלְּפָא מְהַבְּרָי הַאָלָה מְרַחֵץ אַרְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Neofiti Exodus 34:27 And the Lord said to Moses, “Write for yourself these words, for by the _utterance_ of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

Neofiti Exodus 34:27 אָמַר יִי לָמְשָא חַבַּל צֶבֵּאת הָאָלָם מְרַחֵץ עָלְּפָא מְרַחֵץ הָעֵדֻה הַאָלָם צוֹבָא מְרַחֵץ אַרְחֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

Neofiti Exodus 34:27 provides another instance of מִימֶר in construct with a genitive noun that fails to imply the Lord. Here, the Lord instructs Moses to write down “these words” (_פתגמיא_ הָאָלָם), a reference to the commands of the covenant law.

Neofiti Exodus 34:27 repeats מִימֶר in the next clause as the genitive noun, suggesting the parallelism between מִימֶר _פתגמיא_ used independently versus its use in the construct package. Therefore, מִימֶר _פתגמיא_ likely means the same thing as מִימֶר _פתגמיא_ used earlier in the verse. Durham argues that “these words” in Hebrew refer to “the whole of Yahweh’s explanatory revelation regarding the application of the principles set forth in his own ‘Ten Words.’”

That מִימֶר _פתגמיא_ refers to the written application of the Ten Commandments is affirmed in both the Hebrew and Aramaic texts of Exodus 34:28. The Hebrew highlights that Moses wrote down the דְּבָרֵי הָבְרֵא (‘words of the covenant’) followed by

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67 John Durham, _Exodus_, WBC 3 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 462.
the appositional עשרת הדבורהים (‘the Ten Words’). This construction further specifies the “words of the covenant.” Neofiti Exodus 34:28 interprets the Hebrew closely, translating “words of the covenant” with עשרת דבורהים מליילו קרייתא in apposition. מליילו is never used in the Targums to indicate agency, and here parallels מימי מנהגיא and פתגמיות, suggesting that they all refer to the same thing. Neofiti Exodus 34:27–28 translates the Hebrew literally and fails to indicate agency or manifestation of Yahweh. Instead, God instructs Moses to write down the words of the covenant that he has made with Israel so that Israel would know what God requires and be able to obey.

Targum Qoheleth 6:3:  
“Word” as Inner Deliberation

Ecclesiastes 6:3  I say that a stillborn child is better off than he.

MT Ecclesiastes 6:3  אמרתי טוב ממנת הנפל

Targum Qoheleth 6:3  I said to myself [lit. I said in my word] that better than he is a stillborn baby that has not seen this world.

Targum Qoheleth 6:3  אמרתי במימה דיסבי מימי דלא מתה דלא המתה柜ימי

Targum Qoheleth 6:3 is an example of במימה referring to an inner deliberation. In Targum Qoheleth, the phrase occurs in the first person in 2:1, 6:3, 7:23, 8:14, and 9:16 (ברימה). It occurs in the third person in 1:2, 8:17, and 12:8 (ברימרה). In each of these cases, the phrase is used to interpret Qoheleth deliberating a wisdom issue. Peter Knobel points out that the phrase is equivalent to the

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68 For the “explicative apposition” see Williams, Williams’ Hebrew Syntax, §70; GCK, §131f–g; Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §26.

69 At times, this phrase is used of God’s deliberations (Tg. Onq. Gen 22:16; 2:25; 15:2; 15:10; Tg. Isa 12:2), and may refer to an action through his agent, thus referring to Jesus. The same Aramaic construction is used in these instances, but when God “says by his Memra,” whatever God is saying and whether the Memra will carry out God’s deliberation as his agent may demonstrate a similarity to Jesus. In Tg. Qoh 6:3, Tg. 2 Chr 25:19, and Tg. Ps.-J. Num 15:32, the phrase refers to the internal deliberations of a person.
As such, this use of מִימֶר serves as a euphemism for, “I said to myself.”

Although this use of Memra is prominent in Targum Qoheleth, it is not limited to Targum Qoheleth. The phrase occurs in Targum 2 Chronicles 25:19 and Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 15:32 as well. Targum 2 Chronicles 25:19 uses the phrase in the second person as Joash sends word to Amaziah regarding a previous message. This use is not inner deliberation, but implies something that someone else said “in his heart,” or “to himself.” The מִימֶר in Targum 2 Chronicles 25:19 was not a word directly spoken to Joash, but rather, something that Joash had heard regarding Amaziah’s deliberations. Even so, the phrase again fails to describe God’s agency.

In Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 15:32, מִימֶר is used similarly to indicate the inner intent of a man who planned to pluck wood on a Sabbath. The Targum expands the Hebrew by including the man’s deliberation about plucking wood on a Sabbath, and uses this construction (אמר במימריה) to suggest internal deliberation. Since this targumic use of מִימֶר fails to highlight God’s agent or manifestation, Targum Qoheleth 6:3 does not help one find Christ in this use of מִימֶר.

**Targum Isaiah 40:10: Reward for Those Who Do His “Word”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targum Isaiah 40:10</th>
<th>MT Isaiah 40:10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behold the Lord God is revealed with strength, and the strength of his mighty arm rules before him.</td>
<td>Behold, the Lord comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

reward of the doers of his word is with him because all his deeds are revealed before him.

Targum Isaiah 40:10

Isaiah 40:1–11 describes the glorious appearance of the Lord, but the reference to Memra does not suggest manifestation. Isaiah 40:10 says the Lord comes in might and the fruit of his victory is before him, namely reward and recompense. The reward that God brings is literally “wages” in both the Hebrew and Aramaic (אגר/shakhar).

Several reasons exist why Memra in Targum Isaiah 40:10 does not refer to Jesus in the Old Testament. First, the context of Targum Isaiah 40:10 involves those who obey God’s commands and are worthy to receive the reward that comes when God is revealed. The verb עבד typically implies action in Aramaic, and in this verse, the action is performed by the receivers of God’s reward, not by God himself. Therefore, מימריה represents the body of commands that those who receive the reward have done (עבד).

Second, the use of מימר in Targum Isaiah 40:10 is similar to the use of מימר in Neofiti Exodus 34:27 in which the “words” are the statutes and commands of the covenant law.

Third, the use of מימר in this targumic interpretation fails to indicate agency or

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72 For שכר, see BDB, 968, and for מימר, see Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, 14. The LXX translates שכר as μισθός. Compare these terms to Rom 4:4–5, where Paul compares the “wages” (μισθός) of the one who “works” (ἐργαζόμενος) to the faith of the one who believes in God’s agent (Tg. Neof. Gen 15:6; Tg. Neof. Exod 14:31).

73 This phrase occurs again in Tg. Isa 62:11 in almost identical fashion.

74 Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, 1034–35.

75 The participle of עבד likely implies a characteristic (occupation) of those who will receive God’s reward (Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §16a). In this sense, those who receive God’s reward consistently live according to his commands. The annexation מימר explains human action specifically as action “according to” God’s word/command (ibid., §12e).
manifestation of God. Certainly, God reveals himself in *Targum Isaiah* 40:10, but he is not revealed “in/by his Memra” as in other passages (Tg. Onq. Exod 2:25; Tg. 1 Sam 3:21). Therefore, the use of מימר in *Targum Isaiah* 40:10 fails to provide a reference to Jesus in the Old Testament.

*Memra* occurs in some passages where the Hebrew implies a body of commands or inner deliberation of a human. In addition, *Memra* occurs as a reference to the word of a human being or a spoken word. These occurrences clearly do not refer to Jesus, nor do they help one find Christ in the Old Testament.

**Conclusion**

The Targums use *Memra* in various contexts to explain the meaning of the Hebrew original. Where the *Memra* functions similarly to Jesus, one can possibly find a reference to Christ in the Old Testament. Some occurrences of *Memra* clearly point to the offices or roles of Jesus in the New Testament. Where *Memra* functions as God’s agent or manifestation and performs similar functions directly connected to Jesus’ offices or roles, these passages certainly point to Christ in the Old Testament. While some occurrences of *Memra* directly connect to the New Testament presentation of Jesus’ offices and roles, other passages are more indirect and probably refer to Jesus. Where the *Memra* functions as an agent or manifestation and an indirect, conceptual connection to Jesus exists, these occurrences probably can help one find Christ in the Old Testament. While many occurrences of *Memra* fall into these two categories, some occurrences of *Memra* do not point to Christ in the Old Testament because מימר may also represent a “decree” or “command,” a body of laws, or a euphemism for inner deliberation. These occurrences of *Memra* do not help one find Christ in the Old Testament. The examples in this chapter are by no means exhaustive, but represent a sampling of the targumic uses of *Memra*. By using similar exegetical methods as the apostles, one can find Christ in the Old Testament through the Aramaic *Memra*.
Like *Memra*, the terms *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* seem to have Christological implications based on their use in the Targums as God’s divine manifestation. The *Shekinah* represents God’s manifest presence, sometimes taking on similar agent-roles as the *Memra* (e.g., *Tg. Onq.* Exod 33:16; *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod 13:21). The *Yeqara* represents God’s “weighty” radiance as in the burning bush (e.g., *Tg. Neof.* Exod 3:1, 6; cf. 2 Cor 4:4, 6) or the pillar of cloud and fire (e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.* Num 9:20–22; cf. 1 Cor 10:1–9). Since both of these targumic terms refer to an aspect of God’s manifestation, they will be considered together in this chapter. In fact, the two terms often occur in tandem, especially in *Neofiti*.\(^1\) The Apostle John highlighted the close relationship between the *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* when he taught that Jesus “tabernacled (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us, and we have beheld his glory” (John 1:14, τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ).\(^2\) Because *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* represent God’s manifestation, and because the New Testament authors identified Jesus as God’s final manifestation, nearly all of the occurrences of *Shekinah* may point to Christ, and most of the occurrences of *Yeqara* may point to Christ.

As the manifestation of God, *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* may refer to God’s

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\(^1\) In general, *Tg. Onq.* prefers to use “*Yeqara*” in the same passages that *Tg. Neof.* uses “*Yeqara* of the *Shekinah*.” *Tg. Ps.-J.* seems to go back and forth between these terms without a clear reason. In parallel passages, *Tg. Ps.-J.* sometimes follows *Tg. Onq.*, but sometimes mirrors *Tg. Neof.* Even with this variation in use, the meaning of the terms remains nearly identical.

\(^2\) In chap. 2 it was argued that John used targumic terminology in John 1:14 to teach that Jesus was the premier manifestation of the Father. Indeed, Jesus fully displayed the presence of God (Col 1:15) and the glory of God (Heb 1:3).
manifestation or to God’s manifestation with agency. Chapter 3 argued that Memra mainly represented God’s manifestation in action, fulfilling an office or role similar to Jesus. Alternatively, Shekinah and Yeqara most often represent God’s manifestation, but may or may not indicate action/agency. Since the New Testament authors speak of Jesus as the manifestation of God, the targumic passages that teach of the manifestation of the Father through the Shekinah or Yeqara may refer to Christ. Furthermore, the Shekinah and Yeqara sometimes fulfill offices or roles similar to the Memra and Jesus. Therefore, the targumic passages where Shekinah or Yeqara imply God’s manifestation with agency may also refer to Jesus.

As God’s manifestation, Shekinah nearly always refers to Christ, and Yeqara mostly refers to Christ. Therefore, Shekinah and Yeqara will be delineated into categories of manifestation and manifestation with agency. The New Testament also seems to point toward this structure for Shekinah and Yeqara. The New Testament describes Jesus as God’s final manifestation. Jesus is the “tabernacle” presence of God (John 1:14) and the “image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). He is the radiant glory of the Father (Heb 1:2), and in his face, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father shines (John 1:14; cf. 2 Cor 4:4, 6). Indeed, Jesus is the manifestation of the glory of the Father similar to God’s presence passing in front of Moses (cf. Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 33:23–24; 34:5–9). Therefore, the first category of passages to be considered are those in which

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3 For this discussion, a “manifestation” is a manifestation of God’s presence without the implication of action or performance. For instance, God’s presence in the temple or in the land of Israel would be considered simply, a manifestation. Alternatively, God’s “manifestation with agency” refers to the Shekinah or Yeqara fulfilling the role of a personal agent similar to the Memra or Jesus.

4 The Shekinah or Yeqara are often used to translate God’s presence in the promised land or tabernacle. For good overviews of Shekinah, see Chan Yew Ming, “The Shekinah: An Introduction to the Jewish Understanding of the Presence of God,” TTJ 17 (2009): 1–19; Leonard Kravitz, “Shekinah as God’s Spirit and Presence,” Living Pulpit 5, no. 1 (1996): 22–23. For rabbinic references to the Shekinah, see Abot R. Nat. 38; b. Sotah 13a; b. Meg. 29a; b. Sabbath. 22b; b. Ber. 7a.

5 Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 33:23 states that the Yeqara of the Shekinah will pass over before Moses as the Memra protects him in the cleft of the rock. However, God tells Moses that he will not be able to see
the *Shekinah* or *Yeqara* function as a manifestation of God and refer to Christ.

In addition to displaying God’s manifestation, *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* fulfill agent-roles that the New Testament authors apply to Jesus. The *Yeqara* of the *Shekinah* saves/redeems (*Tg. Neof.* Deut 23:15), fights (*Tg. Ps.-J.* Deut 20:4), and distributes the Holy Spirit (*Tg. Neof.* Num 11:25), doing the Father’s work in the world. Similarly, Jesus does the works that his Father sent him to do (John 5:36; 14:10–11). Jesus is Israel’s Savior and redeemer (Luke 2:11; John 4:42), and he is the manifestation of God who will send the Helper (John 15:26). Therefore, the New Testament connects Jesus to the active manifestation of God, and the Targums assign similar functions and roles to the *Shekinah* or *Yeqara*. Targumic passages in which *Shekinah* or *Yeqara* present God’s manifestation and fulfill a role or function similar to Jesus will be considered in the category entitled, “Occurrences of *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* Referring to God’s Manifestation with Agency.”

While nearly all of the occurrences of *Shekinah* refer to Christ, and many occurrences of *Yeqara* refer to Christ, some occurrences of *Yeqara* fail to help one find Christ in the Old Testament. Some occurrences of *Yeqara* appear as a literal translation of the Hebrew כבוד. In order to provide a balanced understanding of these targumic terms, the final category in this chapter presents a few occurrences of *Yeqara* as a literal

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6Like Memra, when the *Shekinah* or *Yeqara* fulfill agent-roles similar to Jesus, they often mirror the offices of Christ (Prophet, Priest, and King) as well.

7*Yeqara* occurs almost 600 times in the various Targums. Of these occurrences, 260 of them do not refer to Jesus because they literally translate כבוד or other Hebrew words meaning “dignity,” “precious,” “expensive,” or “honor” (see Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005], 593). Often, the translation of כבוד with יקר refers to the “glory” of a kingdom (e.g., *Tg. Isa* 35:2; 38:12) or the “glory” of an object like garments (e.g., *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 3:21; *Tg. Ezek* 23:26). יקר is also used in *Tg. Neof.* Exod 34:29–30 to refer to the “glory” of the face of Moses as he descended from his meeting with the Lord. These references do not refer to a manifestation of God, and therefore, do not help one find Christ in the Old Testament.
Occurrences of Shekinah and Yeqara as a Manifestation of God

Shekinah and Yeqara often represent the manifestation of God’s presence. In some cases, these terms display God’s manifestation without the notion of action or agency. These occurrences of Shekinah or Yeqara typically fail to exhibit divine agency, and yet they refer to Jesus because they function as the manifestation of the Father. Shekinah and Yeqara exhibit the manifestation of the divine character and presence just as Jesus displayed the fullness of God as the God-Man. The examples in this section show how Shekinah and Yeqara function as a simple manifestation of God and also point to Jesus as the quintessential manifestation of the Father.

Targum Psalms 36:10[9]: Manifestation as Light

Psalms 36:9  For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.

MT Psalm 36:10  אמר עליך נובות חיים באורך חיים נראות אור

Targum Psalms 36:10  For with you are streams of living water; in the splendor of your Yeqara we will see light.

Targum Psalms 36:10  אורות עליך נובות חיים בvoie יקרא ונראה אורות

The context of Psalm 36:7–9 [MT and Tg. 36:8–10] highlights God’s goodness to his people and the blessings that come in the shadow of his presence. One of those blessings is that God’s people see the light of the glory of God and gain eternal life in his presence. Targum Psalms 36:10 interprets the “fountain of life” in the Hebrew as God

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8 Even literal translations of כבוד may refer to Christ if the display of God’s glory is a display of his glory that has a clear connection to Jesus’ appearance (e.g., Tg. Neof. Exod 40:34; Tg. Isa 40:5). The examples that fit into this chapter’s final category clearly do not refer to a manifestation of God’s glory.

9 Tg. Ps 36:8 interprets the “shadow of his wings” as “the shadow of your Shekinah.”
providing “streams of living water.” In addition, Targum Psalms 36:10 explains “in your light do we see light” as seeing the light of “the splendor of your Yeqara.” As such, the Targum presents the Yeqara in a context in which God’s Shekinah (Tg. Ps 36:8) provides comfort and blessings to his people, and in God’s presence the light of the Yeqara shines leading to streams of living water.

The New Testament authors, indeed Jesus himself, used similar language to teach about God’s presence with his people. John says that Jesus was the “true light” who was coming into the world (John 1:9). After introducing the Memra’s role in creation (John 1:1–3), John highlights Jesus’ role as the Yeqara. He says, “In him was life (cf. Tg. Ps 36:10a) and the life was the light of men” (cf. Tg. Ps 36:10b). Jesus is the light that “shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (cf. Ps 80:3, 7, 19; Isa 9:2). Jesus is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5), and will be the light source in the new creation (Rev 21:23). Indeed, the same one in whom God’s people see the light of the glory of God (cf. 2 Cor 4:4; 6; Heb 1:3) is the one who provides streams of living water just as Targum Psalms 36:10 explains.

When Jesus conversed with the woman at the well, he referred to living water similarly to Targum Psalms 36:10. Jesus told her that if she knew who was talking to her, she would have asked him for a drink and he would give her “living water” (John 4:10).

10 The grammar of יִקרך בֵּזיו seems to point to a personal manifestation. One meaning of the genitive is the ב preposition indicating possession (Russell T. Fuller and Kyoungwon Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax: A Traditional Semitic Approach [Grand Rapids: Kregel, forthcoming], §12e). In this particular construction, the genitive is properly annexed with the meaning of the ב preposition, identifying the owner of the “splendor.” As such, the two similar nouns become one unit of meaning with יִקרך making the whole package definite. Therefore, the splendor belongs to something or someone. This construction differs from the same genitive in Tg. Onq. Exod 34:35, in which the construct package יִקרך בֵּזיו carries one meaning, but is annexed to and governs משֵׁה דָּפֵא with the Aramaic pronoun די. In Tg. Onq. Exod 34:35, the two independent construct phrases form a composite construct package that indicates the “splendor of the glory” belongs to “the face of Moses.” Alternatively, Tg. Ps 36:10 suggests that the “splendor” belongs to the Yeqara, a personal manifestation.

11 John’s combination of the ideas of life and light in his prologue parallels the similar ideas in Tg. Ps 36:10.
Furthermore, Jesus told the woman that the water he provides would become a “spring of water (πηγή ὑδάτως) welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14).\textsuperscript{12} As the Yeqara of the Lord, Jesus distributes living water in John 7:38. Jesus, the manifestation of God, who shines the radiant glory of the Father, is the one who distributes streams of living water, which are the “fountain of life” to all who believe. Indeed, the streams of living water found in the presence of the Yeqara are similar to Jesus’ teaching to the woman at the well.

\textit{Targum Onqelos Exodus 20:21[24]:}

Manifestation Requires Worship

\textbf{Exodus 20:24}\textsuperscript{13}  
An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.

\textbf{MT Exodus 20:24}  
פיהבד אתמיה תגשה אל ואוהת עליה ואוהת שלמים את תאנים ואת בכרות כל המקוה אש יאוכר את שמי אבאה אלוהות ברכתך

\textbf{Onqelos Exodus 20:21}  
You shall make an altar of earth before me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your holy sacrifices from your flocks and from your bulls. In every place where I cause my Shekinah to dwell, I will send my blessing to you, and I will bless you.

\textbf{Onqelos Exodus 20:21}  
פיהבד אתמה תגשי קדם והיה דכה עליה ית עולות ייח נכסת קדשה מון צער ומון תורה כולם אחר לאחרי שכרתי להמן אשלאה ברכתך ליאברכים

In Exodus 20, God delivered the Ten Commandments to Israel (Exod 20:1–17) and demonstrated his presence with his people by speaking with them (Exod 20:22).

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\textsuperscript{12}The LXX uses πηγή to translate “fountain” in Ps 36:10.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Tg. Onq.} has a different versification than \textit{MT} and the other Targums leading to the discrepancy between which verse is being discussed. The content of the verses is the same.
Instead of making images of silver and gold, Israel is to worship the true God alone (Exod 20:23–24). In every place the Lord causes his name to be remembered, Israel is to build an altar of worship. *Onqelos* explains that the place where God will make his name be remembered is the place where he causes his *Shekinah* to dwell.\(^{14}\) Whereas the tabernacle is likely in view as the place where God will make his *Shekinah* dwell, God has not yet established the “building” where worship will take place. Instead, he suggests that wherever his presence is manifest, worship will happen. As such, the manifestation of God requires and elicits worship just as Jesus’ presence elicited worship.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the premier manifestation of God who requires the worship of humanity. The magi sought Jesus in order to worship him (Matt 2:2), and brought him gifts as an expression of that worship (Matt 2:11). After exercising his dominion over the storm, the men in the boat worshiped Jesus (Matt 14:33). On several occasions, people knelt before Jesus when asking for help, a sign of adoration and respect (Matt 9:18; 20:20; Luke 5:8). Jesus taught that those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father (John 5:23) suggesting that the inverse is also true. Those who *do* honor the Son honor the Father since the Son is the manifest presence of the Father. After Jesus healed the blind man, he believed and worshiped (John 9:38). One day, every knee will bow to Jesus (Phil 2:10–11), and the author of Hebrews says that even the heavenly hosts should worship Jesus (Heb 1:6). According to the New Testament, Jesus is the one, in

\(^{14}\) Bernard Grossfeld points to Rabbi Halafta of Kefar Hananiah and his exposition of this verse in *m. Abot* 3:6 (Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Exodus: Translates, with Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 7 [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988], 58n17). The Mishnah reads, “When ten sit and study Torah, the Divine Presence rests among them . . . . How do I know this is true even of one person?—because it says, ‘in every place where I cause my name to be mentioned I will come to you and bless you’ (Exod 20:24).” The Mekhilta links this revelation of God specifically to the temple and Grossfeld subsequently connects this passage to Deut 12:5, which is addressed below. Although God’s presence is with individuals, the Mishnah interprets Exod 20:24 to say that where several are gathered at the place where God’s name dwells, his presence is there with them also. In Matt 18:20, Jesus speaks of himself similarly to how Judaism speaks of the *Shekinah*. He says, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.” Using similar language as Judaism, Jesus points out that he is the *Shekinah* of God who manifests God’s presence with his people.
whom the Name of God resides (Phil 2:9; Heb 1:4), and his manifestation of the Father elicits worship.

_Targum Pseudo-Jonathan_

**Deuteronomy 12:5:**

**Manifestation in the Promised Land**

Deuteronomy 12:5 But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. And you shall go there.

MT Deuteronomy 12:5

עי אל המפקד אשר יהוה אלוהים מכל העמים
לשהם את שמם שלם ויביאו ויבואו שמם

_Pseudo-Jonathan_

Deuteronomy 12:5 But you shall seek the land where the Memra of the Lord your God has chosen, among all your tribes, to cause his Shekinah to dwell, and there as a house for his Shekinah you shall go.

_Pseudo-Jonathan_

Deuteronomy 12:5

אלוהים לארתני יחרוש מימה דידי אלוהים מכם לכל שבטכם
לארשא שפןיתו תמך לоборот שפןיתה המבונה והורתון תמך

Deuteronomy 12 elaborates on the idea of the place where God will make his name to dwell and links it to the place where his habitation will be. God told Israel to go to the place he would put his name, which was also the place of his habitation. _Pseudo-Jonathan_ simplifies the Hebrew. The Targum explains that the place of God’s name and his habitation were the dwelling of God’s Shekinah.15 As Israel’s history unfolds, God chooses to make his presence dwell among his people in the promised land.16 God

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15_Tg. Ps.-J. also explains that the “place” (הַמֶּקֶם) where God will choose to make his name dwell is “the land” (ארעא). Ernest G. Clarke explains that ארעא in Tg. Ps.-J. may be a scribal mistake since ארעא occurs in vv. 11 and 14 (Ernest G. Clarke, _Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Deuteronomy: Translated, with Notes_, The Aramaic Bible 5B [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998], 38n6). However, the targumist also may have been explaining that the location of the temple (Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 12:10) was in the land.

16_Related to the idea of God’s presence in the land is that the removal of the Shekinah is often a consequence of disobedience in the Targums (Tg. Neof. Exod 33:5; Tg. Isa 1:5; 57:17; Tg. Jer 33:5; Tg. Mic 3:4). Although the New Testament fails to threaten to remove the presence of God in Christ from believers, Jesus will deny those who disobediently deny him before men (Matt 10:33). Those who reject
specifically chooses to make his dwelling in the temple, and the Targum points the reader to this reality. ¹⁷

The New Testament teaches that the presence of God is with his people at all times through Christ. Jesus promised to never leave his people implying his eternal presence even in his physical absence (Heb 13:5; Matt 28:20). Paul taught that the hope of Christian’s future glory was that Christ was alive in them even in the present (Col 1:27). As mentioned in chapter 2, these targumic terms relate to Jesus’ identification as the “image of God.” If one understands this title as Jesus being the quintessential human being, Jesus was also the temple of the presence of God through the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa 61:1–2; Luke 4:18–19; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Eph 2:21). As the God-Man, Jesus was the “place” of the manifest presence of God similarly to the temple that housed the Shekinah. Just as God chose to make his Shekinah dwell among his people in the promised land, so also, he chose to exhibit the manifestation of his presence in Christ throughout the church.

**Targum Neofiti Exodus 40:34:**

**Manifestation in the Tabernacle**

Exodus 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

MT Exodus 40:34 וכס ענן ואת אהל מועד וכסו יהוה מלא את המשכן

*Neofiti* Exodus 40:34 Then the cloud covered the tent of assembly, and the *Yeqara* of the Shekinah of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

*Neofiti* Exodus 40:34 יכס עננה ית משכן ימיה ואריך יקר שבינותה דידי מת ית

the presence of God in Christ will be cast out from the presence of God eternally (Matt 25:41). In this sense, the Shekinah will be removed from them as an act of judgment similarly to how the Shekinah was removed from Israel as an act of judgment.

After the tabernacle was built and dedicated, God manifested his glory in a cloud surrounding the tent of meeting. Neofiti interprets the כבוד יהוה as the Yeqara of the Shekinah of the Lord. Sometimes, the Targums will interpret words based on multiple meaning or common consonants, but in Neofiti Exodus 40:34, the Targum leaves המשכן for the “tabernacle.” Although the use of איקר could be a literal translation of כבוד, the combination of איקר with Shekinah suggests more than visible radiance. Instead, Neofiti highlights God’s simple manifestation in the tabernacle, a manifestation that was also common later in the temple (Tg. 1 Kgs 8:12–13, 27). Indeed, God’s manifest presence existed in the tabernacle and the temple.

Just as the Yeqara of the Shekinah displayed God’s presence in the tabernacle and temple, Jesus also displayed God’s manifestation as the temple. After driving out the moneychangers in the temple, Jesus told the Jews, “Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up again” (John 2:19). John clarifies that Jesus was talking about his own body rather than the temple building (John 2:21). Paul failed to use the terminology of the temple, but said that all of the fullness of deity dwelled in Christ making him the dwelling place of the presence of God (Col 2:9). As such, the full manifestation of God dwelled in Christ, who was the temple.

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18 See Martin McNamara, Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible: A Light on the New Testament, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 105. If the Targum had translated Exod 40:34 using the common consonants, one would expect Yeqara to be a literal translation of כבוד and Shekinah would take the place of יהוה כבוד. Using this technique, the Targum would teach that the glory of God is seen in the Shekinah. However, the Targum leaves the reference to the tabernacle (המשכן) and includes a reference to Shekinah. As such, the Targum emphasizes the Yeqara of the Shekinah dwelling in the tabernacle.

19 Tg. Neof. Exod 40:38 says that the cloud of the Yeqara of the Shekinah would lead in the tabernacle by day and fire by night throughout their wilderness journeys. Comparing this idea to Tg. Neof. Exod 13:21, the Yeqara of the Shekinah takes on a similar role to the Memra, God’s agent to lead Israel in the wilderness.

manifestation of God in a designated building. Jesus taught that something better than the temple had come (Matt 12:5), and indeed Jesus fulfilled God’s manifestation in the temple. The Son, who displays the glory of God, “tabernacled” among men (John 1:14).

**Targum Neofiti Deuteronomy 6:15–16:**
**Israel Grumbled Against God’s Manifestation**

Deuteronomy 6:15–16  
For the Lord your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the Lord your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth. You shall not put the Lord to the test, as you tested him at Massah.

MT Deuteronomy 6:15–16  
כִּי אָלֹהֵיכֶם אֵל חָיָה בְּכַרְבּוּךָ פִּי חָיָה אֵל חָיָה
אֵלֹהִים בְּאֶחֶד מֵעָלֶיךָ מִפְּנֵי אֲדָמָה
לֹא חָמֹת אֵל חָיָה אֲלֹהִים כְּאֶחֶר נִפְשָׁת בִּמְשָׁה

Neofiti Deuteronomy 6:15–16  
For your God is a jealous and avenging God, the Yeqara of whose Shekinah is among you, lest the anger of the Lord your God grow strong against you, and destroy you from off the face of the land. You shall not put to the test the Yeqara of the Shekinah of the Lord your God as you put to the test before him at Testing.

Neofiti Deuteronomy 6:15–16  
אֱרוֹם עַלָּךְ קְנֵי טוֹפֵרֵת חָיָה אֲלֹהִים אֲדָוִר
שְׁכִינָתוֹ בְּנִיכָנֶם דְּלָא יִשְׁמַח רְגּוֹת דְּיֵי אֲלֹהִים בָּר
וְרַשְׁתֵּי חֲבֻּךְ מְטֵילֵי אֵפָא אֲרֻרָא
לֹא תֹּמְסֻן אֲתּוֹ הֵאִישׁ שְׁכִינָתוֹ דְּיֵי אֲלֹהִים בָּרָא
וְרַשֵּׁתֵי קְדָמִי בְּנִיפְשָׁה

In Deuteronomy 6, Moses rehearsed many of the promises given to Abraham with intermingled warnings. As Israel prepared to enter the promised land, one of the warnings Moses offered was that Israel should not test God as they did at Massah (Deut

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*Biblical Theology*, Beale says, “Christ is the epitome of God’s presence on earth as God incarnate, thus continuing the true form of the old temple, which actually was a foreshadowing of Christ’s presence throughout the OT era” (idem, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011], 632).
6:15–16). The targumic tradition of Israel’s grumbling in the wilderness suggests that Israel grumbled against God’s manifest presence, the Yeqara of the Shekinah, who was “among [them].”

Neofiti Deuteronomy 6:15–16 teaches that God is an avenging God and, therefore, Israel should not test the Yeqara of the Shekinah as they did as Massah. The Targums consistently apply this idea. Onqelos Exodus 17:7 says that Moses called the name of the place “Testing” and “Quarreling” because they tested God by asking if the Shekinah was among them. Israel quarreled against the Shekinah by asking if God’s manifest presence was with them. Likewise, Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 21:7 teaches that God delivered serpents to plague Israel because they grumbled against the Yeqara of the Shekinah, and Onqelos Numbers 11:20 says that Israel grumbled against the Memra, whose Shekinah was among them. In Deuteronomy 6:15–16, Moses recalled these instances in Israel’s history and warned Israel not to rebel against God as they had before. According to Neofiti, the Yeqara of the Shekinah functions as God’s manifestation against whom Israel grumbled in the wilderness.

Paul recalled these passages when he taught the Corinthians to flee from idolatry in 1 Corinthians 10:1–14. The testing Moses warned against in Deuteronomy 6:15–16 was turning to worthless idolatry by not obeying God’s commandments (cf. Deut 6:17–19). To make his point, Paul referred to the same wilderness episodes as

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21The Mishnah (m. Abot 5:4) mentions ten trials with which Israel tested the Lord. These trials are listed in full in Sifre Devarim 1:1 and in b. Arak. 15a. The majority of the trials listed in the Talmud and Sifre refer to Israel grumbling against or testing God’s agent(s) in the Targums.

22Num 11:20 is another example of Israel grumbling in the wilderness, and therefore refers to Jesus similarly to Tg. Neof. Deut 6:15–16 (cf. 1 Cor 10:9). However, Tg. Onq. Num 11:20 differs by presenting the Shekinah as the manifestation of the Memra. Tg. Onq. Num 11:20 explains Israel rejecting the Lord as Israel “loathed the Memra of the Lord.” In addition, Tg. Onq. Num 11:20 includes that the Memra’s Shekinah dwelled in Israel whereas the Hebrew says that the Lord dwelled among them. Therefore, the use of Shekinah in Tg. Onq. Num 11:20 portrays the manifestation of God in the Memra, a character who displays the divine presence as well. Other passages that equate the Memra with the Shekinah include Tg. Neof. Lev 16:2; Tg. Neof. Num 14:14; Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 16:13; Tg. Ps.-J. Num 10:36; Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 31:8.
Moses. In the exodus journey, God protected Israel with a pillar of cloud (1 Cor 10:1; cf. Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 13:21) rescuing them through the sea, and yet Israel failed to trust the Lord, becoming fearful (Exod 13:10–12). In the wilderness, Israel ate the food provided by God (Exod 16:15) and drank from the Rock whom Paul labeled explicitly as Christ (1 Cor 10:3; cf. Exod 17:6; Tg. Onq. Exod 17:7). In all their journeys, God provided everything Israel needed. As Paul continued, he indicated that God was not pleased with Israel’s idolatry (1 Cor 10:7). Even though Israel had the blessings of God’s presence and provision, God’s people still practiced idolatry. Paul taught that Israel put Christ to the test (1 Cor 10:9), whereas the Targums indicate that Israel tested the Yeqara of the Shekinah (Tg. Neof. Deut 6:16). According to Paul, these things happened in Israel’s history so that the Corinthian church would not fall into the same trap of idolatry, a figurative grumbling against God’s manifestation in Christ (1 Cor 10:14).

In the wilderness, Israel grumbled against God’s manifestation, the Yeqara of the Shekinah. Moses warned Israel not to put God’s manifest agent to the test as they prepared to enter the promised land, and Paul extended these ideas in the New Testament to warn against idolatry. Just as Israel grumbled against God’s manifestation in the wilderness, so also the church was prone to test Jesus, being tempted to worship idols rather than a faithful God who provides a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13).

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Bruce Metzger and the committee of the Textual Commentary on the New Testament place a {B} rating for “Christ” in 1 Cor 10:9 (Bruce Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the New Testament, 2nd ed. [New York: United Bible Societies, 1971], 494). Metzger’s comments affirm that “Christ” probably parallels Paul’s use of “Christ” in 1 Cor 10:4, but the early church found difficulty explaining how Israel could have tested Christ, and so later manuscripts insert “Lord.” Even so, “Christ” is the favored reading (as the more difficult one).
Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come and I will dwell in your midst, declares the Lord. And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord in that day, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.

Rejoice and be glad, O congregation of Zion, for behold I am revealing myself and I will cause my Shekinah to dwell in your midst—the Lord has spoken. And many nations shall be added to the people of the Lord at that time, and they shall become a people before me, and I shall make my Shekinah dwell in your midst. Then you shall know that the Lord of hosts sent me to prophesy to you.

Zechariah prophesies of the future day when God will dwell with his people in Zechariah 2:14–15. Targum Zechariah 2:14–15 explains God’s self-revelation as causing his Shekinah to dwell in the midst of his people. Zechariah likely refers to a future day when God will once again cause his presence to dwell with Israel. When


26For the eschatological outlook of Zech 2:14–15, see Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25B (Garden City,
God causes his Shekinah to dwell with Israel, “nations will join themselves to the Lord, and shall be [his] people” (Zech 2:11). God’s manifest presence will return to his people at a time when the nations are primed to enter God’s kingdom.

Although the New Testament authors do not draw a direct connection to Zechariah 2:14–15, they appear to connect the idea of Zechariah’s prophecy to the appearance of Jesus as God’s manifestation to welcome the nations.²⁷ Simeon knew that Jesus was God’s presence representing a light for the Gentiles/nations (Luke 2:32; cf. Isa 42:6). After the incarnation, the nations were central to the New Testament message. Jesus commissioned his disciples to take the message of salvation to all nations (Matt 28:19), and Paul taught that God’s grace was given to bring the obedience of faith to all nations (Rom 1:5; 16:26). Paul was commissioned to take the gospel to the Gentiles, including all nations in God’s purposes for his final revelation through Christ (Gal 3:8).

In the book of Revelation, the elders around the throne praise God that the Lamb will bring people into the kingdom from every nation (Rev 5:9; 7:9). In the Song of the Lamb (Rev 15:3–4), all nations will come and worship the Lamb, who is God’s final manifestation (Rev 15:4). Finally, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the nations will walk by the light of the glory of the Lamb, and there will be no need for the temple (Rev 21:24). Indeed, the nations will be gathered into God’s eternal presence through Christ (Rev 21:26).

Zechariah prophesied that God would bring in the nations when God once again manifested his presence in the world. Jesus clearly manifested God’s presence (Heb 1:3), and in God’s redemptive plan, all nations will be represented in the heavenly

kingdom, when the Lamb will be God’s eternal presence with his people.\(^{28}\)

**Targum Neofiti Genesis 17:22:**  
**Manifestation as God’s Messenger**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 17:22</th>
<th>When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MT Genesis 17:22</td>
<td>יוכלทำไม אנה יוכל אלהים על אביה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neofiti Genesis 17:22</td>
<td>Then he finished speaking with him, and the Yeqara of the Shekinah of the Lord was taken up from Abraham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neofiti Genesis 17:22</td>
<td>אשתלמה מנמלאלהenzhen אסחתלקרomorphic scenery ירי מעולם אברים</td>
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Neofiti Genesis 17:22 is an example of God’s manifestation to Abram. In verse 22, the Lord has finished speaking with Abram, and his presence is taken up from him (cf. Gen 35:13; Tg. Neof. Gen 35:13). The Targum interprets God’s presence that had been speaking with Abram as the Yeqara of the Shekinah. God manifested himself to Abram to deliver a message through his agent. In addition, Neofiti Genesis 17:1 teaches that the Memra of the Lord was revealed to Abram (ואשתלמה מנמלאלהزين אסחתלקרomorphic scenery ירי מעולם אברים). The Targum introduces God’s agent as the Memra (Tg. Neof. Gen 17:1), but when God’s agent departs, he is the Yeqara of the Shekinah. Both of these targumic concepts suggest that God manifested his divine presence before Abram.\(^{29}\)

Just as the Yeqara of the Shekinah represents God’s manifest agent, so also Jesus is God’s manifest agent. Jesus spoke only the words that his Father gave him in order to accurately represent the Father to the world (John 14:10). Jesus is the exact

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\(^{29}\)In addition to God manifesting himself as the Yeqara of the Shekinah to Abram, Ronning demonstrates that the Memra was, in fact, the “God of Abraham” from *Tg. Neof.* Exodus and John 8:58. See Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology*, 209–11.
imprint of the Father’s nature (Col 1:19; Heb 1:3), so he is able to accurately express the Father’s heart regarding the promises of the Abrahamic covenant. As God’s manifest agent, he appeared so that the promises spoken to Abram would be fulfilled in God’s agent (Rom 15:8; Gal 3:16–22).

Indeed, Jesus was God’s final and premier manifestation just as the Yeqara of the Shekinah was God’s manifestation to Abram. Jesus was not just any manifestation, but he was the manifestation of God who would bring about the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. Indeed, he was the one in whom Abraham believed (Tg. Onq. Gen 15:6; cf. Rom 4:3; Gal 3:22). As God’s manifestation, Jesus was closely related to the Abrahamic covenant; indeed he fulfilled its promises (2 Cor 1:20).

\textit{Targum Isaiah 40:5:}
\textbf{Manifestation of God’s Presence}

Isaiah 40:5 And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

MT Isaiah 40:5 וְנָגִּלָּה כְבוֹד יְהוָה וְרָאָה כָל בֵּשָּׂר וּרְאוּ יְהוָה כְּפִי יְהוָה דָּבָר

\textit{Targum Isaiah 40:5} And the Yeqara of the Lord shall be revealed, and all mankind will together see for by the Memra of the Lord it has been decreed.

\textit{Targum Isaiah 40:5} וְיָנֵחַל יֵכְרָא דֵּי רְאוּ דֵּי כֵּל בֵּשָּׂר בַּשָּׂר וְרָאָה דֵּי מֵמְרָא דֵּי יִקְרָא וְיִתְגַּלֵּי לְגִין כֶּנַּי

According to \textit{Targum Isaiah 40:5}, the Yeqara of the Lord will be revealed after the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness (cf. Isa 40:3). The Yeqara represents

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\footnote{One could perhaps argue that Jesus was involved in the Abrahamic covenant based on the appearance of God’s agent in \textit{Tg. Neof.} Gen 17:22. Jesus says that before Abraham existed, he existed (John 8:58). In John 8:56, Jesus says that Abraham saw Jesus’ day and rejoiced in it. Although Jesus’ saying could be metaphorical, it could also be literal if the Memra and Yeqara of the Shekinah are understood as God’s agent(s) of manifestation.}

\footnote{Related to Memra, \textit{Tg. Neof.} Gen 15:6 says that Abram “believed in the name of the Memra of the Lord” pointing to those who believed in the name of the one that John calls the “Word” in John 1:12.}

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God’s manifestation in *Targum Isaiah* 40:5 since he will be revealed (יתגלל) and all flesh will see him (ויחזון). Grammatically, יمير אל ויי mirrors זמרה דידי, in which the construct package uses יי as a proper annexation giving the package one unit of meaning. This construction allows *Targum Isaiah* to maintain the definite governing noun, which seems to suggest an independent agent or manifestation of the Lord. Even though *Targum Isaiah* 40:5 translates חבלמ literally, the Targum uses a term that suggests the manifestation of God to all mankind.

The arrival of the *Yeqara* mirrors Jesus’ arrival following John the Baptist’s announcement (e.g., Luke 3:4). In addition, the manifestation of the *Yeqara* may point to Christ since it is closely related to the decree of the *Memra* in *Targum Isaiah* 40:5. The surety that the *Yeqara* will be revealed is that God’s agent has decreed it. Just as Jesus taught that he fulfilled Isaiah 61:1–2 (cf. Luke 4:18–19), perhaps he would also decree his arrival as the fulfillment of God’s manifestation in the world. Finally, the radiant glory of God is particularly seen in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:4, 6). Indeed, John taught that the Word became flesh, and by doing so, “we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father” (John 1:14). Jesus uniquely displays the radiant glory of the Father as God’s manifestation. Therefore, *Targum Isaiah* 40:5 helps one find Christ in the Old Testament since the *Yeqara* of the Lord will be revealed and seen just as Jesus was (cf. 1 John 1:1) following the decree of the voice crying in the wilderness.

**Targum Isaiah 12:6:**

*Manifestation of the Holy One of God*

Isaiah 12:6 Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

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32 *Tg. Isa* interprets the prophetic perfects of the Hebrew (יתכלי, ראו) as imperfects (יתכלי, ראו), indicating a future reality. See Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, NAC 15B (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 97, no. 44.

33 Fuller and Choi, *Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, 12e.
MT Isaiah 12:6

Rejoice loudly and praise, O congregation of Zion, for the Great One has commanded to make his Shekinah to dwell in your midst, the Holy One of Israel.

Targum Isaiah 12:6

בוגך קדישא דישראל

Similarly to the Shekinah, Jesus is also called the Holy One. When Jesus encountered demons, they knew of his status as “the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34). Simon Peter confessed that Jesus was the Holy One of God (John 6:69), and realized there was no one else in whom he could believe for eternal life (cf. John 3:16; Tg. Onq. Exod 14:31; Tg. Jonah 3:5). The book of Revelation describes Jesus as the Holy One in the letter to the church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:7), and in the third bowl of


35In the Hebrew, קדוש ישראל is a construct package functioning as the nominative of the phrase יושבת ציון כגדול בكيفון קדוש ישראל. In the Targum, קדושה דישראל is determined, sharing the same gender, number, and state as נבוח. These terms, therefore, are in apposition. The נבוח, whose Shekinah dwells in Israel’s midst is the קדושה דישראל. Therefore, one can also conclude that the Shekinah, which is a manifestation of the נבוח is also the קדושה דישראל.

wrath, the angel declares that Jesus, as the Holy One, has authority to bring about these judgments (Rev 16:5).\textsuperscript{37} Indeed, just as the Shekinah simultaneously manifests “the Great One” and \textit{is} the Holy One of God, so also Jesus carries the title “Holy One of God” and manifests the presence of God.

\textit{Targum Onqelos Deuteronomy 3:24:}

\textit{Divine Presence in Heaven}

Deuteronomy 3:24

O Lord God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such mighty acts as yours?

MT Deuteronomy 3:24

אַדְגֵּד חַךִי אֶת הַחַלְחָל לְהַרְאוֹת אֶת עֹבְדָךְ אֱלֹהִים

הָאָת יִרְכָּךְ הַרְאוֹת אֶת עֲמַרְיָם הַבָּמָרָם אֱלֹהִים

יִשָּׂש כִּמְעַשֶּׂךָ בָּנֶבּוֹרָתָךְ

Onqelos Deuteronomy 3:24

O Lord God, you have begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand, that you are God, whose \textit{Shekinah} is in heaven above, and the ruler on the earth. There is none who can do according to your deeds and your mighty acts.

Onqelos Deuteronomy 3:24

יר אָלָדוֹם אַת שָׁרֵית אֶת הַדָּוָה אֵת עַבְדָךְ אֱלֹהִים

וּתַי יִרְכָּךְ מְקַפֶּרֶת אַת הָאָת אֶת הָשֶּׁכֶנְתָךְ בְּשם אֱלֹהִים

מֶלְעָיְלָא וּשְׁלֵית בָּארֵאוֹת לָהֶת דִּינָבִית כִּפּוֹבָּךְ

וכְּנַבְּרוֹתָךְ

In Deuteronomy 3:24, Moses extols the Lord God as the only one in heaven or on earth who displays his mighty acts in the created order so clearly. \textit{Onqelos} interprets God’s presence in heaven as his “\textit{Shekinah} in the heavens above” and his earthly presence as his rulership (\textit{שְׁלֵית בָּארֵאֵת}).\textsuperscript{38} Even though the Targum seems to distinguish

\textsuperscript{37}For the Holy One as a reference to Jesus here, see Rev 5:7; 6:1, where the Lamb takes the scroll of God’s judgments and opens them, unfolding the coming judgment.

\textsuperscript{38}Cf. \textit{Tg. 1 Kgs} 8:23, where a similar idea is expressed for God’s presence in the heavenly realm versus his rulership on earth.
between God’s manifest presence in heaven and his active rulership on earth, these two ideas are complementary. Onqelos interprets God’s implied presence on earth from the Hebrew specifically as God’s rulership on earth, deriving from his authority as the divine presence in heaven.39 Because God’s Shekinah is in the heavens above, he has the authority to rule on earth. No god compares to the divine authority of Yahweh, and the Targum explains the answer to the Hebrew question.

Just as the Shekinah exists in heaven yet exercises rule on earth, so also Jesus was the heavenly presence sent from God to establish his rule. Regarding Jesus’ heavenly existence, John taught that the one who came from heaven had authority over all (John 3:31). Jesus taught Nicodemus, “no one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man” (John 3:13).40 Nathanael drew a link between Jesus’ heavenly dwelling and his earthly rule when he called Jesus the Son of God and King of Israel (John 1:49). As the Son who came from God (1 John 4:9), Jesus is also the King of Israel. Paul taught that after Jesus’ resurrection God raised Jesus to the heavens to exercise his authority from the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 1:20–22). Finally, in the eschatological revelation of Christ from heaven, every knee will bow recognizing his royal authority (Phil 2:9–11).

In 1 Timothy 6:13–16, Paul highlights some of the same ideas as Onqelos Deuteronomy 3:24. He charges Timothy “in the presence of God . . . and of Christ Jesus”

39 The Targum explains the question, “what god is there?” as a reference to Yahweh and therefore ascribes to him the proper authority and rulership. According to the Targum, God’s authority on earth is a result of his manifest presence in heaven. Likewise, Jesus existed with the Father before the creation of the world (i.e., heavenly presence, John 1:1; 8:58; 17:5), and exercises royal authority in the earthly realm (i.e., earthly King, John 1:49; 3:31).

40 Ronning argues that John’s language about Jesus descending from heaven is similar to how the Old Testament speaks of God intervening in human affairs to judge, redeem, and dwell among his people (Ronning, The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology, 115). According to Ronning, John has adapted targumic language to describe Jesus as the one who is both the God of the Old Testament and descended as the one who “fulfills various OT divine roles (warrior, bridegroom, lawgiver).” See ibid., 84–115.
showing the link between the presence of God and Jesus’ manifestation of God. In verse 14, Paul mentions “the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,” a reference to the second manifestation of God in Christ in the last days. In most Greek texts of verses 15–16, the description of God in Christ is set apart as an ancient hymn, probably on the nature of God the Father that Paul applies to Jesus as well. These two verses describe the Father and the Son. Paul describes God in Christ as “the only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.” Then, in verse 16, Paul continues the hymn, but refers to the one who “dwell in unapproachable light” (cf. Job 37:23) and “whom no one has ever seen or can see.” These descriptors hint at the dynamic in the Godhead that the Father, who dwells in heaven alone, exercises his authority on earth through Christ. In other words, Paul affirms the reality of God’s “hidden” presence in heaven, but suggests that in Christ, the heavenly presence of God is manifest through Jesus’ earthly rule. Paul knew that “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side,” and yet “he [Jesus] has made him known” (John 1:18).

**Occurrences of Shekinah and Yeqara Referring to God’s Manifestation with Agency**

In addition to the Shekinah and Yeqara functioning as God’s manifestation, these terms also portray God’s manifestation with agency similarly to the Memra. In fact, the Targums often equate the Shekinah and/or Yeqara with the Memra. In Neofiti Leviticus 16:2, the Lord told Moses, “my Memra will be revealed” over the mercy seat, “in the clouds of the Yeqara of my Shekinah.” The revelation of the Memra is the manifestation of God by the Yeqara of the Shekinah, equating all of these terms. In Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis 16, Hagar conversed with the angel of the Lord (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 16:7), and yet she claimed that the Memra of the Lord spoke with her when the Yeqara of

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41 Ronning, *The Jewish Targums and John’s Logos Theology*, 50–62.
the Shekinah of the Lord was revealed to her (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 16:13). The Memra, whose Yeqara of his Shekinah was revealed, conversed with Hagar. In Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 10:36, Moses recounted the occasions when the ark would rest during the wilderness wanderings. At those times, he would pray, “Return now, O Memra of the Lord, by your good mercy, and lead the people of Israel and cause the Yeqara of your Shekinah to dwell among them.” As the ark rested, Moses asked the Memra to cause the Yeqara of his Shekinah to dwell in Israel. Finally, Onqelos Numbers 11:20 equates the Shekinah with the Memra when Moses says that Israel “loathed the Memra of the Lord, whose Shekinah dwells among you.” Where the Hebrew says the Lord dwelled in Israel, Onqelos says the Memra’s Shekinah dwelled in Israel. These examples show how the Targums equate the Memra with the Shekinah and Yeqara, and provide a reason why the Shekinah and Yeqara sometimes represent an active manifestation of God.

Because Jesus was God’s manifest agent in the world, passages in which Shekinah or Yeqara functions as God’s agent may refer to Jesus. The passages in this section provide examples of how Shekinah and Yeqara function as God’s agent(s) fulfilling roles similar to those of the Memra and Jesus.

**Targum Neofiti Deuteronomy 23:15:**

**Manifestation as Savior**

Deuteronomy 23:15

Because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.

MT Deuteronomy 23:15

כי יהוה אלהיך מתהלך בקרוב מחניך להצילך
איבך לפני יהוה מחניך קודש ולא יראהך ברוחנה
דבר ושבע מאחוריך

Neofiti Deuteronomy 23:15

For the Lord your God, because the Yeqara of his Shekinah leads in the midst of your camps to save you and to hand over your enemies before you, so
your camps shall be holy, and he shall not see in you nakedness of a matter so that the Yeqara of his Shekinah would not turn back from you.

The context of Deuteronomy 23:15 would seem to have little direct, canonical connections with Jesus, and yet the Targum describes the Yeqara of the Shekinah as God’s manifestation to save Israel. In Neofiti Deuteronomy 23:15, the Targum interprets God’s presence in Israel’s camp as the Yeqara of the Shekinah “leading” (מדברה שכינתיה) in the camp. This language implies God’s manifestation since it translates the Hebrew, “the Lord your God walking” (יהוה אלוהיך מתהלך) in Israel’s midst.  

Furthermore, the Targum provides the reason why the Yeqara of the Shekinah reveals God. The Yeqara of the Shekinah is present in the midst of the camp “to deliver” Israel (למשזבה). Therefore, God’s manifest presence through the Yeqara of his Shekinah is for the purpose of delivering Israel, a role similar to Jesus’ manifestation of the Father.

Similarly to how the Yeqara of the Shekinah manifests God’s presence to

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42Nine other passages in Tg. Neof. have the same phrase (אליך שכינתיה מדברה) and suggest that the Yeqara of the Shekinah is a divine manifestation of God with his people (Tg. Neof. Exod 33:14; Tg. Neof. Deut 1:30; 1:42; 7:21; 9:3; 20:4; 31:3; 31:6; 31:8). While Tg. Neof. Deut 23:15 implies that the Yeqara of the Shekinah is God’s warrior to save, Tg. Neof. Deut 1:30; 1:42; 7:21; 9:3; and 20:4 make that idea explicit. According to Tg. Neof., the Yeqara of the Shekinah is God’s manifest agent for warfare similarly to the Memra.

43Jastrow, A Dictionary of the Targumim, 1558–59. The idea of God “delivering” through an agent was common in the targumic tradition. See, for example, Tg. Ong. Jer 1:8; 1:19; 15:20, where the Memra is Israel’s aid “to deliver.” See especially Tgs. Neof. and Ps.-J. Exod 3:8, where God is revealed “by his Memra” to deliver Israel in the exodus. Likewise, see Kravitz, “Shekinah as God’s Spirit and Presence,” 23, where he says, “. . . for them [Christians], God is Creator as Father, Redeemer as Son and ongoing presence as Holy Spirit.”

44For the ה + infinitive construct to express purpose, see Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §53g, cf. §18e.
deliver, so also, Jesus is God’s manifest agent in salvation/deliverance. The New Testament teaches that Jesus is the “Savior of the world” (John 4:42; 1 John 4:14). At Jesus’ birth, the angels announce that he is God’s manifest agent to save (Luke 2:11; cf. Isa 45:15; Tg. Isa 45:15). As God’s manifest agent, Jesus redeems those who believe in him and offers forgiveness of sins, a picture of saving deliverance (Acts 5:31; Eph 1:7). The LXX translates בְּatsby in Deuteronomy 23:15 with ἐξαιρέω. In the New Testament, Paul uses ἐξαιρέω to teach that Jesus gave himself in order “to deliver us from the present evil age” (Gal 1:4). When Paul illustrates Christ’s relationship to the church (Eph 5:22–33), he says that Jesus is the “Savior” of the church (Eph 5:23). Finally, Paul tells Titus that the church waits for “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). Although Paul likely refers to the radiance of God’s magnificence in Christ, his language resembles Neofiti Deuteronomy 23:15 where the Yeqara of the Shekinah is God’s manifestation as a deliverer/savior.

In addition to the Yeqara of the Shekinah delivering Israel, Neofiti Deuteronomy 23:15 suggests that if Israel’s camps become unholy, the Yeqara of the Shekinah would be taken up from Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus presents God’s

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46Isa 45:15 teaches that God “hides himself” but is Savior. Tg. Isa 45:15 explains God’s hiddenness that he made his Shekinah to dwell on high rather than in visible form on earth. With the advent of the Messiah, Israel’s “hidden” God, who saves, is now manifest as God in the flesh, Israel’s “Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

47Tg. Isa 54:6 interprets God calling Israel as a wife who is distressed as the Shekinah meeting Israel like a wife. Indeed, Jesus is Israel’s Savior and bridegroom just as the Shekinah.

48See George W. Knight III, The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 321–26, for a discussion of the various interpretations of the phrase “glory of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” F. J. A. Hort argues that “glory” could refer to a title in Jas 2:1 (F. J. A. Hort, The Epistle of St. James [London: Macmillan, 1909], 47). Hort also argues for “glory” as a title in Titus 2:13 (ibid., 103). The Targums seem to support the use of “glory” as a title for God’s manifest agent, the one in whose face the glory of the Father resides (cf. 2 Cor 4:4, 6).

49Tg. Onq. has that God’s Memra would turn back from doing good to Israel if God’s Shekinah finds unholiness in the camp. With this correlation, both the Memra and Yeqara of the Shekinah function
people as holy by becoming a curse for them (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21). In this sense, God’s manifest agent (Jesus) provides the holiness required by God’s manifest presence (the Yeqara of the Shekinah). Therefore, those who are in Christ continually have the presence of God’s mediating agent in them (Col 1:27). Alternatively, failure to believe in Jesus results in “unholiness.” However, instead of Jesus removing his presence like the Yeqara of the Shekinah, he casts the unholy out of his presence (Matt 25:41; Luke 13:27).

In both the New Testament and in the Targum, God’s manifest presence will not stand unholiness.

As God’s manifestation, the Yeqara of the Shekinah intends to deliver Israel from her enemies and sustain the holiness of God’s people. Likewise, Jesus delivers his people from the enemy of unholiness and promises his eternal presence (Matt 28:20).

**Targum 1 Kings 22:19: Manifestation as King**

1 Kings 22:19  
And Micaiah said, “Therefore, hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left.”

MT 1 Kings 22:19  
יזאמר לך שמון דבר יהוה רצייך ואחיה ישב על כ maçא  
וכל צבא השמים עומד עליו מيمنיו ומימינו

Targum 1 Kings 22:19  
Then he said, “Therefore receive the word of the Lord. I saw the Yeqara of the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the heavenly hosts were standing before him, from his right and from his left.”

Targum 1 Kings 22:19  
ואמר בכלי הקובהל פותמה דויי יהיה יתקרא דרי שם על  
כרצה לכל חואלי שם קימי קדמי קדמי כמות יומינה ומימנה

In 1 Kings 22, the prophet Micaiah delivered a message to Jehoshaphat that as God’s manifestation. See Bernard Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Deuteronomy: Translated with an Apparatus and Notes*, The Aramaic Bible 9 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 69n10. For other references to the Shekinah leaving Israel for disobedience or unholiness, see Tg. Isa 57:7 and Tg. Jer 33:5.
Israel was like sheep scattered on a mountainside without a shepherd (1 Kings 22:17). As Micaiah elaborates on the vision, he says that he saw the Lord sitting on his throne with the hosts of heaven on either side of him (1 Kings 22:19). The Targum interprets this verse similarly to Isaiah 6:5–6 as Micaiah seeing the Yeqara of the Lord sitting on the throne. Like Isaiah 6:1 (cf. John 12:41), the Yeqara functions as a manifestation of God. Furthermore, the Yeqara, sitting on the throne, represents God’s King who has the authority to speak messages such as the one Micaiah delivers.

Similarly, Jesus is God’s manifest King surrounded by the heavenly hosts. The wise men sought Jesus, who was born “king of the Jews” (Matt 2:1; cf. Matt 27:11, 37). Jesus fulfilled Zechariah 9:9 as he rode into Jerusalem (Matt 21:5), “the city of the great King” (Matt 5:35). Revelation describes Jesus as the “ruler of kings on earth,” making him the preeminent King (Rev 1:5). Likewise, he is the King of kings when he delivers the final blow to Satan and his followers (Rev 19:16). As the Lamb enters the throne room of heaven, the elders and those around the throne bow down in worship (Rev 5:8). In Hebrews 1, the author implies that the hosts of heaven are to worship the Son (Heb 1:6), who is the “radiance of God’s glory” (Heb 1:3) and God’s final prophet (Heb 1:2). According to the author of Hebrews, angels should worship the Son because he has “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” a reference to his kingship (Heb 1:3).

These images of the Yeqara and Jesus suggest that Jesus has always been the manifestation of God’s glory. Isaiah saw the Yeqara and John said that Isaiah saw Jesus (John 12:41). Similarly, Micaiah saw the Yeqara of the Lord with the hosts of heaven surrounding him. Jesus, God’s final manifestation of the divine glory, sits enthroned as King and demands the worship of the hosts of heaven.

**Targum Pseudo-Jonathan**

**Deuteronomy 20:4:**

**Manifestation as Warrior and Redeemer**

Deuteronomy 20:4 For the Lord your God is he who goes with you to fight for
you against your enemies, to give you the victory.

MT Deuteronomy 20:4
כי יוהו אלוהים חלך עמים חלך לעמים עמים ואביכם
לארשיים אביכם

Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 20:4
For the Lord your God, his Shekinah is leading among you to wage war before you with your enemies, to deliver you.

Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 20:4
ארוים יי אלוקים שעינתה מירבאה יבברך לאנך
مشולך עמובעל דביכוך לארשים תחוכ

In Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 20:4, God’s Shekinah will lead before Israel to fight the nations in the promised land. Moses encourages Israel not to fear the nations because God’s Shekinah will go with them as they fight. However, the Shekinah represents more than just a general presence of God with his people. The Shekinah “leads before” (קדמיכון) Israel in order to “wage war” (לאגחא) against their enemies and thus redeem them.50 Pseudo-Jonathan Deuteronomy 20:4 teaches that God’s manifest presence functions as a warrior and redeemer, fighting Israel’s battles as they enter the promised land.51

Just as God’s manifest agent in the Targums fights Israel’s battles and redeems them, so also Jesus wages war against his enemies to redeem his people. Again, Revelation 19:13 demonstrates that Jesus’ status as the divine warrior is similar to the targumic interpretation of the Shekinah. Just as the Yeqara of the Shekinah arranged in battle array before the foreign nations (Tg. Neof. Deut 20:4), so also, Jesus will wage war

50 For purpose clauses, see Fuller and Choi, Biblical Hebrew Syntax, §53g.
51 Other targumic passages teach that the Shekinah was a warrior for Israel. Tg. Neof. Exod 12:23 says that the Yeqara of the Shekinah would pass over to destroy the Egyptians so that Israel could leave redeemed. Likewise, Tg. Hab 3:8 interprets God’s chariot of salvation as his Shekinah being strength and salvation (מרכיב) for his people when he was revealed over the sea, a reference to the exodus. Both of these passages, like Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 20:4 label the Shekinah as Israel’s warrior and redeemer. Ernest Clarke points to Alexander Sperber’s text of Tg. Ong. Deut 20:4, which says that God’s Memra leads before Israel in battle (Clarke, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Deuteronomy, 55n7). The broader targumic tradition seems to ascribe to the Memra, the Shekinah, and the Yeqara of the Shekinah the same role as God’s agent in warfare.
against Satan and his followers. When Jesus delivers the decisive blow to Satan, he will usher in the redemption promised long ago to Abraham. Therefore, both the Yeqara of the Shekinah and Jesus represent God’s agent(s) to wage war and redeem.

Targum Neofiti Numbers 11:25: Agent to Distribute the Holy Spirit

Then the Lord came down in a cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the Spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders.

In Numbers 11:16–25, Moses chose seventy wise men to help bear the burden of leading Israel. God promised to take some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the elders to empower their leadership just as he had with Moses. In Neofiti Numbers 11:25, the Targum explains God’s distribution of the Spirit as the Yeqara of the Shekinah distributing the Holy Spirit upon the seventy elders.⁵² Therefore, the Yeqara of the

⁵²Tg. Ps.-J. Num 11:17 says also that God will be revealed in the Yeqara of his Shekinah and increase the spirit of prophecy over Israel. Alternatively, Tg. Neof. Num 11:17 says that God will be revealed by his Memra to distribute the Holy Spirit on Israel. In both cases, Memra and Yeqara of the Shekinah function as agents to distribute the Holy Spirit (cf. John 20:22). In an excursus on the ecstasy of prophecy in Israel, Jacob Milgrom points to 1 Cor 12:10, 28 and Acts 10:44–45 as passages that pull from Num 11:25 to support spirit-empowered gifts (Jacob Milgrom, Numbers, JPSTC [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 383). For the Holy Spirit in the Targums related to the New Testament, see Martin McNamara, Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 167–76. For a discussion of “Holy Spirit” in the Targums with an attempt to date the Targums, see Pere Casanellas, “The Use of the Expressions ‘Prophetic Spirit’ and ‘Holy
Shekinah was God’s agent to distribute the Holy Spirit according to Neofiti Numbers 11:25.⁵³

Similarly, Jesus is God’s agent to distribute the Holy Spirit. Some versions of the Nicene Creed say, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son . . . .” Based on John 15:26, Jesus will send the Helper (ὁ παράκλητος), the Spirit who proceeds from the Father. Although the language of procession does not refer to Jesus in John 15:26, that he will send (πέμψω) the Helper suggests that he has the authority as God’s agent to distribute the Holy Spirit to God’s people. Likewise, Paul teaches Titus that the Holy Spirit was poured out on Christians richly “through Jesus Christ our Savior” (Titus 3:5–6, διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ).⁵⁴ As such, Jesus is God’s manifest agent through whom the Father distributes the Holy Spirit just as the Yeqara of the Shekinah distributed the Holy Spirit on the seventy elders in Israel.

Targum Isaiah 30:20:
Manifestation as Teacher

Isaiah 30:20 And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher.

MT Isaiah 30:20 ונהן לך כלם אודיו לחם צר ומים לחם ולא יכנן עוד מוריך ויהי

⁵³In The Jewish Encyclopedia, Ludwig Blau says that in rabbinic literature, the “Holy Spirit” is equivalent to the “Spirit of the Lord” and that the Shekinah is often substituted in place of the Holy Spirit (Ludwig Blau, “The Holy Spirit,” in The Jewish Encyclopedia, ed. Isidore Singer [New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910], 6:446–50). Blau also says, “Although the Holy Spirit is often named instead of God (e.g., in Sifre Deut 31), yet it was conceived as being something distinct” (ibid., 6:448). According to Tg. Neof. Num 11:25, the Shekinah, who is God and distinct from God, distributes the Holy Spirit just as Jesus distributes the Spirit, who is God and yet is distinct from God.

⁵⁴George Knight says, “διὰ with gen. is used to denote the personal agent through whom God has acted” (Knight, The Pastoral Epistles, 345). See also the grammatical discussions of διὰ with the genitive to express agency in chap. 2.
Targum Isaiah 30:20

And the Lord will give you the possessions of the enemies and the plunder of the oppressor. And he will never again remove his Shekinah from the temple, but your eyes will see the Shekinah in the temple.

Targum Isaiah 30:20

ויתן לך כל עניך ומכסה鄠יהudent_entity_604. ויאלום ויתן במקדשא ושכינהו יצעך עינך ויהיinja מקדשא

Targum Isaiah 30:20 expresses God’s promise to never remove his Shekinah presence from the temple. The Targums often interpret the Shekinah in relation to the temple (e.g., Tg. 1 Kgs 8:12–13; Tg. 2 Kgs 13:23), suggesting that God’s presence regularly resided in the “house of holiness” (מקדשא). In Targum Isaiah 30:20, God promises that he will not remove his Shekinah from the temple, and that Israel’s eyes will see the Shekinah. In addition, Targum Isaiah 30:20 translates the Shekinah based on the Hebrew, “your Teacher (מוריך) will not hide himself anymore.” According to the Targum, the Shekinah, who will continually dwell with God’s people, is also their Teacher.

Just as the Targum teaches that the Shekinah will be God’s eternal presence, so also the New Testament teaches that Jesus is God’s eternal manifestation. Once God’s final manifestation arrived in the world, he promised that his presence would always be with his people (Matt 18:20; 28:20; Col 1:27; Heb 13:5). Likewise, Jesus is the final revelation of God who will represent the glory of God throughout eternity (Rev 21:3; 22–27; 22:4–5). Just as Jesus represented God’s visible presence on earth, he will also represent God’s visible presence in eternity. Indeed, Jesus is the final and eternal manifestation of the Father.

In addition, the Targums use Shekinah to translate the Hebrew “Teacher.” Just as the Targums interpret the “Teacher” as the Shekinah, so also Jesus is also called “Teacher” in the New Testament. The religious leaders and disciples often call Jesus...
“teacher” (e.g., Matt 9:11; 12:28; 22:33; Mark 9:38; 12:19; Luke 7:40; John 3:2). Even Jesus refers to himself as “the Teacher” (ὁ διδάσκαλος) when he sends the disciples to prepare for the Passover (Matt 26:18; Mark 14:14). Likewise, the citizens of Judea recognized Jesus as “teacher” (Mark 4:38; 5:35; 9:17). Combining the targumic interpretation with the New Testament, the final revelation of God in Christ is the “Teacher” not hiding himself anymore.

**Examples of Yeqara as a Literal Translation That Do Not Refer to Jesus**

*Shekinah* most often refers to God’s manifest presence, but *Yeqara* may be a literal translation of the Hebrew כבוד. Some occurrences of *Yeqara* as a literal translation may refer to Christ as seen earlier in *Targum Ezekiel* 3:12 and *Targum Isaiah* 40:5. However, יקר has a range of meaning that goes beyond God’s manifest radiance or active agent. Therefore, the passages in this section will demonstrate uses of *Yeqara* as a literal translation of כבוד that do not refer to Jesus.

**Targum Onqelos Exodus 34:35:**

*The “Glory” of Moses’ Face*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exodus 34:35</td>
<td>The children of Israel would see the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face was shining . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT Exodus 34:35</td>
<td>וראוה בני ישראל את פנים משה כי קרן זקן פנים משה</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Onqelos</em> Exodus 34:35</td>
<td>And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the splendor of the <em>glory</em> of the face of Moses had increased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Onqelos</em> Exodus 34:35</td>
<td>ותגוון בני ישראל את אפי משה ארור מי קרא זיו פנים משה</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Exodus 34:29–35, Moses returns from speaking with God face to face, and his visible appearance changed noticeably. The Hebrew Bible says that Moses’ face was shining (קרן) and *Onqelos* interprets that the “splendor of the *glory* of the face of Moses had increased.” *Onqelos* explains that Moses’ face shone with great radiance, and so the
term יקרא was appropriate. Even so, the radiance in Ongelos Exodus 34:35 refers to Moses’ face rather than a manifestation of God, and therefore this passage does not refer to Jesus in the Old Testament.

In addition to the context, the grammar points to a use of יקרא that does not refer to Jesus. The Aramaic pronoun יד connects “the splendor of the glory” to “the face of Moses.” According to Stevenson, 7 before a genitive noun is equivalent to a possessive, in which the genitive noun “belongs to” the governing noun. In Ongelos Exodus 34:35, the governing noun package (משה דיי ספ) “owns” the genitive noun package (יקרא זיו). Therefore, “glory” in Ongelos Exodus 34:35 is that which belongs to Moses’ face, not to a manifestation of God.

Targum Isaiah 11:10:
The “Glory” of the Messianic Dwelling Place

Isaiah 11:10 In that day, the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.

MT Isaiah 11:10 ויהיה בשם ירושלם שורש ישיש אשר עמד למשם עמל אליהם גואם ירש וימיה מנחתו כןוד

Targum Isaiah 11:10 And it will come about in that time that the son of the son of Jesse who will stand as a sign to the nations, kingdoms will

55 Jastrow, Dictionary of the Targumim, 275.

56 Stevenson, Grammar of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic, §7n3.

57 Grossfeld points to Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 34:35, which interprets the Hebrew as “the radiance of his facial features shone brightly from the radiance of the Glory of the Lord’s Presence” (Grossfeld, Targum Ongelos to Exodus, 99n20). Tg. Ps.-J. seems to point more directly to a use of נקרפ that refers to Christ since it only speaks of the “radiance” of Moses’ face, but relegates the “glory” to the Lord. This tradition was common in rabbinic literature, that the shining of Moses’ face was a derived radiance from the glory of God’s presence (see the Midrash Tanhuma; Exod. Rab. 47:6; Deut. Rab. 3:12). The story of the transfiguration (Matt 17:1–8) does not indicate that Moses and Elijah’s faces shone like Jesus, but perhaps the idea is similar. The glorified humans, Moses and Elijah, display their heavenly glory derivative of the glory of God’s manifest presence in Christ (cf. Isa 60:1; Matt 13:43; Rev 21:23). Even though Tg. Ps.-J. presents a more likely use of Yeqara as a reference to Jesus, Tg. Onq. does not readily point that direction in either context or grammar.
obey him and the place of his dwelling will be *glorious*.

Targum Isaiah 11:10

Isaiah 11 is a passage that scholars use to point to Jesus in the Old Testament. John Oswalt says that the truth expressed in Isaiah 11:10 “is underlined when we look at the full revelation of the Messiah in Jesus Christ.”

Targum Isaiah 11:10 also supports a reference to Jesus, but not because of the term *Yeqara*. Targum Isaiah 11:10 provides a messianic reference in the phrase “the son of the son of Jesse.” This son of Jesse will be the king who stands as a signal to the people that God’s kingdom has come (cf. Tg. Isa 11:1). However, כְּלָי occurs in the Targum as an adjective to describe the dwelling place of this son of Jesse rather than as an independent display of the glory of God. According to the Hebrew and the Targum, the dwelling place of this son of Jesse will be glorious (וּלְיָדָיהוּ אָתְרָה בִּית מְשָׁרוֹד בַּכֹּל). The Targum translates the Hebrew literally, and therefore, the use of כְּלָי in Targum Isaiah 11:10 does not refer to Jesus. Even in a passage full of messianic references, כְּלָי does not refer to Jesus. The dwelling place of God’s Messiah will indeed be glorious, but כְּלָי fails to indicate divine manifestation or agency in Targum Isaiah 11:10.

**Conclusion**

Like *Memra*, *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* occur in the Targums with a variety of nuances. Whereas *Memra* functions primarily as God’s agent, *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* function primarily as God’s manifestation. At times, the *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* exhibit God’s manifestation, in which God’s divine presence is seen or experienced. These occurrences refer to Jesus since he is the final manifestation of the fullness of God’s character (Heb 1:3). At other times, *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* refer to God’s manifestation

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with agency, and the *Shekinah* or *Yeqara* fulfill offices and roles similar to Jesus, carrying out the work of the Father. These passages also point to Christ since Jesus is God’s agent to carry out the work of the Father. While nearly all of the occurrences of *Shekinah* refer to Jesus, some occurrences of *Yeqara* represent a literal translation of the Hebrew and do not help one find Christ in the Old Testament.

*Shekinah* and *Yeqara* represent God’s manifestation, and the New Testament similarly teaches that Jesus is God’s ultimate manifestation. When *Shekinah* or *Yeqara* represent God’s manifestation or manifestation with agency, these terms, like *Memra*, may help one find Christ in the Old Testament.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

The endeavor to find Christ in the Old Testament has existed since the early church. Even Jesus pointed the disciples to his presence in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luke 24:27, 44). While the New Testament authors were human authors, the Spirit of God led them along in their interpretive methods (2 Pet 1:21). The Holy Spirit used their context and surroundings to bring to mind explanations and descriptions of Jesus that would fit the culture of the first century. The Holy Spirit, through the apostles, provided interpretive methods for finding Christ in the Old Testament. By following apostolic interpretive methods, one may confidently find Christ in the Old Testament.

One of the interpretive methods used by the apostles was to employ targumic terms and concepts in the New Testament. The Targums provide the names of the Egyptian sorcerers (Tg. Ps.-J. Exod 7:11; 2 Tim 3:8–9), and they may provide insight into titles like “Zechariah, son of Barachiah” (Matt 23:35; Tg. Lam 2:20). These general references to the Targums suggest that the New Testament authors were familiar with these traditions.

In addition to these general references from the Targums, the New Testament authors appear to have used targumic terms and concepts to teach about Jesus. The Memra was God’s manifest agent whereas the Shekinah and Yeqara represented God’s manifestation in the Targums. While many claim that the Memra functions as an anti-anthropomorphic translational device, the Targums do not alleviate all anthropomorphism with substitute terms. Indeed, the Memra explains anthropomorphism rather than avoiding it. Shekinah and Yeqara sometimes translate the Hebrew literally, but in many
cases these terms refer to the manifestation of God and portray similar offices and roles as Jesus. All of these terms have Christological implications based on how the New Testament authors use similar terminology and theological concepts to refer to Jesus.

In chapter 1, the historical overview of these terms demonstrated that nearly all scholarship understands these terms to represent divine agency and God’s manifestation. The Memra is God’s manifest agent, used in the Targums to interpret God’s actions in the created order. Since God is transcendentally other, he acts in the world through his agent. Even so, the Memra is the Lord. He is both God and distinct from God. Likewise, scholarship agrees that the Shekinah and Yeqara represent God’s manifestation. The Shekinah is God’s presence among his people while the Yeqara is God’s “weighty” radiance displayed in Israel. While most scholarship agrees on the meaning and use of these terms, a distinction exists between those scholars who see Christological implications in these terms and those who do not. Indeed, some scholars who deny Christological implications in these targumic terms admit that the apostles understood the terms with Christological implications. These scholars want to study the Targums on their own terms without any connection to the New Testament. However, some admit that the New Testament authors may have appropriated these terms to speak of Jesus, but they simply believe the apostles were wrong. Even so, nearly all scholarship sees agency and manifestation in these terms even if they deny the Christological implications presented in the New Testament.

Chapter 2 showed that the apostles used terms and concepts similar to the targumic Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara when referring to Christ. The Christological implications that some scholars timidly admit became apparent. The Apostle John readily called Jesus the Memra (Logos), and taught that God’s presence in Christ “tabernacled” (Shekinah) among men, allowing them to see the radiant glory (Yeqara) of the Father. Indeed, in Christ, the fullness of deity dwells bodily. As such, Jesus is God’s
agent who redeems, wages war, judges, and displays the character of God in physical
form. Jesus is God’s agent and manifestation similarly to how the Memra, Shekinah, and
Yeqara represent God’s agent(s) and manifestation in the world. Using these targumic
terms, the New Testament speaks of Jesus as the “Word” (John 1:1, 14; Rev 19:13), the
“glory” (John 12:41; 2 Cor 4:4, 6; Heb 1:3), and the manifest presence of God (Col 1:27).

The New Testament also extends similar concepts behind these targumic terms
to speak of Jesus’ offices and roles. As God’s agent, Jesus redeems similarly to the
Memra. Like the Shekinah, Jesus presents the fullness of the glory of God in his person.
In the same way that the Yeqara will be revealed in the age to come (Tg. Isa 40:5), so
also Jesus will be the shining radiance of God in the heavenly kingdom (Rev 21:22–23).
The Memra and the Yeqara of the Shekinah fought for Israel as they entered the promised
land, and Jesus will fight for the church in the final eschatological battle. Throughout the
New Testament, the authors use similar terms and concepts to speak of Jesus’ role as
God’s agent and manifestation.

As God’s agent and manifestation, chapter 3 focused on examples of the
Memra that refer to Christ, may refer to Christ, and do not refer to Christ. In an attempt
to find Christ in the Old Testament, some passages certainly referred to Jesus based on
how the apostles used Memra terminology and concepts. Jesus was God’s agent to
redeem, as well as the one in whom men must believe. Jesus was God’s agent who
accepts worship, and he was presented as the one who will wage war against Satan and
his cohort. When the Father works in the created order, he works through his Son.

Whereas many of the occurrences of Memra refer to Jesus, some become
difficult to discern. Sometimes, the Targums use Memra as a mere substitute for the
divine name, and one may find it difficult to relate the usage directly to a role or function
of Jesus. In addition, some references to Memra translate Hebrew passages in which no
indication of God’s agency exists. For instance, בָּמִימר sometimes translates passages
implying the “word” of God’s law, or the “word” of another human. These references do not refer to Christ, and the New Testament authors do not attempt to make them refer to Jesus. Therefore, a complete study of Memra must take into account that not all occurrences of Memra refer to Jesus.

In chapter 4, Shekinah and Yeqara were presented as God’s manifestation. Sometimes, the Shekinah and Yeqara refer to God’s manifestation, while at other times these terms refer to God’s manifestation with agency. As God’s manifestation, these terms represent God’s presence with his people or in the tabernacle. These terms also represent God’s manifestation as the visible light of God’s glory or his heavenly presence. As God’s manifestation with agency, Shekinah and Yeqara mirror the roles and functions of the Memra. Sometimes Shekinah and Yeqara function as God’s agent(s) to actively carry out the work of the Father. In these cases, these two terms represent God’s active presence to redeem, wage war, teach, and distribute the Holy Spirit. Even though nearly all occurrences of Shekinah, and most occurrences of Yeqara refer to Jesus, Yeqara may be used to translate the Hebrew literally and does not help one find Christ in the Old Testament.

Just as the Shekinah and Yeqara represent God’s manifestation, Jesus also represents God’s manifestation as the divine agent. Jesus is the radiance of the glory of God and in him all the fullness of deity was pleased to dwell. Jesus is God’s manifest King and God’s glory shines brightest in the face of Christ. As God’s manifestation agent, Jesus also redeems, wages war, and is Israel’s Teacher just as the Shekinah and Yeqara. Therefore, as God’s manifestation, the New Testament portrays Jesus with terms and concepts similar to the targumic Shekinah and Yeqara.

While the New Testament authors used a variety of interpretive methods to teach about Jesus, they always sought to show how Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures (e.g., Acts 3:22; 1 Cor 15:4). Since the targumic traditions were part of the synagogue liturgy,
the apostles may have been familiar with these official interpretations of the Hebrew Bible. Although not all of the occurrences of Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara refer to Jesus, the New Testament authors spiritually discerned the ways in which the Targums may point to Christ as God’s agent and manifestation. Using targumic terms and concepts, the apostles taught that Jesus was God’s agent and manifestation similar to the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara. This exegetical strategy was one way the apostles sought to explain Jesus’ person and work in all of Scripture. They highlighted similarities between the Targums and the New Testament, specifically the terms and concepts used to speak of Jesus. Therefore, the New Testament authors provided an exegetical method by which Christ may be found in the Old Testament through the Aramaic Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara of the Targums.
APPENDIX

CATEGORIZATION OF MEMRA AS JESUS, NOT JESUS, AND PROBABLY JESUS

Because Memra functions as God’s agent to carry out his work in the world, the term may often point to Christ in the Old Testament. The intention of this appendix is to list the occurrences of Memra in the targumic traditions in categories indicating whether they refer to Jesus, do not refer to Jesus, or probably refer to Jesus. A similar structure was used in chapter 3, but this appendix provides an exhaustive list of the occurrences of Memra in targumic tradition.

For the occurrences of Memra that certainly refer to Jesus, Memra must be an agent or manifestation of God and have a direct connection to a New Testament office or role of Christ. For example, the Memra is Israel’s Savior (e.g., Tg. Isa 63:8) just as Jesus saves those who believe in him. Likewise, Memra fights for Israel (Tg. Josh 10:14) just as Jesus will wage war against Satan and his cohort in the final battle (Rev 19:13). The Memra creates (Tg. Neof. Gen 1:3) just as Jesus is the author of creation (John 1:3, 10). In these examples, the Memra functions as God’s agent and the New Testament authors appear to directly apply similar terms and concepts to teach about Jesus’ offices and roles.

For the occurrences of Memra that do not refer to Jesus, Memra may be understood as a “word” or “command.” Sometimes it is the word of a human, but at other times, the term indicates a body of commands that should be obeyed. Likewise, may be used as part of a euphemism for inner deliberation. These instances of do not refer to Jesus because the term fails to function as an agent or manifestation of God.

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Finally, the occurrences of *Memra* that probably refer to Jesus indicate that
*Memra* functions as God’s agent or manifestation, and yet a connection to Jesus in the
New Testament is less clear. Perhaps an indirect, conceptual connection to Jesus’ offices
and roles exists, but the New Testament use of similar language may be debatable. These
occurrences of *Memra* are strong enough that they probably refer to Jesus. However,
because the connection to the New Testament is less clear, these references probably
refer to Jesus.

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ABSTRACT

FINDING CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT THROUGH THE ARAMAIC MEMRA, SHEKINAH, AND YEQARA OF THE TARGUMS

Adam Joseph Howell, Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015
Chair: Dr. Russell T. Fuller

This dissertation seeks to find Christ in the Old Testament by examining the targumic passages in which Memra, Shekinah, or Yeqara occur as God’s agent or manifestation. Chapter 1 demonstrates that scholars view the Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara as agents for God or manifestations of God even though many scholars reject the notion of Christological implications found in the New Testament appropriation of these terms and concepts.

Chapter 2 discusses the close connection between the targumic Memra, Shekinah, and Yeqara and the New Testament by citing clear instances where the New Testament authors appropriated targumic terms and concepts to speak of Jesus. By using targumic terms and concepts, the New Testament authors provided an exegetical method for finding Christ in the Old Testament through Targum.

Chapter 3 examines the occurrences of Memra, presenting examples of passages that certainly refer to Christ, do not refer to Christ, and probably refer to Christ. In this chapter, the Memra refers to Christ or probably refers to Christ when the Memra functions as God’s agent, carrying out God’s work in the world.

Chapter 4 investigates the occurrences of Shekinah and Yeqara, but under the influence of the New Testament, nearly all of the occurrences of Shekinah, and most
occurrences of *Yeqara* refer to Jesus. *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* are delineated into categories of occurrences that refer to God’s manifestation and God’s manifestation with agency. Even though most occurrences of *Shekinah* and *Yeqara* refer to Christ, some occurrences of *Yeqara* are a literal translation of the Hebrew and do not refer to Jesus.

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation by tying several themes together to show the consistency and validity of finding Christ in the Old Testament through Aramaic terms and concepts.

This dissertation argues that when the *Memra*, *Shekinah*, or *Yeqara* appear as God’s agent(s) or as manifestations of God, one may find Christ in those Old Testament passages. One may find Christ in these passages because the New Testament authors present Jesus as the premier agent and manifestation of God using targumic terms and concepts.
VITA

Adam Joseph Howell

EDUCATIONAL
Diploma, Elizabethton High School, Elizabethton, Tennessee
B.S., East Tennessee State University, 2002
M.Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007

MINISTERIAL
Discipleship Coordinator, The Well Ministry, Johnson City, Tennessee, 2004-2005
Minister of Education, Boone Trail Baptist Church, Johnson City, Tennessee 2004-2005

ACADEMIC
Garrett Fellow, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2006-
Adjunct Instructor of Biblical Languages, Boyce College, Fall 2009
Adjunct Online Instructor, Liberty University, 2012-
Adjunct Instructor of Biblical Studies, Boyce College, Spring 2013, Spring 2014, Spring 2015
Adjunct Instructor of Biblical Languages, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Spring 2014
Adjunct Online Instructor, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014-2015

ORGANIZATIONAL
Evangelical Theological Society
Society of Biblical Literature