



The Formula “come, see” in the Palestinian Targums

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Abstract: The article examines the expression “come, see,” which appears three times in non-translation passages of the Palestinian Targums (Gen 22:10; 28:12; Num 21:6). This technical phrase is rarely used in the Hebrew Bible, where it occurs only once (Ps 66:5). The paper aims to closely analyze the three instances of “come, see” in the Palestinian Targums to determine its meaning and literary function within the text. The focus is on the non-translation passages in the Palestinian Targums because these expansions of the sacred text reveal the theology of the targumists.

Keywords: Palestinian Targums, *Targum Neofiti*, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, “come, see”

The development of in-depth studies on targumic literature has revealed many common elements with New Testament texts. Notable similarities in theological ideas and linguistic expressions can be observed between the Palestinian Targums and Johannine literature. Over the past few decades, many articles and books have been written describing these similarities. One such work is Martin McNamara’s book, *Targum and Testament Revisited: Aramaic Paraphrases of the Hebrew Bible. A Light on the New Testament*. Among the many theological concepts and linguistic expressions shared between the Targums and Johannine literature, the author highlights the phrase “come and see,” which appears four times in the Gospel according to John (McNamara 2010, 214).¹

This study adopts the approach of several scholars, such as Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Bruce Chilton, and Geza Vermes, who argue that similarities between the New Testament and Jewish literature result from a shared Jewish tradition, which influenced both the New Testament texts and the targumic/rabbinic literature (cf. Morrison 2005, 592). According to Vermes, the New Testament is a simply dated segment in relation to undated material within a developing tradition (Vermes 1982, 372–73). Therefore, this study does not aim to prove the possible influence of the Targums on

¹ The expression “come and see” appears in the Gospel of John in slightly different forms: “ἐρχεσθε καὶ ὄψεσθε” (John 1:39); “ἐρχου καὶ ἴδε” (John 1:46; 11:34) and “δεῦτε ἴδετε” (John 4:29). It should be noted that in Polish, the topic of the correlation between the phrase “come, see” occurring in the Fourth Gospel and in targumic literature has been addressed in: Wróbel 2014; 2017, 286–333.

the text of the Gospel of John, as examining the correlations between the occurrences of this expression is beyond its scope. Instead, it suggests that because the expression “come, see” appears more frequently in targumic literature than in the Hebrew text, its meaning should be explored by examining its usage in the Targum.²

Avigdor Shinan notes that the Targum must be “an object of study in and for itself,” and concludes that “the scholarly exploration of the Targums for their own inherent interest and into a dimension beyond textual and linguistic issues still awaits fresh energies.” (Shinan 1983, 48) This article aims to contribute these “fresh energies” to the study of the expression “come, see” in targumic literature.

Before examining the specific cases of use “come, see” some fundamental methodological considerations must be addressed. This article is limited to the Palestinian Targums and will not consider other Jewish literature, such as the Talmud and other rabbinic texts, where the phrase is also quite frequent.³ Due to the nature of Talmudic redaction, it is challenging to isolate the specific theology of this genre. Hermann L. Strack and Günter Stemberger describe the Talmudic genre, noting: “The Palestinian Talmud was not in fact edited in the proper sense, but merely represents a hasty collection of material ... the ‘redactor’ must have simply collated the blocks of material directly and without order.” (Strack and Stemberger 1996, 171) In contrast, targumic literature, which originated as translations of the Hebrew Bible with some expansions, presents a different character. Our focus will primarily be on the expression in the narratives of *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, as it appears to have a more restricted and technical meaning in targumic literature compared to its usage in the Talmud and other rabbinic texts.⁴

In this brief study, all occurrences of the phrase “come, see” in the Palestinian Targums will be presented. Following this, an attempt will be made to closely analyze

² In the Hebrew Bible a similar phrase is hardly ever used. It appears only in Ps 66:5, where psalmist invites all the earth to praise God: “Come and see what God has done” (לכו וראו מפעלות אלהים). *Tg. Onq.*: אֵילֵּוּ וְחַמּוֹן עֹבְדֵי אֱלֹהִים.

³ The term “Palestinian Targums” can be confusing. There are three ways of understanding of this term: (1) the Targums composed in Palestine; (2) the Targums with many large midrashic expansions; (3) the Targums written in late Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. In this study the notion “Palestinian Targums” is used to refer to *Targum Neofiti* (*Tg. Neof.*), *Targum from Cairo Genizah*, the so-called *Fragment Targums* (*Frg. Tg.*), and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* (*Tg. Ps.-J.*). I am aware of the difficulty with the claim that *Tg. Ps.-J.* belongs to the Palestinian Targums. However, since *Tg. Ps.-J.* was composed in Palestine, in the Late Jewish Literary Aramaic, and contains the entire Pentateuch it is reasonable to take into consideration also this version, while discussing the formula “come, see.” McNamara mentions *Tg. Ps.-J.* along with *Tg. Neof.* as the one of the examples of the Palestinian Targums (McNamara 2010, vii; 1992, 4). Cf. Mortensen 2006, 1; Smelik 1995, 76.

⁴ Where it will be relevant *Fragment Targum* will be discussed either. Unlike *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, *Fragment Targum* is simply collection of variants readings and additions and has the fragmentary character. For that reason, it does not share the same genre of narrative with *Tg. Neof.* and *Tg. Ps.-J.* (Klein 1980, 12–19).

the meaning of each instance in order to identify some general characteristics of the phrase in targumic literature.

1. The Phrase “come, see” in the Palestinian Targums

The Aramaic expression “come, see” contains two verbs: *אתי* (to come) and *חמי* (to see) (Sokoloff 1992). Though both words taken separately are very frequent in the Palestinian Targums, examining the collocation of these two verbs together, in the imperative form alters the situation. The expression “come, see” appears only four times in the Targums to Pentateuch (including the marginalia): Gen 22:10; 27:27 (mg.); 28:12; Num 21:6.⁵ Distribution of the occurrences of this expression is unbalanced. Three of them appear in *Genesis* and the other in *Numbers*. The focus is on the non-translation passages in the Palestinian Targums.⁶ In *Tg. Neof.* Gen 27:27 (mg.) the expression “come, see” seems to be only the mode of rendering the verb “see” which is present in the MT.⁷ Although, this verse contains the expansion, the formula “come, see” appears in the translated part of the verse and does not have similar meaning to the other three occurrences, which seem to have a technical sense in the Palestinian Targums. Since the focus is on the non-translation passages the case of *Tg. Neof.* 27:27 (mg.) will not be the object of this study.

2. Grammatical Analysis

The expression “come, see” (*אתון חמין*) consists of two G imperatives without a *waw*, an asyndetic construction, which Gesenius considers a coordination of the complementary verbal ideas (Kautzsch 1910, §120d; Joüon and Muraoka 2008, §177). The general definition of the asyndetic construction provided by Takamitsu

⁵ Each of three versions of Palestinian Targums (*Tg. Neof.*, *Tg. Ps.-J.*, *Frg. Tg.*) contains the expression “come, see” in the expansions. In Gen 27:27 the expression “come, see” appears only in the marginalia of *Tg. Neof.* Both *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Frg. Tg.* do not confirm this translation.

⁶ In his article Morrison claims that non-translation passages in the Targums presents “the theology of the targum at work.” (Morrison 2005, 592)

⁷ MT Gen 27:27: ויגש וישקליו וירח את־ריח בגדיו ויברכהו ויאמר ראה ריח בני כריח שדה אשר ברכו יהוה: *Tg. Ps.-J.* follows faithfully the beginning of the MT and translates: וקריב ונשיק ליה וארח ית ריחא דלבושוי וברכיה ואמר חמין: ויחא דברי כריחא דקטורת בוסמניא דעתיא מתקרבא בטורר בי מוקדשא דאיתקרי חקיל דברין יתיה יי ואתרעי לאשראה שכינתיה תמן

Tg. Neof. Gen 27:27 (mg) follows faithfully the beginning of MT but adds the verb “come”: וקרב לוותיה ונשק: וקריב ואריח ית ריח לבושוי וברך יתיה ואמר אתון חמון ריחא דברי כריח קטרת בסמניה טביה דעתיא דמתקרבא עלגבי מדבחא בטורר בית־מקדשא הוא טורא ברך יתיה חי וקיים כל עלמאי

Muraoka's *Grammar of Qumran Aramaic* is as follows: "two or more verbs which are all of identical inflectional categories may be juxtaposed without a coordinating conjunction." (Muraoka 2011, 207) This kind of grammatical construction is well known in the Hebrew language. Gesenius notes that when the preceding imperative denotes a physical movement, such as: לך (לכו), קום, (קומו), it is "for the most part only equivalent to interjections, *come! up!*" (Kautzsch 1910, §110h) Similar syntax appears also in the Aramaic language. According to Holger Gzella: "Rein interjektionalisiert leitet der Imperativ eine Aussage ein und verlegt das inhaltliche Gewicht auf die folgenden Imperative. Besonders häufig begegnet dieser Gebrauch mit קום 'aufstehen' im Sinne von 'Los!' und dergleichen." (Gzella 2004, 309) Muraoka claims that when the first verb of asyndesis is a verb of physical movement such as קום "it seems to indicate a call to action, and it is devoid of its usual meaning, for the person addressed was not necessarily seated on receipt of the instruction." (Muraoka 2011, 208)

The phrase "come, see" can be treated as the example of the asyndetic construction (verbal hendiadys). The first imperative ארו in the phrase is the verb of movement and could be explained in terms of interjectory force.⁸ As suggested by Elitzur A. Bar-Asher Siegal the non-lexical verb (the hendiadys verb) functions in this case as an adverb which modifies the second verb (Bar-Asher Siegal 2013, 269). Thus, the verb ארו does not mean simply the physical movement but it functions rather as the intensification of the meaning of the second imperative of verb חמי. If it is the case the emphasis is placed on the action of seeing and the whole phrase could be translated: "come, see!" To highlight the asyndetic construction the phrase will be translated without conjunction "and."

3. Individual Occurrences of "come, see" in the Targums.

3.1. Gen 22:10

The first reference of the "come, see" in *Targum Neofiti* appears in Gen 22:10. Likewise, both *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Fragment Targum* provide the same phrase. According to *Targum Neofiti*, Abraham was tempted by God with ten temptations (נסינוה עשירה) of which the sacrifice of his son Isaac was going to be the last one (Grossfeld 2000, 173). The mention of the tenth temptation means that the action is about to enter into a climax of the whole Abraham cycle.⁹ From the very beginning of the *Akedah* story the reader is involved into a dramatic situation in which the father

⁸ Similar construction occurs in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 50:1 where Judah encourages his brothers: "Come, let us plant (איתון נבני) for our father a tall cedar" and in *Tg. Ps.-J.* Gen 50:3 where Egyptians wept for Jacob saying one to another: "Come, let us weep (איתון ניבכי) over Jacob."

⁹ Morrison notes that "il numero 10 potrebbe significare la prova ultima, nel senso della prova estrema." (Morrison 2014, 439)

has to sacrifice his own son. Abraham informed in v. 2 about the difficult God’s request responds without any hesitation (הנני) and immediately commences fulfilling the will of God. The narrator builds suspense while describing in detail the preparation of the Moriah sacrifice.¹⁰ The narrative culminates in v. 10, when Isaac, placed upon the altar above the wood, requests to be bounded tightly. The reader observes terrifying scene in which he sees the altar, the bound boy upon it and the father with a knife in his hand stretched above the son in a gesture of killing. At this point the narrator slows down the action describing the eyes of the father, which were directed towards the eyes of his son, and the eyes of Isaac, which were gazing at the angels of the height. Then, the dramatical scene is interrupted by the *Bat Qol* (בת־קול), that comes out from heavens:

Tg. Neof. Gen 22:10:

בה בשעתא נפקת בת קול מן שמיא ואמרת אתון חמון תרתין יחידיין דבעלמי חד נכס וחד מתנכס דנכס לא מעכב ודמתנכס פשט צואריה

In that hour a *Bat Qol* came forth from the heavens and said: “Come, see two individuals who are in my world; one slaughters and the other is being slaughtered. The one who slaughters does not hesitate and he who is being slaughtered stretches out his neck.”

3.1.1. Speaker of the Revelation – the Bat Qol

Targum Neofiti employs the expression “come, see” in order to introduce the announcement, which is proclaimed by the *Bat Qol* (lit.: daughter of a voice) that came from heavens.¹¹ The speaker of the examined expression is the heavenly voice. One of the characteristics of the Targums is the reverential attitude in speaking of God (McNamara 2010, 141–45). To avoid the use of the holy name, targumists applied many other modes by which they referred to God. In some contexts, they replaced the Holy Spirit, who was believed to be God himself, with the *Bat Qol*, of whom concern was to speak to Israel (McNamara 2010, 168). Even if this notion is not so frequent in the Palestinian Targums, it is well known in the rabbinic literature.¹² Rabbinic tradition links the *Bat Qol* with the time of the cessation of prophecy.¹³ As it is in the *Tosefta*, the *Bat Qol* took over the role of prophets: “When the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, died, the holy spirit ceased out of Israel; but nevertheless it was granted them to hear communications from God by means of

¹⁰ The narrative devotes seven verses (Gen 22:3–9) describing step-by-step how Abraham was fulfilling God’s request.

¹¹ McNamara explains: “In a sense the *bath qol* was the same as the Holy Spirit, God revealing his will to man, or as continuing divine action after the Holy Spirit was believed to have ceased to be with Israel.” (McNamara 1992, 39)

¹² In *Tg. Neof. Gen 22:10*; 27:33; 38:25; Num 21:6 and in *Tg. Ps.-J. Deut 28:15*.

¹³ For the discussion on the *Bat Qol* as a secondary form of communication of God see: Verman 1992, 10–11.

a *Bat Qol*.” (t. Soṭah 13:2)¹⁴ Thus, the announcement which is expressed by the *Bat Qol* has a similar significance to the prophecies.¹⁵ It function as the revelation of God himself through the heavenly voice.

Dealing with a specific role of the *Bat Qol* in the midrashic tradition, Christine E. Hayes presents in her article several examples taken from rabbinic literature, which can be illuminating for this study. The author evokes the story of Judah’s confession and repentance on the occasion of his sexual liaison with Tamar. She cites the passage from B. Soṭah 10b in which the *Bat Qol* appears to praise Judah for his confession:

A *bat qol* came forth and said, “You saved Tamar and her two sons from the fire. I promise that on account of your merit I will save some of your offspring from the fire.” Who were they? Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. “She is more righteous than I.” How did he know? A *bat qol* came forth and told him, “From me come forth secrets.” (Hayes 1995, 178)

Concluding her discussion on this passage Hayes claims that: “Here the *bat qol* does not declare Judah’s innocence or announce divine orchestration of the whole affair. Rather, the *bat qol* commends Judah for his act and informs him of the merit he has earned for his good deed.” (Hayes 1995, 178)

Another function of the *Bat Qol* is subsequently presented by Hayes is based on B. Makkot 23b:

R. Eleazar said: In three places the Holy Spirit [more commonly, *bat qol*] appeared in the court of Shem, in the court of Samuel and in the court of Solomon. In the court of Shem as it is written, “Judah recognized and said, ‘She is more righteous than I.’” “How did he know? Perhaps the woman who was with him gave her [the pledges] and another man had been with her [Tamar].” But a *bat qol* came forth and said, “From me come forth secrets...” (Hayes 1995, 184)

On this occasion the function of the *Bat Qol* relates to the court process. It is the *Bat Qol* and not the pledges that becomes the proof of the innocence of Tamar. Judah is convinced that he is the father of the children due to the heavenly voice which gave the testimony of Tamar’s innocence.¹⁶ This passage reveals how great

¹⁴ Paul V. Flesher and Bruce Chilton explain that the *Bat Qol* “literally means ‘daughter of a voice’ or echo. The Rabbis believed that the age of prophecy had ceased with the last of the biblical prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, but that those attentive to the ways of heaven could still hear echoes from the heavenly council where all wisdom was known.” (Flesher and Chilton 2011, 502)

¹⁵ Vermes (2014, 11) notes that the view about the end of prophecy was not supported by history. He evokes: 1 Macc 4:46; 14:41; 1QS 9:11 and Matt 11:9; 13:57; 21:11; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; 7:16, 26; 24:19 showing that still in the final period of the Second Temple prophets were expected.

¹⁶ Tanhuma B. Wayyeseb 17 makes it even more explicit showing that Judah was encouraged by the heavenly voice to confess his guilt: “At that moment a *bat qol* came forth and said to him, ‘Say: From me she conceived. So that she will not burn.’ After this he confessed ‘From me is this thing.’”

importance for the Israelites had the proclamations pronounced by the *Bat Qol*. This notion was employed by the rabbinic literature in order to support an “incomprehensible nature of God’s operation in the world: Judah’s act was abominable and yet from him – indeed, from his sin – kings arose.” (Hayes 1995, 184) From the human point of view, it is impossible to declare Tamar and Judah innocent, thus higher authority has to be introduced in order to explain an obscure divine plan. What is incomprehensible for a human being has to be revealed by the *Bat Qol*. This is the case of the targumic expansion of Gen 22:10. The heavenly voice starts its announcement employing the phrase “come, see.” This expression performs a characteristic function of providing God’s revelation.

3.1.2. Time of the Revelation

The message from heaven comes at a specific time. Targum clarifies that the *Bat Qol* came forth “in that hour (בה בשעתה).” Doubtless, this expression refers to the hour of the *Akedah* as the whole event. But another interesting point could be made here. Both, marginalia of Gen 22:10 in *Targum Neofiti* and the *Fragment Targum* contain the phrase “the hour of distress” which, according to Craig E. Morrison, has a technical sense in *Targum Neofiti*. The scholar points out that among the other aspects of the meaning of “the hour of distress,” there is also the strong conviction of divine intervention from the part of those who suffer (Morrison 2005, 598). If it is the case, “the hour,” in which the *Bat Qol* speaks, is the moment of a great distress of man and at the same time the hour of God’s intervention. Moreover, knowing that the *Akedah* story is one of the crucial moments in the salvation history, the presence of the phrase: “come, see” on this occasion could not be only accidental.¹⁷ God intervenes manifesting his revelation and explaining the deeper meaning of what is going on. The reader encounters one of the most incomprehensible biblical story and risks misunderstanding of this crucial moment of the salvation history. Thus, not only the notion of the *Bat Qol*, which has the great authority, but also the phrase “come, see” is employed in order to introduce the God’s interpretation of the event which takes place on the earth. The reader is invited to get through the visible reality and see what is beyond it, just as God does.

3.1.3. Content of the Revelation

After having examined the speaker of the expression “come, see” and the time when it is being pronounced the question of the content of the message which follows this introductory phrase should be raised. First, what is being revealed by the voice that comes from heaven, is not the heavenly reality but rather something which takes place on the earth. The *Bat Qol* invites the reader to observe two men, Abraham and

¹⁷ Right after this sacrificial trial God blesses Abraham, his descendants. Because of the obedience of Abraham God promises that all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 22:18).

Isaac, who are individuals in the world (תרתינן יחידיין דבעלמי). Thus, the aim of God's revelation is not to disclose some transcendental mystery of heavenly character, something that would be beyond human perception. The revelation which is introduced by the expression "come, see" does not have incomprehensible, apocalyptic character, but to the contrary, it aims to focus the reader's attention on the earthly, visible reality.¹⁸ But at the same time it is not a simple description of what is going on in the world.

The divine message, which follows "come, see" pretends to preserve the reader from misunderstanding of the event, by providing a proper interpretation of it. The reader, who has been deeply shocked by the cruelty of this expected sacrifice, is at risk of missing the real meaning of the *Akedah*, thereby remains on its outer surface. The *Bat Qol* invites him to go beyond the plain observation of the action. The voice from heaven opens the reader's eyes underscoring what is really important to comprehend. The *Bat Qol* praises the obedience and the unity of the father and the son using the phrase תרתינן יחידיין דבעלמי making from their uniqueness the most significant point of the *Akedah*. This expression evokes *Tg. Neof. Gen* 3:22 where the phrase יחידי בעלמא is used for the first time. In the first reference God declares that Adam is alone (unique) in the world just like God is alone (unique) in heaven.¹⁹ The comparison between God and the first human being, is made based on their uniqueness. The same title is not attributed to anyone elsewhere in *Targum Neofiti* except: Abraham and Isaac (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 22:10), Abraham (*Tg. Jon. Isa* 51:2; *Ezek* 33:24) and Israel (*Tg. Ps.-J. Num* 23:24; 29:36; *Deut* 26:18). In *Tg. Neof. Gen* 22:10 Abraham and Isaac are honored with this appellation by the *Bat Qol*. This parallel with the first man before his disobedience underscores the fact that the *Akedah* restores the original likeness and communion between the man and God.²⁰ It is confirmed in the further verses (*Tg. Neof. Gen* 22:16–18) in the promise given by the Lord:

In the name of his Memra I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this thing (ארום חלף דעבדת ית פתגמא הדין) and have not withheld your son, only son, I will certainly bless you (מברכה אברך יתך) and multiply your sons (ומסגיא אסגי ית בנך) as the stars of the heavens and as the sand that is upon the seashore. And your sons will inherit the cities

¹⁸ The revelation offered in *Gen* 22:10 is not similar to those from the Book of Daniel or Book of Revelation, which are expressed in many mysterious and difficult to interpret images.

¹⁹ *Tg. Neof. Gen* 3:22: דאנא יחידי בשמי מרומא.

²⁰ Another point, which renders Abraham similar to Adam, is a small addition in *Tg. Neof. Gen* 22:1 which reveals that Abraham, just as Adam before had sinned קודשא בית בלשן עני (answered in the language of the sanctuary). It is the first time when this kind of solemn characteristic of the speech is attributed to someone else than Adam. Except of Adam (*Gen* 2:19), this expression appears elsewhere in *Tg. Neof.* as attributed to Jacob (*Gen* 31:11 [mg.]; 35:18) Laban (31:47) and Moses (*Exod* 3:4) (McNamara 1992, 58). Thus, Abraham, after Adam, is the second figure who speaks with God "in the language of the sanctuary." And it is the only instance when he does so.

of their enemies. And because you listened to the voice of his Memra (הלף די שמעת בקל), in your descendants will all the nations of the earth be blessed. (ממריה)

Moreover v. 10 is framed with the verb פשט.²¹ As Abraham stretched out his hand in order to slaughter his son, so that Isaac stretched out his neck to be slaughtered.²² This inclusion underlines once again the obedience of both the father and the son, to the will of God. They do not attempt to change the divine will and even do not dispute with it.²³ Thanks to Abraham and Isaac's obedience the humanity will enjoy redemption through the merit (זכו) of Abraham.

3.2. Gen 28:12

The expression אתון חמון occurs one more time in *Targum Neofiti* of the Book of Genesis. In Genesis 28 the reader is familiarized with Jacob's dream. After conspiracy of Jacob and his mother, Isaac sends his son to Paddan-aram, to the house of Laban.²⁴ During the journey Jacob dreams of a ladder stretching to heaven on which the angels ascend and descend. The God's messengers proclaim good tidings saying:

Tg. Neof. Gen 28:12:

והא מלאכיה דילוון יתיה מן בייתי דאבוי סלקון למבשרי למלאכיה מרומא למימר אתון חמון לגברא חסידא
דאיקונין דידיה קביעא בכורסיה איקרא דהויתון מתחמדין למחמי יתה והא מלאכין מן קדם ייי סלקין ונחתי
ומסתכלין בה

And behold, the angels that had accompanied him from the house of his father ascended to bear good tidings to the angels on high, saying: “Come, see the pious many whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory, whom you desired to see.” And behold, the angels before the Lord ascended and descended and observed him.

On this occasion the formula “come, see” appears once again.

²¹ This inclusion is present also in *Tg. Ps.-J.*

²² *Tg. Ps.-J.* underlines even more that Isaac willingly offered himself. In the beginning of the chapter 22 the narrator reports the quarrel between Isaac and his older brother Ishmael. Isaac with confidence says: “if the Holy One, blessed be He, were to ask all my members I would not refuse. These words were immediately heard before the Lord of the world.” (*Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 22:1*) In the light of this version, it seems to be Isaac rather than Abraham who is tested by the Lord.

²³ As Morrison noted their willing disposition regarding God's will is emphasized by the phrase בלבה שלמה (*Tg. Neof. Gen 22:6, 8*) which is associated with both, Abraham and Isaac. Morrison recalls *Tg. Neof. Exod 19:8*, when Israelites, at the moment of the ratification of the Sinai covenant, with “a perfect heart” were subordinated to God. Likewise, also Abraham and Isaac fulfil divine will with “a perfect heart.” (Morrison 2005, 594)

²⁴ Samuel R. Driver points to the fact that it was not Jacob to invent this conspiracy but rather his ambitious mother Rebekah. The writer discloses in this way his sympathies with Jacob (Driver 1904, 255).

3.2.1. Speaker of the Revelation

In this expansion of *Targum Neofiti* the speaker of the words: “come, see” is no longer the *Bat Qol*, but the angels who accompanied Jacob from the house of his father. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* in Gen 28:12 specifies who really these angels are:

והא תרין מלאכיא דאזלו לסדום ואיטרדו מן מחיצתהון מן בגלל דגליין מסטירין דמרי עלמא והוו מיטרדין
ואזלין עד זמן דנפק יעקב מבית אבוי והינון לון יתיה בחיסדא עד ביתאל

Two angels who had gone to Sodom and who had been banished from their apartment because they had revealed the secrets of the Lord of the world, went about when they were banished until the time that Jacob went forth from his father's house. Then, as an act of kindness they accompanied him to Bethel.

The allusion is probably made to Gen 19:13, where two angels reveal to Lot God's intention of the destruction of Sodom. From this expansion the reader learns that there are some secrets (מסטירין) of the Lord, which are known to the angels and should not be revealed to a man.²⁵ Thus, even if the announcement is not proclaimed by the *Bat Qol*, it has still a divine character. Moreover, these two angels are characterized as the ones who gladly disclose God's secrets. Revealing מסטירין was claimed to be also the role of the *Bat Qol*. It was the *Bat Qol* which in B. Makkot 23b says: “From me come forth secrets.” The revelatory character of what follows the expression: “come, see” is subsequently confirmed in Gen 31:13 where the Lord through his angel says to Jacob: “I am the God who was revealed to you at Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and where you made a vow to me.” Hebrew text slightly differs from the targumic versions and reads as follow: אנכי האל ביתאל אשר משחת שם מצבה אשר נדרת לי שם נדר. “The God of Bethel” is rendered by the Targums as “the God who was revealed to you at Bethel (אלקא דאיתגלית עליך בביתאל).” Hence, the Targums leave no doubt that the dream of Jacob was really the revelation of God himself.

3.2.2. Time of the Revelation

The moment in which the angels proclaim the commendation of Jacob is a crucial moment to the whole Jacob cycle in which the son of Isaac experiences the revelation of God and obtains the promises from him. For Jacob, this is the first personal encounter with God; he was aware of the faith of his ancestors, but on this occasion, he has a possibility to see God face to face (פנים אל-פנים). Jacob understands the vision because right after the revelation he confesses: “Truly the Lord is in this place, yet I did not realize it” (Gen 28:16). This remarkable encounter pushes him to worship God by setting up the stone as a sacred pillar, pouring oil on the top of it and making a vow (Gen 28:18).

²⁵ The angels who revealed God's intention regarding Sodom were punished by banishment from their apartment (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 28:12).

Before he wakes up, he sees the Lord, who introduces himself as “the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac” (Gen 28:13). This is the only occurrence of such an appellative for God, in which Abraham and Isaac are mentioned together. Usually, the Lord is presented by the titles such as: “The God of Abraham your father” (Gen 26:34; 31:42) or “the Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exod 3:15, 16). According to Gordon Wenham, who comments on the Hebrew text of Genesis: “the double title ‘God of Abraham ... God of Isaac’ recalls the great promises and blessings given to them and anticipates their reaffirmation and reapplication to Jacob.” (2002, 222)

The promises consequently received in Jacob’s dream correspond to those found in Gen 13:14–16.²⁶ This point makes a strong parallel of the revelatory dream of Jacob with the revelation given to Abraham on the Moriah. In both cases God finishes his speech giving the blessing not only for them, but through their merits for all the nations. What is original in the promise received by Jacob is the assurance of divine presence: “I in my Memra am with you.” (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:15)²⁷ Jacob is the first in the Bible who heard such a promise, which further will be also given to Moses (Exod 3:12), Joshua (Josh 1:5) and Gideon (Judg 6:16) (Wenham 2002, 225). In the New Testament only Joseph, the son of Jacob (Acts 7:9) and Jesus (John 3:2; Acts 10:38) appear as the persons with whom God was (ὁ θεὸς μετ’ αὐτοῦ). Thus, the revelation provided on this occasion has a particular significance and cannot be underestimated.

3.2.3 Content of the Revelation

The targumic rendering of the Bethel episode introduces the revelation concerning Jacob. The reader is informed that the content of this revelation has great importance because is proclaimed by the angels of the Lord. The message provided by the heavenly beings in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:12 discloses similar dynamic as in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 22:10. Similarly, the object of the revelation is again the person, not any of heavenly realities. In *Tg. Neof.* Gen 22:10, the reader is invited to observe Abraham and Isaac, whereas in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:12 the angels encourage other angels to observe Jacob. Also, in this case they use the phrase “come, see.” Once again, the invitation to see Jacob is only the first step. The messengers of God lead their listeners to a deeper observation. They do not simply present the person of Jacob but rather point to his specific features saying: “come, see (אתון חמון) the pious man (לגברא חסידא) whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory (דאיקונין דידיה קביעא בכורסיה איקרא), whom you desired to see (דהויתון מתחמדין למחמי יתה).” In *Tg. Neof.* Gen 22:10 the *Bat Qol* points to the fact of the uniqueness of Abraham and Isaac, now the angels emphasize

²⁶ Jacob would inherit the land, have descendants as numerous as the dust of the earth, and bring blessing to the nations.

²⁷ MT Gen 28:15: הנה אנכי עמך. This kind of assurance is characteristic element in the Jacob cycle (cf. Gen 26:3; 31:3; 46:4).

three mysterious features of Jacob. The reader is invited not simply to see Jacob, but to recognize in him the one who is pious, whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory, whom the angels desire to see.

The first characteristic of Jacob is expressed by the title חסידא which occurs seven times in *Targum Neofiti*, all of them in expansions. For the first time this notion is used in regard to Isaac (*Tg. Neof. Gen 24:60*). Afterwards, the title is repeated twice in regard to Jacob (*Tg. Neof. Gen 28:12; 29:22*). Another two occurrences are linked with Joseph (*Tg. Neof. Gen 49:22, 26*) and the last two references are associated with Aaron (*Tg. Neof. Num 21:1; Tg. Neof. Deut 33:8*). However, the collocation גברא חסידא in *Tg. Neof. Gen 28:12* recalls a special attention because only here it is uttered by the angels of the Lord. As it has been already claimed both the angels of the Lord and the *Bat Qol* disclose the secrets of God. The remaining six references of חסידא come from human mouths. Therefore, this characteristic of Jacob comes not from the human observation, but it is the truth of God proclaimed by his messengers, thus as such becomes indisputable.

Jacob is not only “the pious man” but he is also the one “whose image is engraved in the throne of Glory, whom you (angels) desired to see.”²⁸ This strong affirmation, on some level, links Jacob with the divine world.²⁹ Since this original phrase does not occur elsewhere in *Targum Neofiti* it is difficult to ascertain its meaning. McNamara notes that “the Glory of the Lord is a metonym of God ... and in Targums is employed in connection with God’s relations to the world.” (McNamara 2010, 147–48) Jacob, therefore, is somehow present in the most elevated place in heaven. Throne is an image of divine sovereignty and judgment (Dan 7:9–10) (Verman 1992, 7). Even if the targumic sources do not provide a satisfactory explanation concerning this notion the rabbinic tradition seems to be richer in this regard.

In the Talmudic tradition exists an idea that “the souls of the righteous are hidden under the Throne of Glory.” (Mas. Shabbath, 152b) Jacob is not only hidden under the throne of Glory, but his image is permanently engraved in this throne. This suggests that in the God’s eyes he must be extremely important. Jerome H. Neyrey claims that this kind of presentation of the patriarch could be a reminiscence of so-called Merkabah mysticism (Neyrey 1979, 429). After the cessation of prophecy with Malachi it was assumed that God did not communicate to the Israelites in direct manner. The *Bat Qol* was believed to be the following form of God’s communication. This kind of mediated form of communication with God was not sufficient for some and on this basis emerged a new type of spirituality which consist of the combination of apocalyptic symbolism and the visionary theosophy (Verman 1992, 10–11). This was

²⁸ It is possible to find a parallel with 1 Pet 1:12, which shows how the angels desire to see the salvation brought by Jesus (εἰς ἃ ἐπιθυμοῦσιν ἄγγελοι παρακύψαι). In terms of intertextuality there is a strong connection between these two texts.

²⁹ Another image which underscores Jacob’s connection with heaven is the vision of a ladder which becomes a bridge thrown between heaven and earth.

the time when Merkabah mysticism emerged in response to the growing demand for apocalyptic visions among the people. Many authors of apocalyptic writings described individuals who were guided by angels to reach heaven. Typically, these accounts of celestial journeys were accompanied by descriptions of visions of God enthroned in heaven and the angelic hosts surrounding his throne. Both the concept of Jacob's image engraved on the throne of Glory and the angels' desire to see him fit this apocalyptic pattern. In the targumic tradition, Jacob is not only guided by angels to heaven but is also already present there through his image engraved on the throne of Glory.

Another interesting parallel should be presented. The Book of Ezekiel describes the vision of the prophet given to him by the river Chebar. After seeing a strange living being (חיות) with wheels (אופנים) he observes the form of the throne above which there is the form like the appearance of a human beings.

MT Ezek 1:26:

וממעל לרקיע אשר על־ראשם כמראה אבן־ספיר דמות כסא ועל דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם עליו מלמעלה

And above the expanse that was over their head was the form of a throne, like the appearance of lapis lazuli stone. And above the form of the throne was a form like the appearance of a human being over it from above.

Tg. Jon. Ezek 1:26:

ומעלוי רקיעא דעל רישיהון כחיוז אבן טבא דמות כורסא ועל דמות כורסא דמות כמראה אדם עלוהי מלעילא

And above the expanse that was over their heads was the form of a throne, like the appearance of a precious stone. And above the form of the throne was a form like the appearance of a human being over it from above.

The Targumic Toseftais written in the margin of f.180^v in Ms.7 of the Montefiore Library dated on 1487:³⁰

נוסח אחר צורת יעקב אבונא עלוהי מלעילא

Another version: The form of Jacob our father over it from above.

Here, both MT and *Tg. Jon.* display the vision of celestial throne with the motif of the appearance of human being above. The Tosefta's rendering clarifies that human

³⁰ According to Willem F. Smelik, Toseftot is a "collections of highly midrashic 'additional' readings to TO and TJon of which no complete version survived or existed." (Smelik 1995, 30)

appearance belongs to Jacob. Alinda Damsma in her book *The Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel* comments on this passage and presents broad rabbinic tradition concerning the motif of Jacob's image engraved on divine throne (Damsma 2012, 125–28). Among the other evidence she cites is *Hekhalot Rabbati*, where God describes His deep love for Israel by saying that He will embrace and kiss the countenance of Jacob engraved on the throne (קלסתר פניו יעקב אביהם שהיא חקוקה לי על כסא כבוד) (Schäfer 1981, 164).³¹ Another interesting parallel contains one of the piyyut which describes how Moses goes to heaven in order to receive the Torah and sees there the image of Jacob rising ahead him (דאיקונין דיעקב הוא מזדקף לקיבליה). Damsma's survey makes it clear that the motif of Jacob's image engraved on the divine throne was common in rabbinic literature. Unfortunately, despite this rich tradition, the exegetical background of this notion remains vague (Damsma 2012, 127).

All these texts present Jacob in a much better light than MT does. The announcement proclaimed by the angels in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:12 makes Jacob a highly important person in God's eyes and at the same time legitimized him in the eyes of readers. The question that should be raised here is why Jacob is honored so much. The reader still has in his memory the story in which shrewd Jacob bought the birthright from his brother (Gen 25:29–34) and stole the blessing deceiving his old father (Gen 27:1–30). From the narrative point of view, the targumic revelation provided by the angels aims to change not entirely positive image of Jacob. The one, who will become the founder of twelve tribes of Israel has to be not only a man accepted by God, but even more, he has to be the chosen one. Thus, the invitation to observe the patriarch encourages the reader to see Jacob in a new light, in the light of the God's choice. The angels who used to reveal the mysteries of the Lord now disclose this one, that despite Jacob's dishonesty, God chooses him, gives him blessing even greater than this given to Abraham and Isaac, and keeps his image engraved on his divine throne. Does this mean that God approves patriarch's dishonesty? Even if the narrator avoids any explicit moral comments, that does not mean that he has no moral values. Wenham in his commentary to the Hebrew text of the Book of Genesis offers a sober opinion in this regard: "By setting this new step forward in the history of salvation in the context of such unprincipled behavior by every member of the family, each self-centeredly seeking his or her own interest, the narrator is not simply pointing out the fallibility of God's chosen, whose virtues often turn into vices, but reasserting the grace of God. It is his mercy that is the ultimate ground of salvation." (Wenham 2002, 216)

The complicated story of Jacob presented in the MT, in the Palestinian Targums and in the rabbinic literature gains a different meaning. These texts honor Jacob showing him as the one chosen by God and despite his complications put his icon

³¹ The Greater (Book of the Heavenly) Palaces is the one of the Hekhalot texts written in Hebrew with an Aramaic phrase. This text describes praxis for traveling to the divine throne room. It is the example of Merkabah mysticism texts (Davila 2013, 137–57).

on the throne of Glory. It is not deceit and stolen blessing of Isaac, which make from Jacob one of the greatest patriarchs of Israel. What makes him great is the free will of God to choose him despite his complicated life story.³² Similarly to Tamar and Judah who were proclaimed innocent by the *Bat Qol* also Jacob is honored by the angels of the Lord. Once again that what is incomprehensible for a human being, has to be announced with the highest authority (the angels) who employed the expression “come, see” inviting readers to grasp the divine mysteries which are revealed.

3.3. Num 21:6

The last reference of “come, see” which will be discussed here is slightly different than the previous cases. It appears in the Book of Numbers in a completely different context than in the Book of Genesis. In Num 21:4–5 the narrator presents one of the moments in which people become impatient and rebel against God and Moses. As a response for their ingratitude God punishes them with the fiery serpents, which bite the people causing their death. On this occasion the Targums offer an expansion which introduces God as an active participant of the dialog with the rebellious people. *Targum Neofiti* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* are presented below to facilitate the comparison:

Tg. Neof. Num 21:6:

ברת־קלא נפקת מן גו ארעא ואישתמע קליה ברומה אתון חמון כל ברייתיה ואתון אציתו כל בני בשרא לטית
חויה מן שרויה ואמרית לית עפרא יהווי מזונך אסקת עמי מארעא דמצרים ואחתת להון מנא מן שמיא ואסקת
להון בירא מן תהומא ואגיזת להון סלוי מן ימא וחזרו עמי למתרעמא קדמי על עסק מנה דמיכלי קליל ייתי
חויה דלא אתרעם על מזונת

The *Bat Qol* went out from the earth and its voice was heard on high: “Come, see, all creatures, and come, give ear, all you sons of flesh: The serpent was cursed from the beginning and said to it, Dust shall be your food.” I brought My people up from the land of Egypt and brought down for them manna from heaven, and I brought a well up from the abyss, and I brought quail over for them from the sea, and My people have turned to murmur before Me on account of the business of the manna, whose food is of little worth. The serpent will come, who did not murmur concerning its food, and will rule over the people who have murmured concerning their food.

³² This idea aligns with God’s general tendency to choose the smallest or least likely. Cf. Deut 7:7; 1 Sam 16:11.

Tg. Ps.-J. Num 21:6:

ברת קלא נפלת מן שמי מרומא וכן אמרת איתון חמון כל בני־נשא כל טבון דעבדיית לעמא אסיקית יתהון פריקין ממצרים אחיתית להון מנא מן שמיא וכדון חזרו ואתרעמו עלוי והא חיויא דגזרית עלוי מן יומא שירוי עלמא עפר יהוי מזוניה ולא אתרעם עלוי ועמי אתרעמו על מזוניהון וכדון ייתון חיויא דלא אתרעמו על מזוניהון וינכתון ית עמא די אתרעמו על מזוניהון בכך גרי מימרא דיי בעמא ית חיוון חורמנין ונכיתו ית עמא ומיתו אוכלוסין סגיאין מישראל

The *Bat Qol* fell from the heavens on high, and thus it said, "Come, see, all mankind, all the good things that I have done for the people. I have brought them up redeemed from Egypt. I brought down for them manna from heaven, and now they have turned and murmured against it. And behold the serpent about whom I decreed from the time of the beginning of the world, 'Dust shall be its food,' and it did not murmur against it, but My people have murmured against their food. So now serpents will come, which have not murmured against their food, and they will bite the people who murmur against their food." Then the Memra of the Lord incited venomous serpents against the people, and they bit the people, so that many of the people of Israel died.

A first impression is that this expansion is much more elaborate and longer than the previous ones. Secondly, contrary to *Tg. Neof. Gen 22:10* and *Tg. Neof. Gen 28:12*, the revelation which follows "come, see" in the Targums of Num 21:6 has a negative content. The *Bat Qol* does not praise some of the remarkable features of the man, as it has done concerning Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but rather rebukes the whole community of Israel because of their sin of murmuring.

3.3.1. Speaker of the Revelation

Similar as in *Tg. Neof. Gen 22:10*, the phrase איתון חמון is pronounced by the *Bat Qol*. Knowing that this kind of designation in the targumic literature introduces God's act of communication with Israelites, the importance of what is being said is underscored. The text sets his readers in the ambient of God's revelation. It is the heavenly voice that is disclosing before the Israel the real sense of events which took place on the earth. At this point another interesting remark should be made. *Tg. Lam. 3:38* reads as follows: "From the mouth of God Most High evil does not go forth, without a *Bat Qol* intimating [that it is] because of the robberies with which the earth is filled. But when he desires to decree good in the world, from the mouth of the Holy One it goes forth." This verse provides an interesting characteristic of the targumic theology, which tried to avoid stating that evil could come from the mouth of God or at least it does not come in the same manner as good. In the note to this verse Philip S. Alexander claims:

God only does so [command evil to take place] in response to human sin. It is sin that is the root cause of evil, not God. Evil ultimately does not issue from God: punishment is his *opus alienum*. God, however, is the direct source of all good ... Good and evil do not

go forth from God’s mouth in the same way. That it is to say, one (good) issue from God directly, the other (evil) indirectly, in response to human sin. If people did not sin, God would not issue evil decrees. (Alexander 2007, 155)

The emphasis, therefore, is made to cases in which God has to decree some kind of punishment in the reaction to people’s sins.³³ Although this statement seems to be the case of *Tg. Neof.* Num 21:6, there is no other evidence for this claim in the Palestinian Targums. Other occurrences of the *Bat Qol* appear in the context of the announcement of good matters (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 22:10; 27:33; 38:25).

3.3.2. Time of the Revelation

It is not the first time when the Israelites complain against God, but it is the first time, when they are punished so severely. Commenting on the Hebrew version of the Book of Numbers, Timothy R. Ashley notes that in previous case of their complaint about the food, God responded providing them quails to eat. But in Num 21:6 God’s reaction is to send fiery serpents that kill many people (Ashley 1993, 402). This divergence in God’s responses suggests that the rebellion in Numbers 21 is particularly egregious and requires such severe punishment. Hebrew version of this story immediately after the description of murmurings in v. 5, introduces the action of God which could be treated as an answer for the questions of Israelites. Thus, the reader of the MT is in front of the action and reaction structure of the wilderness story and can be scandalized by the punishment decreed by God. *Targum Neofiti* does not leave God silent. By employing the *Bat Qol*, the narrator introduces a lengthy expansion in which the heavenly voice decrees the serpent’s punishment explaining that this is the consequence of sins of the Israelites. The expression “come, see” thus functions once again as an introduction to God’s revelation, but this time with a negative content, which explains the divine perspective.

Before examining the content of the *Bat Qol* revelation, another problem must be addressed. *Targum Neofiti* points to the earth as the place the heavenly voice came from (ברת-קלא נפקת מן-גו ארעא). The narrator continues that this voice was heard on high (אישתמע קלי ברומא).³⁴ *Tg. Ps.-J.* differs on this occasion from *Tg. Neof.* rendering that: “The *Bat Qol* came from the heaven on high (ברת קלא נפלת מן שמי).” This difference raises the question: Is this only a mistake or maybe deliberate change of the author of the Targum? What was the direction of this revelation? As in *Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:12 the reader has been told that addressees of “come, see” were the angels on high, similarly in *Tg. Neof.* Num 21:6 the narrator discloses specific receivers to whom the message is directed: כל בני בשרא ... כל ברייתה (all creatures ...

³³ Alexander provides some examples which prove this statement, all from rabbinic literature: b. Sanh. 11a; t. Soṭah 13:2 (Alexander 2007, 154).

³⁴ In the same way the idea is presented by *Frg. Tg.*: ואשתמע קלא במרומא ברת קל נפקת מן-גו ארעא ואשתמע קלא במרומא.

all you sons of flesh).³⁵ It is clear, therefore, that the revelation which follows “come, see” is addressed to the human beings who live in the world. Thus, the target point of the proclamation is on the earth. The logical source, which is suggested by *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, would be heavens (שמי מרומא). Why then *Targum Neofiti* reads that the *Bat Qol* “went out from the earth and its voice was heard on high?” It is plausible that, by doing so, the Targum conveys an idea that has been previously discussed. By attributing the proclamation of the punishment to the earth, the Targum suggests that God is not directly responsible for the serpent plague, even though His voice announces it. The *Bat Qol* emerges from the earth – a realm associated with human evil and sin – and is heard from above, signifying that these sins require a just response from the Lord. Thus, the punishment is closely connected to human actions.

3.3.3. Content of the Revelation

The message proclaimed by the *Bat Qol* is unusual. Instead of the praise of uniqueness and obedience of Abraham and Isaac in *Tg. Neof. Gen* 22:10 or “good tidings” about Jacob in *Tg. Neof. Gen* 28:12, the heavenly voice in *Tg. Neof. Num* 21:6 reveals the evil deeds and ingratitude of the Israelites. However, the content of Lord’s revelation is still the reality which takes place on the earth and concerns specific action of people, their murmuring. After an elaborate introduction, which consists of the exhortation “come, see” and addressee “all mankind,” the *Bat Qol* proceeds with the haggadic presentation of salvation history. In some way, the last “come, see,” which appears in *Targum Neofiti*, provides a short summary of the events of this history. In the beginning the image of a serpent is introduced as the one which, as the consequence of being cursed by the Lord, was decreed to eat the dust of the earth. Subsequently, the heavenly voice reminds people of all good things that God has done. *Targum Neofiti* lists: deliverance from the land of Egypt, the gift of the food (manna and quails) and water (well in the desert). *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* omits the gift of quails and water underscoring in this way the importance of the manna gift, regarding which the Israelites murmured. Another difference is that according to *Targum Neofiti*, God just brought his people up out of the land of Egypt (אסקת עמי מארעא דמצרים). Whereas in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Fragment Targum* the verb “redeem” appears (אסיקית יתהון פריקין ממצרים). Both *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and *Fragment Targum* put the emphasis on the deliverance from the land of Egypt as the act of redemption and on the gift of manna, while *Targum Neofiti* seems to present more general picture of God’s providence towards Israelites. However, each version combines the goodness of the Lord with the ingratitude of people. *Targum Neofiti* reads: “My people (עמי) have turned (והזורו) to murmur (למתרעמא) before Me on account of the business of the manna (עלי־עסק מנה), whose food is of little worth (דמיכלי קליל).” *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* does not mention the turning of the people and does not

³⁵ *Tg. Ps.-J.*: כל בני־נשא (all mankind); *Frg. Tg.*: כל בני־אנשא כל בני־בשרה (all creatures, all you sons of flesh).

clarify what was the food regarding which they murmured: “My people (עמי) have murmured (אתרעמו) against their food (על מזונהו).” *Fragment Targum* on this occasion provides the most elaborate version reading: “My people (עמי) have turned (חזרו) to murmur (למתרעמי) before Me on account of the matter of the manna (על עיסק מנא), saying, ‘Our souls are in distress (נפשן מעיקא) because of this food, which is of little worth (בלחמא דמיכליה קליל).’” Both *Targum Neofiti* and *Fragment Targum* link the rebellion of the Israelites with the gift of manna.

It is worth to compare the targumic version concerning the reason of the rebellion with the Hebrew text which reads: אין לחם ואין מים ונפשנו קצה בלחם הקלקל (Num 21:5). As Ashley notices: “the cause of the complaints is lack of water and acceptable food ... Whether the complaint was about the manna (as in 11:6) or about the food available in the desert is not said. If the former is the case it amounts to a direct rejection of God’s providence.” (Ashley 1993, 404) This doubt is removed by targumists, who explicitly link the complaints of the people with the gift of manna. It is suggested that their rebellion was not merely against bad conditions in the desert but and above all against God’s goodness and providence, which makes their sin greater. The contrast between not complaining of cursed serpent and complaining of the Israelites in illustrative way underlines strongly the ingratitude of them.³⁶

Evidently, the expansion introduced by “come, see” points to the acts of the Israelites, this time of negative character, but at the same time invites the readers to go beyond the ordinary observation. The revelation, which follows “come, see” provides God’s interpretation of the rebellion of people and brings to light the real weight of their sin. They do not only complain against the lack of food, but they also forget about the benefits they received and underestimate the gift of manna, the sign of God’s providence and care, calling it: לחמא דמיכליה קליל (food, which is of little worth). By “come, see” phrase, the reader is invited to contemplate not only the punishment of the fiery serpents, but also the great sin of the people which was in fact the cause of this affliction. Also, in this instance the narrative function of the phrase “come, see” can be uncovered. The expression is addressed to the reader in order to focus his attention not on the external layer of the serpent story, but rather to prompt him to accept divine wisdom which often goes beyond human reasoning.

Conclusion

The study of the phrase “come, see” in the Palestinian Targums has shown that this formula is not a mere invitation for physical movement and observation. In each case examined, what follows this introductory phrase reveals its deeper meaning

³⁶ *Tg. Ps.-J.* in a particular manner emphasizes the act of murmurings repeating the word (רעם) five times in v. 6.

and purpose. The phrase carries a specific and technical significance. This brief investigation has identified five aspects that are common to each use of the phrase “come, see”:

1. *Introduction of the revelation.* The phrase “come, see” introduces a divine revelation. What follows this introductory phrase is always the God’s message (proclaimed by the *Bat Qol* or the angels). The function of revelation is to reveal something hitherto unknown.
2. *It appears in the crucial moment of salvation history where proper comprehension of the event is required.* In *Tg. Neof.* Gen 22:10 the obedience of Abraham and Isaac gains “merit” that will compel God to “redeem” Israel in the hours of distress. Jacob, in his dream receives the blessing and the promise of the land which will be fundamental for the existence of the future of Israel (*Tg. Neof.* Gen 28:12). In Num 21:6 “come, see” appears on the occasion of the great sin of ingratitude of the Israelites.
3. *The point of departure for the revelation is a common person and his actions.* The revelation does not begin with the description of some transcendental reality. The fundament of what is being revealed is a man (it can be both individual persons, as in case of Jacob, Abraham and Isaac or the Israelites in general) and his deeds or features. Thus, there are being revealed: Abraham, Isaac and their sacrifice, Jacob and his piousness, the Israelites and their sin of murmuring. The first layer of the revelation’s content deals with ordinary life.
4. *The aim of the revelation is to lead the receiver to a deeper level of perceiving.* It is not enough to observe the visible reality. The receiver is encouraged to surpass his own human impressions in order to acquire a divine perspective on the event. He is asked to observe Abraham and Isaac but from the perspective of their obedience and uniqueness; to see Jacob as the pious and extremely honored man in the eyes of God; to see the Israelite and their rebellion in the light of graces that God has bestowed upon them in order to comprehend better their ingratitude. Thus, “come, see” introduces a new, profound insight into the meaning of an event which takes place on the earth.
5. *The narrative function of the phrase “come, see” is to direct the reader’s attention to the true meaning of an event.* This phrase appears when there is a significant risk of misunderstanding the event. The narrator does not allow the reader to remain passive; instead, the reader is invited to make an effort to look beyond the visible reality and perceive what lies beyond it. The invitation is to view the visible reality from God’s perspective. The goal is to understand earthly reality through eyes transformed by divine revelation.

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