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# **THE MEMRA**

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IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

By Radar Apologetics

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## FOUNDATIONAL VERSE

### John 1:3 (NASB 2020)

“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being.”

## THE WORD AS AN AGENT

### Isaiah 55:10-11 (NASB 2020)

““For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it produce and sprout, And providing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will **My word** be which goes out of My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the purpose for which I sent it.”

### Psalms 107:19-20 (NASB 2020)

“Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He saved them from their distresses. He sent **His word** and healed them, And saved them from their destruction.”

**Psalm 147:15 (NASB 2020)**

“He sends His command to the earth; **His word** runs very swiftly.”

**Genesis 15:4 (NASB 2020)**

“Then behold, **the word of the LORD** came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir.””

**1 Samuel 15:10 (NASB 2020)**

“Then **the word of the LORD** came to Samuel, saying,”

**2 Samuel 7:4 (NASB 2020)**

“But in the same night, **the word of the LORD** came to Nathan, saying,”

**2 Sameul 24:11 (NASB 2020)**

“When David got up in the morning, **the word of the LORD** came to Gad the prophet, David’s seer, saying,”

**1 Kings 6:11 (NASB 2020)**

“Now **the word of the LORD** came to Solomon, saying,”

**1 Kings 13:17 (NASB 2020)**

““For a command came to me by **the word of the LORD**: ‘You shall not eat bread, nor drink water there; do not return by going the way that you came.’””

**1 Kings 16:1 (NASB 2020)**

“Now **the word of the LORD** came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying,”

**1 Kings 17:8-9 (NASB 2020)**

“Then **the word of the LORD** came to him (*Elijah*) saying, “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide food for you.””

**1 Kings 18:31 (NASB 2020)**

“Then Elijah took twelve stones, corresponding to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom **the word of the LORD** had come, saying, “Israel shall be your name.””

**1 Kings 19:9 (NASB 2020)**

“Then he came there to a cave and spent the night there; and behold, **the word of the LORD** came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?””

**1 Kings 21:17, 28 (NASB 2020)**

“Then **the word of the LORD** came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,”

“Then **the word of the LORD** came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,”

**1 Chronicles 22:8 (NASB 2020)**

“But **the word of the LORD** came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before Me.’”

**1 Chronicles 22:8 (NASB 2020)**

“But **the word of the LORD** came to me, (*David*) saying, ‘You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before Me.’”

## TARGUMIC CLAIMS ON THE MEMRA

### THE MEMRA IS JACOB'S GOD

#### Genesis 28:20-22 (NASB 2020)

“Jacob also made a vow, saying, “If **God** will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father’s house in safety, then **the LORD** will be my God. And this stone, which I have set up as a memorial stone, will be God’s house, and of everything that You give me I will assuredly give a tenth to You.”

#### Genesis 28:20-22 (TARG-Onkelos)

“Then Jacob swore an oath, saying, “If **the Memra of the Lord** will be my help, and guard me in this way that I am going, and give me food to eat and clothing to wear, and I return in peace to the house of my father, then **the Memra of the Lord** will become my God, and this stone that I have placed as a pillar shall be where I shall be worshipping before the Lord, and (*of*) all that You give me, I will set aside a tenth before You.””

### THE MEMRA IS THE REDEEMING GOD

#### Leviticus 26:12-13 (NASB 2020)

“I will also walk among you and be your **God**, and you shall be My people. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt so that you would not be their slaves, and I broke

#### Leviticus 26:12-13 (TARG Johnathan)

“And I will cause My glorious Shekhinah to dwell among you, and My **Memra** will be your **redeeming God**, and you will a holy nation for My name. I am the Lord you God who brought you redeemed out of the land of Egypt, from being subjected to them, and I broke the yoke

your yoke and made you walk erect.”

of their servitude from off you, and I led you out from among them as free men, and I made you walk with erect stature.”

## THE MEMRA IS SPEAKS TO BALAAM

### **Numbers 22:12-19 (NASB 2020)**

“But God said to Balaam, “Do not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.” So Balaam got up in the morning and said to Balak’s representatives, “Go back to your land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you.” And the representatives from Moab got up and went to Balak, and said, “Balaam refused to come with us.” Then Balak sent representatives once again, more numerous and more distinguished than the previous. They came to Balaam and said to him, “This is what Balak the son of Zippor says: ‘I beg you, let nothing keep you from coming to me; for I will indeed honor you richly, and I will do whatever you tell me. Please come then,

### **Numbers 22:12-19 (TARG Johnathan)**

“Then the Lord said to Balaam, “Do not go with them. Do not curse the people, for they are blessed by Me since the days of their fathers.” Then Balaam arose in the morning and said to the nobles of Moab, “Go to your land, for it is not pleasing before the Lord to permit me to go with you.” Then the nobles of Moab arose and came to Balak and said, “Balaam refuses to come with us.” Then Balak again sent more nobles, more numerous and honorable than before. Then they came to Balaam and said to him, “Thus says Balak son of Zippor, ‘Now do not be hindered from coming to me, for I will indeed honor you very much. And all that you say to me, I will do. So come now, curse this people for me.’” Then Balaam answered and said to the servants of Balak, “Even if Balak should give me the fullness of



curse this people for me.” But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, “Even if Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not do anything, either small or great, contrary to the command of **the LORD my God**. “Now please, you also stay here tonight, and I will find out what else **the LORD** will say to me.””

his storehouse with silver and gold, I would have no authority to transgress the decree of **the Memra of the Lord my God**, to do something little or big. But now, recline here please, you also, tonight, and I will know what more **the Memra of the Lord** will speak with me.””

## THE MEMRA KILLS THE FIRSTBORN IN EGYPT

### Exodus 12:29 (NASB 2020)

“Now it came about at midnight that **the LORD** struck all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of cattle.”

### Numbers 8:17 (NASB 2020)

““For every firstborn among the sons of Israel is Mine, among the

### Exodus 12:29 (TARG3-E)

“And it came about at midnight of the fifteenth that **the Memra of the Lord** killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh who would sit on the throne of his kingdom to the firstborn sons of the kings who had been taken captive and were in the dungeon, taken as pledge by the hand of Pharaoh. And because they were rejoicing at the captivity of Israel, they also were afflicted. And all the firstborn of the

people and among the animals; livestock whom the Egyptians were  
on the day that I fatally struck all worshipping died.”  
the firstborn in the land of Egypt,  
I sanctified them for Myself.”

## THE MEMRA SPEAKS TO MOSES FACE TO FACE

### Deuteronomy 34:10-11 (NASB 2020)

“Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land—and for all the mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

### Deuteronomy 34:10-12 (TPJ)

“And there did not again arise a prophet in Israel like Moses, for the Memra of the Lord knew him speech for speech, for all the signs and miraculous wonders that the Memra of the Lord had sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants, and to all the people of his land, and for all the power of his mighty hand, as he carried the rod whose weight was forty seahs, and he split the sea and smote the rock, and every great fearful thing that Moses did at the time when he received the two tablets of sapphire stone, whose weight was forty seahs, and carried them in his two hands in the sight of all Israel.”

## THE MEMRA GOES BEFORE ISRAEL

### Deuteronomy 1:30-31 (NASB 2020)

“The LORD your God, who goes before you, will Himself fight for you, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, on all of the road which you have walked until you came to this place.”

### Deuteronomy 1:30-31 (TPJ-E)

“The Memra of the Lord your God who is leading before you, He will fight the war for you, just as everything that He had done for you in Egypt in your sight, and in the wilderness where you have seen swift serpents full of deadly poison, and the Lord your God bore you up on clouds of the glory of His Shekhinah, just as a man would bear up his son, in all the way that you have walked until the time when you came to this place.”

## THE MEMRA MAKES A COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

### Genesis 17:1 (NASB 2020)

“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, **the LORD** appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. I will make My covenant between Me and you, And I will

### Genesis 17:1-10 (T Neofiti)

“Now Abram was ninety-nine years old when **the Memra of the Lord** was revealed to Abram and said to him, “I am the God of the heavens. Worship before Me in truth and be whole in good work. And I will

multiply you exceedingly.” Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall you be named Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations as an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land where you live as a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant, which you shall keep,

establish My covenant between Myself and you, and I will strengthen you very much.” Then Abram went flat on his face, and the Memra of the Lord spoke with him, saying, “Behold, My covenant is with you, and you will become a congregation of an assembly of righteous nations. And your name will no longer be called Abram, but your name will become Abraham, for I am making you a congregation of an assembly of righteous nations, and I will strengthen you very much, and I will make you into peoples. Kings who rule the nations will come forth from your loins, and I will establish My covenant between Myself and you, and your descendants after you throughout their generations, for an eternal covenant, to become God for you in My Memra, to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan as an eternal possession,

between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised.

and I will be for them in My Memra a redeeming God.” Then the Lord said to Abraham, “But you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you, throughout their generations. This is My covenant that you shall keep between Me and you, and your descendants after you, to circumcise every male of yours.”

### **Genesis 17:1-10 (TARG Onkelos)**

“Now Abram was ninety-nine years old when the Lord was revealed to Abram and said to him, “I am El Shaddai. Worship before Me and be whole. And I will establish My covenant between My Memra and you, and I will increase you very much.” Then Abram fell on his face, and the Lord spoke with him, saying, “Behold, I will establish My covenant with you, and you will be a father of many nations. And your name will no longer be called Abram, but your name will become Abraham, for I am making you a father of many nations, and I will make you very, very numerous, and I will make you into assemblies, and kings who rule the nations will come forth from you. And I will establish My covenant between My Memra and you, and your descendants after you, throughout their generations, for an eternal covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you, and I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan as an eternal possession, and I will be God to them.” Then the Lord said to Abraham, “But you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you, throughout their

generations. This is My covenant that you shall keep between My Memra and you, and your descendants after you, to circumcise every male of yours.”

### **Genesis 17:1-10 (TPJ)**

“Now Abram was ninety-nine years old when the Lord was revealed to Abram and said to him, “I am El Shaddai. Worship before Me and be perfect in your flesh. And I will establish My covenant between My Memra and you, and I will increase you very much.” But because Abram was not circumcised, he was not able to stand. So Abram bowed down on his face, and the Lord spoke with him, saying, “Behold I will establish My covenant with you, and you will be a father of many nations. And your name will no longer be called Abram, but your name will become Abraham, for I appoint you as a father of a numerous multitude of nations, and I will make you very, very numerous, and I will make you into assemblies, and kings who rule the nations will come forth from you. And I will establish My covenant between My Memra and you, and your descendants after you, throughout their generations, for an eternal covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you, and I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land of your sojourning, all the land of Canaan as an eternal possession, and I will be God to them.” Then the Lord said to Abraham, “But you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you, throughout their generations. This is My covenant that you shall keep between My Memra and you, and your descendants after you, to circumcise every male of yours, if he has no father to circumcise him.”

## THE MEMRA IS THE CREATOR

### **Genesis 1:3 (NASB 2020)**

“Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”

### **Genesis 1:3 (Neofiti)**

“Then the Memra of the Lord said, “Let there be light,” and there was light, according to the decree of His Memra.”

### **Isaiah 44:24 (NASB 2020)**

“This is what the LORD says, He who is your Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb: “I, the LORD, am the maker of all things, Stretching out the heavens by Myself And spreading out the earth alone,”

### **(Is. 44:24 (TARG- Johnathan)**

“Thus says the Lord, who redeemed you and who established you from the womb: I am the Lord who makes all things. I suspended the heavens by My Memra; I completed the earth by My power,”

### **Isaiah 45:12 (NASB 2020)**

““It is I who made the earth, and created mankind upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands, And I ordained all their lights.”

### **Is. 45:12 (TARG-Johnathan)**

“I, by My Memra, I made the earth and I created mankind upon it. I, by My strength, suspended the heavens, and I completed all their hosts.”

## Megillah 3a

The Gemara cites another ruling of Rabbi Yirmeya or Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba. Rabbi Yirmeya said, and some say that it was Rabbi Ḥiyya bar Abba who said: The Aramaic translation of the Torah used in the synagogues was composed by Onkelos the convert based on the teachings of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua. The Aramaic translation of the Prophets was composed by Yonatan ben Uzziel based on a tradition going back to the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The Gemara relates that when Yonatan ben Uzziel wrote his translation, Eretz Yisrael quaked over an area of four hundred parasangs [*parsa*] by four hundred parasangs, and a Divine Voice emerged and said: Who is this who has revealed My secrets to mankind? Yonatan ben Uzziel stood up on his feet and said: I am the one who has revealed Your secrets to mankind through my translation. However, it is revealed and known to You that I did this not for my own honor, and not for the honor of the house of my father, but rather it was for Your honor that I did this, so that discord not increase among the Jewish people. In the absence of an accepted translation, people will disagree about the meaning of obscure verses, but with a translation, the meaning will be clear. And Yonatan ben Uzziel also sought to reveal a translation of the Writings, but a Divine Voice emerged and said to him: It is enough for you that you translated the Prophets. The Gemara explains: What is the reason that he was denied permission to translate the Writings? Because it has in it a revelation of the end, when the Messiah will arrive. The end is foretold in a cryptic manner in the book of Daniel, and were the book of Daniel translated, the end would become manifestly revealed to all. The Gemara asks: Was the translation of the Torah really composed by Onkelos the convert? Didn't Rav Ika bar Avin say that Rav Ḥananel said that Rav said: What is the



meaning of that which is written with respect to the days of Ezra: “And they read in the book, the Torah of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and they caused them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8)? The verse should be understood as follows: “And they read in the book, the Torah of God,” this is the scriptural text; “distinctly,” this is the translation, indicating that they immediately translated the text into Aramaic, as was customary during public Torah readings. “And they gave the sense,” these are the divisions of the text into separate verses. “And they caused them to understand the reading,” these are the cantillation notes, through which the meaning of the text is further clarified. And some say that these are the Masoretic traditions with regard to the manner in which each word is to be written. This indicates that the Aramaic translation already existed at the beginning of the Second Temple period, well before the time of Onkelos. The Gemara answers: The ancient Aramaic translation was forgotten and then Onkelos came and reestablished it. The Gemara asks: What is different about the translation of Prophets? Why is it that when Onkelos revealed the translation of the Torah, Eretz Yisrael did not quake, and when he revealed the translation of the Prophets, it quaked? The Gemara explains: The meaning of matters discussed in the Torah is clear, and therefore its Aramaic translation did not reveal the meaning of passages that had not been understood previously. Conversely, in the Prophets, there are matters that are clear and there are matters that are obscure, and the Aramaic translation revealed the meaning of obscure passages.