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THEOLOGICAL AND RHETORICAL VIEWS OF THE SYRIAC CHRISTIANS OF THE 4TH CENTURY IN THE MEMRA "ON NINEVEH AND JONAH" (BY EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN?)

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Introduction

Ephraim the Syrian (306–373[1]) was a great Syrian theologian, poet, preacher, teacher, and choir leader. Although Ephraim the Syrian also wrote prose works, most of his works were in poetic form[2]. The main literary genre of Ephraim the Syrian was madrasha, the essence of which is best expressed by the term "teaching hymns". According to their form, they are poetic works, hymns, consisting of a series of separate stanzas followed by a refrain. Each stanza could have a simple isosyllabic meter (e.g., stanzas consisting of 5 + 5 5 + 5 syllables) or complex (e.g., stanzas consisting of verses of 5 + 6, 7 + 4, 4 + 4, 4 + 5 syllables). Ephraim the Syrian used more than 50 such isosyllabic combinations. His madrash seems to have been sung: in the manuscripts of the sixth century each madrash is preceded by a special note ܟܬ ܡܠܟ, possibly an indication of a certain melody or meter for recitation. As to their content, the hymns-madrashe are an exposition of Christian teaching. They reveal the essence of the Christian sacraments, explain Christology, and reveal the essence of the prototypes of the Old Testament. A large number of hymns are consecrated to the polemics against the Arians and other heretics, for example, the hymns "On the Faith" and the hymns "Against the Heresies". It is the hymns-madrashe that make up the bulk of the works of Ephraim the Syrian. More than 400 of his madrashe have been preserved. Probably after his death they were united in various cycles according to its themes and melodies. In the madrash of Ephraim the Syrian, a special type of thinking and theology of the Syrian author is fully presented, which is defined by scholars as "*symbolic theology*" ("*Bildtheologie*"). In the theological dictionary of Ephraim the Syrian there are used more than 20 words to express the idea of a symbol, sign, image, with the help of which the poet-theologian interprets both the Holy Scripture and the phenomena of the surrounding world. A special rhetorical form of madrashe, full of paradoxes and antitheses, embodies the complex theological ideas about the Incarnation of God and the transcendence of God, about the Creator and creation, the one and the many, the manifest and the hidden, comprehension by faith and love and investigation by reason, etc.

However, Ephraim the Syrian composed not only the hymns-madrashe, but also another type of non-strophic poetic work, i.e. the memra (Sir. ܡܐܡܪܐ, "speech"), metrical orations such as memre "On the Faith", memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", memre "On Nicomedia", the first memra "On Reproach", memra "On Sinful Woman" (Luc 7) и др. Unlike the madrashe, memre do not have a refrain, they have only one simple isosyllabic meter of 7 + 7, i.e. they consist of

[1] The date of birth is conventionally accepted in science, the date of death is known from the Chronicle of Edessa (6th century).

[2] A complete list of editions of Ephraim the Syrian's works: *Brock S.* St. Ephrem: A Brief Guide to the Main Editions and Translations (electronic resource: http://syri.ac/brock/ephrem).

lines, each of which consists of two half-verses of 7 syllables each. Unlike the madrashe, the memre of the Ephraim the Syrian probably were not sung but recited[3].

The relevance of the topic. Although little attention has been paid to the memre of Ephraim the Syrian until now, these works are of particular importance. The fact is that it was the memra that became the main form of religious speech in the Syriac Christian tradition after Ephraim the Syrian. Memre are written by anonymous Syrian authors of the 5th century, by poets and theologians of the 5th-6th centuries, such as Balai, John of Antioch, Narsai, Jacob of Sarug, and others. Madrashe, the main genre of Ephraim the Syrian, has been written very little since his death[4]. The memre attributed to Ephraim the Syrian are of considerable interest from several points of view. Thus, they allow us to trace the evolution of the genre of memra from its early examples to later ones. It is also important that in addition to the memra of Nineveh and Jonah attributed to him Ephraim the Syrian composed nine hymns-madrashe on the same subject. It gives us a rare opportunity to compare the interpretation of the same biblical book in the two main poetic genres of the Syrian theologian and to understand how they differ. In addition, the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is one of the two works of the so-called "Greek Ephraim" for which the Syriac original is known[5], which makes it an important link in the history of the appearance of numerous narrative homilies in Greek in the 5th-6th centuries. The study of the Syriac narrative memre is also important for the literary criticism as a whole: they raise important questions about the attitude of narrators to the sacred text, about the possibilities and limits of its "artistic" interpretation, about the applied literary devices, about the role of individuals in (quasi)literary creativity, etc.

The degree of development of the problem in the scientific literature. Although the text of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" has long been published (Beck 1970) and translated into many European languages (TSO 1851, Burgess 1853, Beck 1970, Erić 2015, Zimbardi 2019), it has not been the aim of the research attention. Until recently, only certain theological and rhetorical aspects of the text were covered in a few articles. For example, Christine Shepardson has focused on the peculiarities of the interpretation of the book of Jonah in the memra in light of the differences in the interpretation of this book in the Jerusalem and Babylonian Talmuds (Shepardson 2011). Sebastian Brock has devoted a small study to the ancient translations of the Syriac text (Brock 1994), Rodoljub Kubat has analysed some of the theological themes of the text,

[3] This clarification is relevant only to the memre belonging to Ephraim the Syrian. Later memre could be sung like madrashe.

[4] Although the subgenre of the genre of madrasha, the sogitha, a dialogical poem, is actively used.

[5] It is often said in the scholarly literature that the memra of Nineveh and Jonah is the only such text. However, there is another text from the corpus of "Greek Ephraim", *Sermo de passione salvatoris*, for which J.-M. As early as 1968, Sauger found the Syriac version in two manuscripts (*Sauget J.-M.* L'homéliaire de Vatican Syriaque 253: Essai de reconstitution // Le Muséon. 1968. 81. P. 297–349. Here, p. 335). This Syriac text has not yet been published or studied (*Zimbardi E.* Translating from Syriac into Greek. The Case of Ephrem the Syrian and the Sermon on Jonah and the Repentance of the Ninivites // Aram. 2018. Vol. 30. P. 295–306. Here P. 296–297, footnote 3).

making a number of important suggestions about the possible liturgical context of the memra (the Quadragesima[6]) and the role of the Deuteronomy as an important intertext in the memra (Kubat 2014), Winfried Cramer analysed the memra in the light of a possible actualized interpretation of biblical events and considered the attempt to rebuild the Jewish Temple under Julian the Apostate as *the Sitz im Leben* of the Syriac text (Cramer 2003). In our articles, we have consecrated the possible influence of ancient rhetoric on memra, analyzed anti-Jewish polemics and internal criticism, and revealed the intertextuality of memra with the works of Ephraim the Syrian, associated with his hometown of Nisibis, described the narrative of the "anti-Exodus" that has no parallels, revealed the role of the literature of Wisdom as one of the key intertexts (Fomicheva 2015, 2016, 2021, 2022, 2023) in memra. Emanuele Zimbardi has significantly advanced the study of the memra by providing its translation into Italian with an extensive introduction with a rather detailed analysis of the text, in which he made, among other things, an important assumption about the intersection of fictive and real communicative situations in the memra (Zimbardi 2019). However, in order to clarify many of the key issues related to this work, the format of the article or the introduction to the translation is insufficient, there is a need for a larger study, which is the attempt of the present work.

As to the Syriac narrative memre and related works, liturgical narratives in poetic form (or *Kunstprosa*) in the Jewish and Christian tradition as a whole, the researchers have interested in these works only in recent decades. The French researcher Judith Kecskeméti in a number of her works explored the fictitive dialogues and monologues of biblical characters based on the material of Greek and Byzantine sermons IV- VII century (Kecskeméti 1989, 1996, etc.). The American scholar Laura Lieber has composed a number of articles about the rhetorical and exegetical features of Jewish liturgical poetry in Hebrew and Aramaic, with the examples for the comparison from Byzantine kontakion and Syrian madrashe and memre (Lieber 2008, 2009, 2010, 2015, 2018, etc.)/ It is appeared Zvi Novick's works on the rhetoric of liturgical works (Novick 2011, 2012, etc.), wotks by Ofir Münz-Manor (Münz-Manor 2010, 2013, 2019, etc.). The special value of these works lies in the fact that modern scholars strive to make a comparative analysis of liturgical poetry in different Semitic languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Samaritan, as well as in Greek. It makes possible to discern similarities and differences in rhetorical form and exegetical approach in works with a common context — the liturgical one. As for the Syrian memre, in addition to Sebastian Brock's classic works about narrative memra and sogita (Brock 1981, 1987, 1994, 2001,

[6] In this work, we use the "Quadragesima", more precisely "holy Quadragesima" as a designation for the Lent, which corresponds to the Greek ἁγία τεσσαρακοστή. The name "Lent" is of later origin, and its use for the fourth century's fasting seems to be an anachronism. The name "Quadragesima" is better corresponded to the Syriac name of the Lent — "ܨܘܡ ܪܒܥܝܢ", "fasting of forty [days]".

2011, 2020, etc.), there are new works by Manolis Papoutsakis (1998), Kristy Upson-Saia (2006), Robert Phenix (Phenix 2008), Sidney Griffith (2017), Blake Hartung (Hartung 2018), Christian Heal (2017) and others. At the same time the available research is not yet sufficient to make an accurate "portrait" of the Syriac narrative memra, to describe the rhetorical devices used in the memre and to determine the context the emergence of a genre, to distinguish it from similar genres, for example, madrasha. It is striking to note that the genre of the Syriac narrative memra is of particular importance because of having arisen from the impulses of the Judeo-Hellenistic and Aramaic narrative traditions, it could in turn influence both the formation of Byzantine liturgical poetry and the Jewish liturgical poems-piyuts.

The object of this research is the Christian literature written in Syriac in the IV century. **The subject of this research** is memra (Syr. "homily", "metrical sermon") "On Nineveh and Jonah" attributed to the key Syrian poet-theologian of the fourth century, Ephraim the Syrian.

The main **purpose** of the dissertation research is to establish the specifics of the content and rhetorical form of the Syriac memra "On Nineveh and Jonah".

The tasks that are necessary for this purpose include:

1. To identify the features of the exegesis of the book of the prophet Jonah in the Syriac memra "On Nineveh and Jonah". To show the difference between the exegesis of the book of the prophet Jonah in the memre and the exegesis of this biblical book in the madrashe of Ephraim the Syrian, in the memre of other Syrian authors, as well as from the Greek and Latin commentaries of the IV-VI centuries.
2. To determine the literary strategy by the author of the memra, to identify the literary devices used by him, to determine the intertextuality of the memra with biblical and non-biblical texts, to describe the features of quoting the Holy Scripture in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah".
3. To describe the rhetorical form of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", to identify its possible origins and to outline the ways of development of the rhetorical features of the memre in later Syriac works of the same genre.
4. Describe the genre of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah".

The hypothesis of the study is based on the assumption that the Syrian memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is a narrative composed to the period of the Lent, in which is constructed with the help of literary tools, such as the monologue speeches of the characters, an epic picture of a repentant community, turning to the examples of sapiential literature and rejecting the example of ungrateful Israel.

In the dissertation **were used different methods of scientific research**: the philological text analysis combined with the historical-critical method and theological interpretation. In the analysis of the literary form are used the methods and concepts of modern narratology (narrative, intertextuality). The methods of rhetorical criticism are used to analyze the rhetorical form of the work. In order to identify the exegetical and literary features of the memra in the light of biblical exegesis and homiletics of the 4th–6th centuries is used the method of the comparative analysis.

In the course of the study, it was discovered that one of the functions of this work was polemic. Our study is philological and literary, therefore, first of all, we consider the polemical aspect from a literary point of view, within the framework of the relationship between the "protagonists", the Ninevites and their "antagonists", the Jews. However, the plot twists and turns of the Syriac memra go beyond the purely literary context, involving religious, cultural, and historical processes in their orbit. A detailed analysis of such processes is beyond the scope of our study. We will confine ourselves to some explanations that are necessary, from our point of view.

First of all, it should be said that any ancient texts were written in completely different linguistic, cultural, historical contexts, very far from modern ones. Their authors do not always share modern ethical, moral and ethical attitudes. However, this should not be an obstacle to their scientific study, but, on the contrary, such texts should be actively involved in scientific circulation so that we can better understand the history of the development of concepts important for modern civilization, including interreligious dialogue.

Reading such early Christian polemical works as the Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas (early second century), "Dialogue with Tryphon the Jew" by Justin Martyr (c. 150), the homily "On the Passover" by Meliton of Sardis (c. 60-70s of the second century), Against the Jews by Tertullian (d. 240), the hymns "On Easter", the memre "On Faith" by Ephraim the Syrian (d. 373), and the eight Homilies Against the Jews by John Chrysostom (pronounced in 386), the memra "Against the Jews" by Narsai (d. 503) and other works can be led into the conviction that they contain "anti-Jewish" (anti-jüdisch) elements. Such works have long been the object of study by many scholars[7],

[7] *Schreckenberg H.* Die christlichen Adversus-Judaeos-Texte und ihr literarisches und historisches Umfeld (1.-11. Jh.). Frankfurt am Main – Bern: Peter Lang GmbH, 1982. (Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe XXIII: Theologie, Bd. 172); *Simon M.* Verus Israel: Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire, AD 135-425. Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996; Contra Iudaeos. Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews / Ed. by Limor O., Stroumsa G. G. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996 (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism (TSMJ); 10.); *Shepardson C.* Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008. (North American Patristics Society Patristic Monograph Series; 20.); *Litvin T.V.* To the Problem of the Semantic of Conflicts in Late Antiquity // Yazyk vrazhdy i etiologiya konfliktov v istoriko-filosofskoj perspektive: Kollektivnaya monografiya / otv. red. I. R. Tantlevskij. 2-e izd. S.-Petersburg: Izd-vo RHGA, 2022. P. 148–168. (In Russian); *Svetlov R.V., Shmonin D. V.* The Polemical Strategies of Early Christian Apologetes // Yazyk vrazhdy i etiologiya konfliktov v istoriko-filosofskoj perspektive: Kollektivnaya monografiya / otv. red. I. R. Tantlevskij. 2-e izd. S.-Petersburg: Izd-vo RHGA, 2022. P. 169–180. (In Russian) et al.

but so far there has been no unambiguous approach to the assessment of their "anti-Jewish" component[8].

The term "anti-Jewish" used in literature cannot be considered successful. Early Christian authors polemicize not with Jews in general and, of course, not with Old Testament Jews such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, etc., but, firstly, with "Judaizers" Christians, who continued to observe certain Jewish rites and attend holidays in the fourth century[9], and, secondly, with "Jews" as the personification of the concept of an "incorrect", pre-Christian understanding of the sacred text[10]. The fact is that Jews and Christians found themselves in a unique situation – they share a common source of their teaching, the Hebrew Bible, creating the Mishnah and the New Testament, respectively, as commentaries on it[11].

The main claims of Christians against the "Jews", starting from the New Testament, are the execution of Jesus Christ and the "wrong" reading of the Old Testament without the "true" key to the text, which is for Christians Jesus, whom they revere as the Messiah. For the Christological reading of the Old Testament, a special strategy of educational interpretation was developed, according to which the Old Testament events, phenomena and personalities, although, of course, may have an independent historical value, but, above all, they are only "types", "shadows", the "true" meaning of which is revealed only with the coming of Jesus Christ. Interestingly, such a concept is not purely Christian. For example, the Teacher of Righteousness in the Qumran writings also interpreted the "mysteries" of the prophetic books as inaccessible to the prophets and fully revealed only to him and in his time[12].

The existence of a common Scripture, on the one hand, and different approaches to its interpretation, on the other, could not but predetermine the development of Judeo-Christian relations in the early stages. Christian apologists followed the path of creating a program of "Christianization" of the Hebrew Bible, the goal of which, according to Doron Mendels, was to create a "new collective memory" of Christianity[13] for the purpose of its consolidation and self-

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[8] *Stroumsa G.* From Anti-Judaism to Antisemitism in Early Christianity? // Contra Iudaeos. Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews / Ed. by Limor O., Stroumsa G. G. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996 (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism (TSMJ); 10.). P. 1–26; *Narinskaya E.* What does it take to be Anti-Jewish? A deconstruction of statements held to be Anti-Jewish in Early Christian writers. The article is situated on the site Bogoslov. ru: https://bogoslov.ru/article/2333542. 22.05.2023.

[9] Cf. John Chrysostom, eight "Discources against the Jews".

[10] *Ruether R.* Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism. New York: Seabury Press, 1974; *Ladner G.* Retrospect // Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity. Vol. 2. Separation and Polemic / ed. by Wilson S. G. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986. P. 164–174.

[11] *Stroumsa G.* The End of Sacrifice: Religious Mutations of Late Antiquity // Empsychoi Logoi — Religious Innovations in Antiquity. Studies in Honour of Pieter Willem van der Horst / Ed. by Houtman A., De Jong A., Misset-Van De Weg M. Leiden: Brill, 2008. (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity; Vol.73.). P. 29–46. Here P. 35.

[12] Cf. 1Q pHab 7: 3–5.

[13] *Mendels D.* Memory in Jewish, Pagan and Christian Societies *of the* Graeco-Roman World: Fragmented Memory – Comprehensive Memory – Collective Memory. London, New York: T&T Clark, 2004. P. 115.

determination. According to this strategy, the Old Testament heroes were transformed into "Christians", including in opposition to Judaism. One of the first systematic attempts at such a transformation belongs to Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), who creates an image of Christianity as a triumphant world religion. This process is inextricably linked with the institutionalization of Christianity, with its transformation into a state religion. In his works – "Church History", "Preparation for the Gospel", "Demonstration of the Gospel", the theologian systematically implements the program of "Christianization" of the realities of the Old Testament. The example of the biblical Ninevites, as we show in our dissertation, adheres to this scheme (§§ 1.6.1, 1.6.2.).

It should be noted, however, that Syriac Christian literature, to which our dissertation research is devoted, occupies a special position in comparison with Greek and Latin, due to the linguistic and cultural affinity of Jews and Syrians in northern Mesopotamia, where Ephraim the Syrian, the likely author of the memrah On Nineveh and Jonah, lived. In Nisibis, the hometown of the Syrian poet-theologian, located on the border of the Roman and Persian empires, there was a Jewish community, the first information about which dates back to the I-II centuries AD.[14] Scholars have long spoken of the significant similarity of exegetical methods of interpreting the Holy Scriptures in Hebrew and Syriac literature[15]. At the same time, we can talk not only about the relationship of Ephraim the Syrian and other Syrian authors with the Jews of their time, but about the common heritage of concepts dating back to ancient Mesopotamian and Aramaic literature, as we have demonstrated with the example of the image of the inspired teacher-scribe[16]. In fact, ancient Mesopotamian, Aramaic, and Jewish concepts served as a kind of analogue of

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[14] *Neusner J.* History of the Jews in Babylonia. Vol. 1. The Parthian Period. Leiden: Brill, 1999. P. 47–52; *Oppenheimer A.* Nehardea und Nisibis bei Josephus (Ant. 18) // Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society/ Ed. by Oppenheimer N. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. P. 356–373. (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum; 108.); *Eshel B.-Z.* Jewish Settlements in Babylonia during Talmudic Times: Talmudic Onomasticon. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979. [On Hebrew]; *Kearsley R.* The Epitaph of Aberkios: The Earliest Christian Inscription? // New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity. Vol. 6: A Review of The Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1980–81 / Ed. by Llewelyn S. R. Marrickville: Macquarie University, 1992. P. 177–181.

[15] See, e.g., *Kronholm T.* Motifs from Genesis 1-11 in the genuine hymns of Ephrem the Syrian with particular reference to the influence of Jewish exegetical tradition. Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1978. (Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series; 11.); *Narinskaya E.* Ephrem, a 'Jewish' Sage: A Comparison of the Exegetical Writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian and Jewish Traditions (Studia Traditionis Theologiae: Explorations in Early and Medieval Theology). Brepols: Brepols Publishers, 2010; *Macina R.* L'homme à l'école de Dieu. D'Antioch à Nisibe: Profil herméneutique, théologique et kérygmatique du mouvement scoliaste nestorien // Proche-Orient Chrétien. 1982. T. 32. P. 86–124, 263–301; 1983. T. 33. P. 39–103; *Brock S.* Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources // Journal of Jewish Studies. 1979. № 30. P. 212–232; *Idem.* A Palestinian Targum Feature in Syriac // Journal of Jewish Studies. 1995. № 46. P. 271–282; *Bar-Asher Siegal M.* Judaism and Syriac Christianity // The Syriac World / Ed. D. King. London; New York, 2019. P. 146–156; Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium / Ed. by A. Butts, S. Gross. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism; 180.) et al.

[16] Cf. *Fomicheva S. V.* Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period as a Possible Source for Ephraim the Syrian's Concept of a God-Inspired Teacher-Scribe (on the Example of the Sixth Hymn "On the Crucifixion") // Vestnik of St. Tikhon's Orthodox University. Ser. III: Philology. Vol. 73. 2022. Pp. 103–118; *She is the same.* Astronomical and Calendar Calculations of Ephraim the Syrian in the 6th Hymn "On the Crucifixion" in the Babylonian, Jewish and Christian Context // Bulletin of St. Tikhon's Orthodox University. Series III: Philology. 2023. Iss. 77. S. 107–124; Cf. *Annus A.* The Survivals of the Ancient Syrian and Mesopotamian Intellectual Traditions in the Writings of Ephrem Syrus // Ugarit Forschungen. 2006. Vol. 38. P. 1–25.

paideia for the Syriansfor educated Greek- and Latin-speaking theologians. In the memrah this can be seen in the role of Judeo-Aramaic wisdom and instruction (*marduto,* Heb. *musar*), through the prism of which polemics are introduced into the text (§§ 1.6.2, 2.3, 2.4).

The memra we are studying stands apart from the "anti-Jewish" Christian writings, including Syrian. It (with the exception of the very end of the work) does not mention Jesus, so there is no typical accusatory rhetoric, there is no pre-educational interpretation of events. The Old Testament text itself becomes the “battlefield”, and its narrative reading becomes the main argument: amplification of the original source; “apocryphal” additions to the story of the prophet Jonah, based on intertextuality with various biblical books; parody. This innovation makes the text an important link in the study of Judeo-Christian polemical literature.

It should be emphasized that, as we show in our study, the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” was originally written for a liturgical context, for the preaching during the Lent (§ 2.4). Over time, it began to be used during another liturgical phenomenon – the so-called “prayer of the Ninevites”. Therefore, it is highly likely that its content was intended exclusively for a Christian audience during the worship service and thus was not intended to stir up a real inter-religious conflict.

For a modern researcher, the perception of the text causes an ambiguous reaction. On the one hand, the “artistic” way of reading the biblical text in itself, for example, fully realized in the monologue of King Nineveh (vv. 513-822), the freedom of the Syriac poet-theologian, the innovation of his literary devices (“embedded narratives”) cannot but arouse interest and testifies to high skill, mastery of language and style. On the other hand, it is impossible not to note the author's one-sided view of the Ninevites and their antagonists, the Jews. The utopian image of the Ninevites as absolute “righteous men” and of contemporary Jews who commit pagan sins as absolute “wicked” is, of course, far from an unbiased, objective position. Such an approach of the author of the memra, in the light of the above, is a consequence of the processes of consolidation of the nascent Syriac Church, its self-determination and rethinking of the common heritage of the Old Testament. It is an integral part of the era, should be perceived only in its context and, of course, cannot be transferred to the modern interreligious relations.

The scientific novelty of the work is due to the fact that the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” is an important link in establishing the origin and development of the genre “memra” in the Syriac tradition of religious speech. For the first time, the work analyzes in detail the theological content and literary form of the Syriac memra “On Nineveh and Jonah”. For the first time, the role of the biblical and post-biblical Jewish literature of Wisdom is proved, on the one hand, as the basis for the edifying and exhortatory function of the work, and, on the other hand, as an object for parody. For the first time, the author proves the role of the liturgical context of the memra – the Quadragesima – as a source of imagery of collective repentance and anti-Jewish

criticism in the memra, and the circle of Lenten biblical readings as an impulse for the literary treatment of these readings in the memra (the book of the prophet Jonah, the book of Genesis, the book of Proverbs etc.) in the form of analogies and monologue speeches of the characters. It is shown how the author himself considers his work as a "false" story, a "consolation" that becomes a prophecy in the mouths of people who demonstrate the proper religious behavior and is able (according to the author's worldview) to influence the favorable result of a catastrophic situation. The numerous examples from this memra for the first time illustrate the methode of the "implicit" theology applyed by the author: the main theological ideas are not presented directly in the speech by the narrator but they are involved in a very rhetorical form of the narrative.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research results. The study of the ideas and the form of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" contribute to the understanding of the peculiarities of the biblical exegesis in Syriac memre in comparison with theological commentaries. It can allow to appreciate the specific features of the rhetorical form of Syriac memra and clarify the connection between the liturgical context and the chosen literary form. The practical value of the dissertation is due to the fact that its main conclusions can be introduced into the university curriculum and used in the lecture courses and seminars on liturgics, literary studies and in a number of special courses and special seminars on Syriology, Aramaic Studies, Byzantine Studies.

The structure of the work is determined by the set goals and objectives. The dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. There are 236 titles in the list of sources and scientific literature.

In the Chapter 1 is given a general description of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah": surviving manuscripts, ancient translations, summary, issues of dating, authorship, and integrity of the text. There are analyzed two key theological and exegetical themes of the memra: the role of the pagan Ninevites and the role of the Jews, considered in the broad context of Jewish and Christian literature. There are analyzed the features of anti-Jewish criticism and its biblical origins. There are shown the methods that the author uses to create his anti-Jewish narrative. In the Chapter 2, we focus on one of the main features of the narrative in the Syriac memra – the desire to intersect the "depicted", "fictitious" world with the real one. We identify one of the main literary devices of the author – the use of the monologue speeches of the characters, often containing the "embedded" stories. Here we analyze their rhetorical form, intertextuality with biblical and non-biblical works, their connection with the liturgical context of the memra. In the Chapter 3 we consider the rhetorical form of the Syriac work – the figures, the tropes, the formulae. In the 4th chapter, we have drawn the final conclusions about the genre of the Syriac work. The conclusion

contains the results of our scientific research, as well as prospects for a further study of Syriac narrative memre.

Approbation of the results of the study. The study was tested in the form of the reports at the following conferences:

1. "The "embedded stories" in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah": About a Special Narrative Technique in the Syrian Memre". International Conference "The Christian East: Interaction with Other Cultures". St. Petersburg, The State Hermitage Museum, 15.09.2021-17.09.2021.
2. "Saint Ephraim – "Scribe of the Mysteries of God": Targumic Parallels. Scientific Conference "History and Literature of the Christian East". Moscow, St. Tikhon's Orthodox University, January 22, 2022
3. "About Some Narrative Techniques for Involving the Audience in the Liturgical Narrative on the Example of the Memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" Attributed to St. Ephraim the Syrian." International Academic Conference "Byzantine Heritage in the History of Christianity: On the 30th Anniversary of the Repose of Protopresbyter Ioann Meyendorff". Moscow, St. Tikhon's Orthodox University, November 24, 2022. Section "Reception of Byzantine Heritage in the Christian East".
4. "Astronomical and Calendrical Calculations of Ephraim the Syrian (IV century) in the Christian and Jewish contexts". 51st International Scientific Philological Conference named after L. A. Verbitskaya, March 14–21, 2023, Section "The Bible and Christian Writing".
5. "The Other Face of St. Ephraim the Syrian – Syriac memre" Round Table "The Legacy of St. Ephraim the Syrian in Orthodox Theology and Divine Service" (on the occasion of the 1650th anniversary of his repose). November 10, 2023 Moscow, Nikolo-Ugresha Theological Seminary.

The following articles were published on the topic of the study:

1. Fomicheva S. V. About Some Christian Symbols in the Memra "On Jonah" by Efrem the Syrian. 2015. Ser. 9. Vyp. 4. P. 115–124.
2. Fomicheva. S. V. On the Question of the Influence of Greco-Roman Rhetoric on the Work of Ephraim the Syrian (on the Example of the Memra "On Nineveh and Jonah") // Source Studies of the Cultural Traditions of the East: Hebrew Studies – Hellenistic Studies – Syrology – Slavic Studies. Collection of Scientific Articles / Ed. by K. A. Bitner, N. S. Smelova. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies, 2016. P. 201–212.

3. Fomicheva S. V. Anti-Jewish Polemics and Internal Criticism in the Memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” of St. Ephraim the Syrian. 2021. Vyp. 40. P. 144–170.
4. Fomicheva S. V. To the Question About the Authorship of Ephraim the Syrian for the Memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” // FONS SAPIENTIAE VERBUM DEI. Collection of Scientific Articles in Honor of the 80th Anniversary of Professor Anatoly Alekseevich Alekseev / Ed. by A.V. Sizikov, E.L. Alekseeva. St. Petersburg, ILI RAN Publ., 2022. P. 250–260.
5. Fomicheva S. V. Anti-Exodus in the Memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” by Efrem the Syrian († 373) // Vestnik PSTGU. Series III: Philology. 2021. Vyp. 69. P. 116–129.
6. Fomicheva S. V. Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period as a Possible Source for the Concept of Ephraim the Syrian on the God-Inspired Teacher-Scribe (on the Example of the Sixth Hymn “On the Crucifixion”) // Vestnik PSTGU. Sir. III: Philology. Vol. 73. 2022. P. 103–118.
7. Fomicheva S. V. Nineveh vs Israel: How Christian Exegetes of The Books of the Prophet Jonah Interpret Historical Events // The Bible and Christian Antiquity. 2022. № 1 (12). P. 68–87.
8. Fomicheva S. V. Astronomical and Calendar Calculations of Efrem the Syrian in the 6th Hymn “On the Crucifixion” in the Babylonian, Jewish and Christian Context. Series III: Philology. 2023. Vyp. 77. P. 107–124.
9. Fomicheva S. V. The Book of the Prophet Jonah Through the Prism of Wisdom Literature: The Case of the Memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” (St. Ephraim the Syrian?) // Filaret Almanac. 2024. Vyp. 20 (1). P. 9–26.

The main theses to be defended are:

1. The basis for the anti-Jewish criticism in the memra is the Bible itself: the biblical literature of Wisdom, the book of Deuteronomy and the prophetic literature. The author of the memra derives the fate of the Jews, in his opinion, from the dichotomy of the “two paths” of sapiential literature, from the dichotomy of those who fulfill and break the covenant with God in Deuteronomy, and from the self-criticism in the prophetic books. He forces the Jews in the memra to implement the negative scenario of these patterns, with initially two possible behaviors, while the Ninevites follow the second, positive “branch”.
2. In his story of the “anti-Exodus” the author of the memra deliberately parodies the post-biblical sapiential literature of the Second Temple period, in which, growing out of the impulse of the biblical Deuteronomy, is appeared the story of the Jews as a wise teacher

who taught the pagans — a circle of such texts as the Apocrypha of the Book of Genesis, the Testament of Levi, the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates etc.

3. A peculiarity of quoting the Bible in memra is (with rare exceptions) the absence of special citation markers ("as written" etc.) which is intended to emphasize the inextricable connection of the text of the memra with biblical intertexts and speech by the author.
4. A peculiarity of quoting the Bible in memra is the use of "double" quotation when is chosen one or another biblical expression used in both the Old and New Testaments and put into the mouth of a character of the book of the prophet Jonah. Thus, it is emphasized the special "borderline" character of this biblical book and the integrity of the biblical text.
5. The "embedded stories" within the monologue speeches of the characters are one of the most striking literary tools in the memra.
6. The "game" between the "depicted", "fictive" world of the narrative and the real world is an important literary strategy of the author of the Syrian work.
7. In terms of the rhetoric the memra of Nineveh and Jonah is a hybrid of (Judeo)-Hellenistic and Aramaic-Syriac rhetoric.
8. From the point of view of the genre, the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is a genre hybrid that combines the elements of anti-Jewish "counter-history", the Lenten sermon, the "Christian Wisdom", the lamentation, the dispute poem etc.

Main scientific results

1. One of the most important "innovative" polemical arguments in the memra is the "anti-Exodus" story, which is based on intertextuality with the biblical books of Exodus and Deuteronomy (52:119–121).
2. The Jewish-Christian polemics in the memra are combined with an internal critique of the author's own Christian community [52:125–126].
3. The role of the biblical and non-biblical literature of Wisdom as a kind of metatext that sets the "coordinates" of the moral interpretation of biblical events in memra, as well as in the authentic works of Ephraim the Syrian [58: 106–107, 110–114; 59:109, 110, 118].
4. A special feature of the Syriac work under study is the use, first of all, of Old Testament intertexts, but a thorough analysis has revealed the special role of New Testament imagery in memr within the framework of "implicit" theology [51:116–122].

5. From the point of view of genre, the tanalysed ext is a hybrid genre that combines elements of polemical “counter-history”, sermons for the period of the Lent, “Christian Wisdom”, lamentations, and poems-disputes [52: 123–126].
6. There is an absence of the topic in the memra, which is related to something written: writings, books etc. This is clearly different from the madrashe of Ephraim the Syrian, where is emphasized the special, theologically motivated role of writing, books, and scribes [54:110–114; 59:118–119]. That may be related to the special tradition of memra as an “oral” story.
7. A peculiarity of quoting the Bible in memra is (with rare exceptions) is the absence of special citation markers (“as it is written” etc.), which is intended to emphasize the inextricable connection between the text of the memra and the biblical intertexts [52:120, 121].

Chapter 1. The memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" and its main theological and exegetical themes

The memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is a large poetic work consisting of 2142 lines written in the isosyllabic meter of 7+7, typical for the memre of Ephraim the Syrian[17]. As the title implies, it interprets the Book of Jonah, but the author's method of exegesis differs from the common Greek and Latin interpretations, where each verse of the biblical book is usually analyzed in succession. The type of interpretation presented in the memr is called narrative *exegesis*, the result of which is a new narrative, which is its distinctive feature[18]. Dramatic elements, such as monologues and dialogues of biblical characters, in which details of the narrative that are missing from the original biblical material are reconstructed, thanks to which the text is given the "necessary perspective of understanding"[19] becomes indispensable. The narrative exegesis is characterized by selectivity. For example, the author of the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is not interested in the events of the first two chapters of the Book of Jonah, but focuses on the events of the third and last fourth chapters, since he is primarily concerned with the reaction of the Ninevites to Jonah's preaching. Thus, it is the Ninevites, not the prophet Jonah, who become the protagonists of the Syriac narrative. The interpretation of the events of the biblical book is followed by a non-biblical sequel about the journey of the Ninevites to the homeland of the prophet Jonah, which makes up almost a third of the entire work.

In the course of our analysis, we will show that the definition of "narrative exegesis" does not accurately describe the peculiarities of the interpretation of the biblical text in the Syriac memre, and in the fifth chapter we will try to clarify it. Also, in Chapter 2 we analyze the liturgical

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[17] This meter is associated with the name of Ephraim the Syrian, although isosyllabism was probably inherent in Syriac poetry already in antiquity. One of the earliest examples of the use of the 7 + 7 meter is recorded in a poetic fragment from the Letter of Mara Bar Serapion (1st–2nd centuries). (*Brock S.* Syriac and Greek Hymnography: Problems of Origin // Studies in Syriac Christianity // Studies in Syriac Christianity: History, Literature and Theology. Aldershot: Variorum, 2001. P. 77–81. Here, p. 77). After Ephraim the Syrian, the anonymous authors of the fifth-century memre, apparently wishing to imitate Ephraim, also used the 7+7 meter. Later, new variations of isosyllabic meter appeared: for example, the Syrian poet-theologian of the 5th century Balai used 5 + 5 meters, the 5th-6th century poet Jacob of Sarug used a line of three half-verses of 4 syllables each: 4 + 4 + 4.

[18] About the narrative exegesis in Syriac memre and sogyātā see: *Upson-Saia K.* Caught in a Compromising Position: The Biblical Exegesis and Characterization of Biblical Protagonists in the Syriac Dialogue Hymns // Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies. 2006. 9.2. P. 189–211; *Griffith S.* The Poetics of Scriptural Reasoning: Syriac Mêmrê at Work // Papers presented at the seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015. Leuven: Peeters, 2017. Vol. 4: Literature, rhetoric, and exegesis in Syriac verse / ed. by Wickes J., Heal K. P. 5–24. (Studia Patristica; 78.); *Heal S.* Construal and Construction of Genesis in Early Syriac Sermons // Papers presented at the seventeenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2015. Leuven: Peeters, 2017. Vol. 4: Literature, rhetoric, and exegesis in Syriac verse / ed. by Wickes J., Heal K. P. 25–32. (Studia Patristica; 78.) et al.

[19] *Golovnina N. G., Dmitrieva E. D.* Anonymous Sogita about Abraham and Isaac (V century) // Vestnik PSTGU. Series III: Philology. 2023. Vyp. 77, pp. 137–155. Here, P. 137.

Sitz im Leben memra, which we suppose as the Quadragesima. Final conclusions about the genre of the work will be made in the seventh chapter of the dissertation research.

1.1. The written tradition, editions and translations

The Syriac original of the memra was first published by the famous scholars and collectors of Syriac manuscripts, maronite Christians I. S. Assemani and B. Mubarak in 1740.[20] They were based on the *Vatican manuscript. Syr. 117* (XII century). It was from this edition that Henry Burgess translated the memra into English in 1853[21]. In 1970, the Dominican friar Edmund Beck, a major scholar and publisher of Ephraim the Syrian, published the Syriac text in the *CSCO* series and translated it into German[22]. The Syriac text in this edition is based on three manuscripts: *Vatican. Syr. 117* (hereinafter Y), *British Library Add. 14573* (6th century) (hereinafter W) and *Dublin B. 5.18* (1625) (hereinafter T). In our study, we translate the Syriac text according to this edition and adhere to its numbering of verses.

More recently, several other manuscripts have come to light that contain the text of the memra «On Nineveh and Jonah»in whole or in part. For example, the *manuscript Sparagma* 31 (7th-8th centuries), discovered in 1975 in the monastery of St. Catherine. Catherine's Church at Sinai, contains a fragment of text (vv. 257-493 with several lacunae)[23] .

Since the memra was used for the liturgy during the three-day fast of the "rogation of the Ninevites", its text has been preserved in the East Syriac[24] and West Syriac[25] liturgical collections.

In addition to English and German, the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" has been translated into other modern languages. In 1851 was published a translation into Russian in the series TSO [26]. In this translation there is no division into verses, it is distinguished by numerous inaccuracies and is abundant with the superfluous Old Slavonisms. In some places the translation is clearly not from the Syriac original, but from an ancient Greek translation.

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[20] *Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri opera omnia quae exstant Graece, Syriace, Latine, in sex tomos distribute. Vol. II.* Rome: Typographia Vaticana apud Joannem Mariam Henricum Salvioni, 1743. P. 359−387.

[21] *Burgess H.* (Transl.), The Repentance of Nineveh, a Metrical Homily on the Mission of Jonah, by Ephraem Syrus. Also, An Exhortation to Repentance, and Some Smaller Pieces. Translated from the Original Syriac, with an Introduction and Notes, by the Rev. Henry Burgess Ph.D., of Göttingen, Curate of St. Mary's, Blackburn, and Translator of "Select Metrical Hymns and Homilies of Ephraem Syrus". London: Robert B. Blackader, 1853.

[22] Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO; 311. Syr; 134.). S. 1–40 (Syriac text). Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO; 312. Syr; 135.) S. 1–53 (German translation).

[23] *Brock S.* Ephrem's Verse Homily on Jonah and the Repentance of Nineveh: Notes on the Textual Tradition // Philohistôr: Miscellanea in Honorem Caroli Laga Septuagenarii. Leuven: Peeters, 1994. P. 71–86. Here P. 73.

[24] *Ṭeksā da-ṣlōtā... d-bāʿūtā d-Ninwāye*. Vol. 1. Urmiah: Archbishop of Canterbury's Assyrian Misssionary Press, 1896. P. 215−286; *Breviarium iuxta ritum syrorum orientalium id est Chaldaeorum* .Vol. 1 / ed. by P. Bedjan. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1886−1887. P. 438−466; *Ḥudra.* Vol. 1 / ed. by T. Darmo. Trichur: Mar Narsai Press, 1960−1962. P. 344−388.

[25] *Fenquitho*. Breviarium iuxta ritum Ecclesiae Antiochenae Syrorum. Vol. III. Mosul, 1889. P. 108b−138a.

[26] Creations / St. Ephraim the Syrian. [Reprint ed.]. Moscow, 1993–1996. / T. 5. Moscow, Otchiy dom Publ., 1995. On the words from the book of the prophet Jonah, "Arise and go to Nineveh". P. 54–91.

In 2015, the memra was translated into Serbian[27]. In 2019, Emanuele Zimbardi translated the memra into Italian with an extensive introduction[28].

1.2. The ancient translations

It is important to note that the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" was already translated into a number of languages of the Christian East, as well as into Latin, in antiquity. The Greek translation of the memra survives in a single manuscript in the collection of the Bodleian Library. *Auct. T. 3.12* (XV century).[29] In 1915 S. Mercati published an excerpt from this translation, and it was not until 1967 that the complete Greek text, published by D. Emmerdenje-Iliad, became available[30]. The Greek text of the memra was the subject of research in the dissertations of Wonmo Su and Emanuel Zimbardi[31]. Researchers have come to the conclusion that the translation of the memra into Greek was made quite early, no later than the middle of the 6th century.[32] In his work, Emanuele Zimbardi cites many of the most interesting features of the Greek translation of the memra. Thus, first of all, the Greek translator of the memra seeks to preserve the seven-syllable isosyllabic meter of the Syriac original. Often he modifies it only slightly, creating a stanza formed from four columns. As far as meaning is concerned, the translator clearly seeks to omit and shorten the numerous anti-Jewish passages of the memra, to lower their pathetic intensity and emotionality. It is also noteworthy that he avoids the name "Assur", which is repeatedly used in the memre, as it is incomprehensible to the Greek reader and lacks the semantic content that it has for the Syrians. The researcher emphasizes that the Greek translator demonstrates a deep knowledge of both Syriac and Greek.

The ancient Georgian version of the memra has been preserved in a single manuscript from the monastery of St. Catherine. St. Catherine's Church on Mount Sinai, dating back to the 9th-

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[27] *Eric B.* Memra Mar Ephraim the Blessed: On Nineveh and Jonah (introduction, translation from the Syrian original and commentaries) // When Israel was a child: Proceedings in honor of Professor Dragan Milinaon on the occasion of his 70th Birthday /edited by Kubat R. Belgrade: Orthodox Faculty of Theology University of Belgrade, Bible Institute, 2015 C. 113–174.

[28] Ephrem Syriac Sermon on Nineveh and Jonah, edited by Emanuele Zimbardi. Turin: Paideia Editrice, 2019.

[29] *Bodl. Auct. T. 3. 12*, foil 152v–173v.

[30] *Hemmerdinger-Iliadou D*. Saint Ephrem the Syrian: Sermon on Jonah (unpublished Greek text) // The Museum. 1967. No. 80. P. 47−74.

[31] *Suh W.* From the Syriac Ephrem to the Greek Ephrem: A Case Study of the Influence of Ephrem's ìsosyllabic Sermons (Mêmrê) on Greek-speaking Christianity. Princeton, 2000; *Zimbardi E.* The Greek translation of the Sermon on Nineveh and Jonah by the Syrian Ephrem. New critical edition and study on translation technique, tutors G. Agosti, A. Camplani, J. Niehoff-Panagiotidis, Sapienza University of Rome – Freie Universität. Berlin, 2019. The fragment from the recension on the dissertation by Zimbardi is in: Zimbardi E. The Greek translation... [Fact sheet elaborated on the basis of the abstract and the opinions of the reviewers Pier Giorgio Borbone, University of Pisa, and Carla Castelli, University of Milan] // Adamantius. Yearbook of Ancient Christian Literature and Judeo-Hellenistic Studies. Journal of the Italian Research Group on "Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition". 2019. No 25. P. 479–481.

[32] *Suh W.* From the Syriac Ephrem to the Greek Ephrem… P. 136; *Zimbardi E*. Translating from Syriac into Greek… P. 303–304.

10th centuries.[33] The ancient Georgian text of the homily is very different from the Syriac original, so the researchers have drawn a conclusion that the translation was not made directly from the Syriac language but through the mediation of the Greek translation[34].

In 1836, the Mekhitarist monks published an ancient Armenian version of the memra, which has been preserved in several manuscripts[35]. In contrast to the Old Georgian translation, the Armenian translation was probably translated from the Syriac original, without the intermediary of the Greek[36].

An Ethiopian translation of the Nineveh and Jonah memra was published in 1984.[37] It is based on a single manuscript from *the British Library Or.*768 (XVIII century). The translation of the memra into the ancient Ethiopian language (Ge'ez) was made either from the Syriac original or through the mediation of an Arabic translation, which, however, no tracehas survived[38].

Several manuscripts have also been preserved containing a translation of the memra into Latin[39]. As we shall discuss later, the Latin translation of the memra seems to have been familiar with the Gallic theologian Caesarius of Arles.

1.3. The problem of the authorship

The question of the authorship of the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is one of the key problems of the text. There is a good basis for the authorship of Ephraim the Syrian as far as the manuscript history of the text is concerned. The Syriac text is preserved in the manuscript Br. M. Add. 14573 (6th century), which, in addition to this work, contains the unquestionably authentic works of the Syrian poet-theologian[40]. Edmund Beck and Sebastian Broca considered the memra of Nineveh and Jonah to be an authentic work by Ephraim the Syrian, but their opinion is based on general observations rather than a thorough analysis of the text.

Other researchers, Christine Shepardson and André de Halleux, have expressed doubts about the authenticity of the work. For example, André de Halleux believes that the memra was written to be read during the liturgy of the so-called "fasting" or "rogation of the Ninevites", which was formed in the East Syriac tradition no earlier than the 6th century. He could hardly have known about the "rogation of the Ninevites", and the author of the memra is a native of the Nineveh-

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[33] *Cod. georg. 97*, fol. 197ra–230vb.
[34] *Garitte G.* St. Ephrem's sermon on Jonah in Georgian // The Museum. 1967. No. 80. P. 75–120. Here P. 76.
[35] *Srboyn Ep'remi matenagrut'iwnk'*, IV. Venice, 1836. P. 107–204.
[36] *Garitte G.* The Armenian Version of St. Ephrem's Sermon on Jonah // Journal of Armenian Studies. 1969. No. 6. P. 23−43.
[37] *Arras V.* Asceticon. Leuven, 1984. (CSCO 458–459; Scriptores Aethiopici 77–78). P. 111-141 (Ethiopic text); P. 73−95 (Latin translation).
[38] *Brock S.* Ephrem's Verse Homily on Jonah … P. 72.
[39] For example, *Vat. Palat. 210*, fol. 246r–260v (7–8 ce.); *Vat. Lat. 4951*, fol. 153r–201r (XII в.). The text of the manuscript *Vat. Palat. 210* under the title «*De Poenitentia Ninivitarum»,* attributed to Augistin, is edited in *Mai A.* Patrum nova bibliotheca, I vol. (continens Sancti Augustini novos ex codicibus vaticanis sermones). Roma: Typis sacrii consilii propagando christiani nomini, 1852. P. 193–204.
[40] *Brock S.* Ephrem's Verse Homily on Jonah … P. 74.

Mosul region, who lived no earlier than the fifth century.[41] Again, this conclusion is made in a short article whose purpose was not to analyze the Syriac text. In the section 2.4 we show that the "rogation of the Ninevites" most likely had nothing to do with the original text, so de Halleux's assumption is not an argument sufficient to exclude the authorship of Ephraim the Syrian.

Christine Shepardson, comparing this memra with the authentic work of a Syrian theologian dedicated to Jonah, the ten hymns of the cycle of hymns "On Virginity" (hymns 42-50), comes to the conclusion, that these works could hardly have been written by the same person. She points out such differences between the memra and the hymns as a more positive assessment of the figure of the prophet Jonah, an atypical focus on the Ninevites instead of Jonah, the unusual absence of references to "God", "the Son", and "Jesus" and the more moderate anti-Jewish criticism diluted with criticism of the author's Christian community[42]. Shepardson made some very important observations, noticing for the first time the great "unusualness" of this memra. But in the volume of one article, without a detailed analysis of the work, it is simply impossible to prove or disprove the authorship of Ephraim the Syrian for this work.

Emanuele Zimbardi, the author of the most detailed study of the memra that precedes our own, analyses the text as if it were from the pen of Ephraim the Syrian, and finds in it many similarities with his theological ideas and their poetic expressions, such as antitheses and paradoxes[43].

In our opinion, the very fact that some researchers, having become acquainted with this text, doubt the authorship of Ephraim the Syrian, makes us think, because no one doubts the authenticity of most of his other works. Even Edmund Beck, who considered the text to be the authentic work of Ephraim, implicitly senses some difference between it and other works of the Syriac poet-theologian. Thus, describing the rhetoric of memra, the researcher notes that "Ephraim is *more than usual* here [emphasis is mine – S.F.] plays with such rhetorical figures as parallelism and antithesis"[44].

Our study is the first attempt to analyze the form and content of this Syriac work in the context of Syriac and non-Syriac exegesis of the book of Jonah. In the course of our analysis, we discovered many similarities between the memra and the original works of Ephraim the Syrian, especially those associated with his hometown of Nisibis. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there are more almost verbatim correspondences between the memra and the works of

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[41] *Halleux A. de* On the Ephemian Sermon on Jonah and the Penance of the Ninevites // Lingua Restituta Orientalis. Festgabe für Julius Assfalg. Wiesbaden, 1990. (Ägypten und Altes Testament 20). P. 155–166. Here P. 155.
[42] *Shepardson C.* Interpreting the Ninevites Repentance: Jewish and Christian Exegetes in Late Antique Mesopotamia // Hugoye. 2011.Vol. 14. Here P. 260–261.
[43] Ephrem the Syrian Sermon on Nineveh and Jonah... P. 56–59.
[44] Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO; 312. Syr; 135.) S. vi.

Ephraim the Syrian than between other unquestionably authentic works of the Syrian poet-theologian. It seems to us that we have succeeded in explaining the "unusual aspects" of the work to which Christine Shepardson points out. However, however, we believe that our research can neither prove nor disprove the authorship of Ephraim the Syrian. It only shows that the memra of Nineveh and Jonah, even if it belongs to the pen of Ephraim the Syrian, is very atypical among his original works, although this great master of words wrote works of the most diverse genres, sometimes very different from each other. The memra's redundancy and lengthiness of biblical events contrasts sharply with the conciseness and ideological capacity of Ephraim's madrashim, and the originality and psychologism of the memra cannot be compared with his few narrative works, such as commentaries on the biblical books of Genesis and Exodus. In addition, in other works of Ephraim the Syrian, we do not find such "apocryphal" freedom, which is characteristic of memra, when the biblical text is not only enriched with numerous details, but also receives a continuation. A very important formal distinction of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" was pointed out by Edmund Beck: while in most of the works of the Syrian theologian, both madrashe and memre, there is a close connection between every two long verses consisting of two half-verses, in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" there is no such close connection[45].

Therefore, we believe that only a linguistic analysis of authorship, such as stylometry, could be a sufficient basis for confirming or refuting the authorship of Ephraim the Syrian. Until such an analysis is made, we consider the authorship of Ephraim the Syrian to be unproven, and in our dissertation, we will use the title "author of memra". This decision of ours may give rise to the justifiable objection that in this way we violate the principle of "Occam's razor" and multiply entities unnecessarily, introducing some indefinite authority "author of memra" other than Ephraim the Syrian. Moreover, we cannot offer any other real authorship – neither Narsai nor Jacob of Sarug, who composed their memre about Jonah, could have been authors; it is unlikely that the memra could have been written by anyone from the so-called "school of Ephraim", since the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is much longer and more complex than the samples of the "school".[46] Nevertheless, we believe that the unconditional designation of the author of this work as "Ephraim the Syrian" in the dissertation would create a false impression of the absence of special problems associated with this work.

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[45] *Beck E.* Ephrem of the Syrian, hymns // Liturgy and poetry. An interdisciplinary compendium. Gualtero Duerig annum vitae septuagesimum feliciter complenti / Ed. by H. Becker, R. Kaczynski. St Ottilien: Eos Verlag Archabbey of St. Otilien, 1983. Vol. 1. P. 345–379. Here P. 363.

[46] Cf. the memra "On the Signs Moses Performed in Egypt": *Hartung B.* The Mêmrâ on the Signs Moses Performed in Egypt: An Exegetical Homily of the "School" of Ephrem" // Hugoye. 2018. Vol. 21. Issue 2. P. 319–356.

1.4. The dating

If we have before us the work of Ephraim the Syrian, then it was written, respectively, before 373, i.e. the year of the poet-theologian's death. Ephraim the Syrian lived in two cities of key importance in the history of Syrian Christians. He was born and spent most of his life in the city of Nisibis, located in northern Mesopotamia on the border of Byzantium and the Persian Empire (present-day Nusaybin in southeastern Turkey), which is why he is often referred to as "Ephraim of Nisibis". During the lifetime of Ephraim the Syrian until 363, Nisibis was part of the Byzantine Empire, and during the life of the poet-theologian it survived three sieges by the Persian Shah Shapur II, which Ephraim the Syrian described in his Nisibis hymns. Three times the inhabitants of the city won a victory over the Persians, but as a result of the peace treaty of the Emperor Jovian with Shapur II in 363, the city with a number of other border fortresses was transferred to the Persian Empire. Ephraim the Syrian, like most of the Christian population of the city, left it and moved to the city of Edessa, where he spent the last ten years of his life. It was Nisibis, where the poet-theologian spent most of his life, who determined his work. Many of his works were devoted to this probably multinational and multi-confessional city, information about which, unfortunately, is extremely scarce[47]. Ephraim the Syrian spent the last decade of his life in an equally important city, Edessa (Syriac name Urhai, modern city of Shanli Urfa in Turkey), the cradle of Syriac Christianity.

The first question that arises if the memra was written by Ephraim the Syrian is whether it was written in Nisibis or Edessa. Some researchers have tried to substantiate the exact date of writing. For example, Winfrid Kramer believed that the memra was written during the reign of Julian the Apostate from 360 to 363 during his plans to reconstruct the Jewish Temple, or in Edessa immediately after these events. which, according to Kramer, provoked such a sharp anti-Jewish criticism in the memre[48]. We believe that there is no indication in the memr to support such a date, but in the meantime it is possible to find some facts not mentioned by the scholar that may indeed connect the text with Edessa. For example, above we analyze the role of warriors in the speech of the king of Nineveh in the memra and show that the appearance of the warriors and the call for the physical destruction of Israel at the end of the text, although referring to the In the Old Testament era, the text seems to have in common with such Edessa narratives as the "Teaching of Addai" and the "Roman of Julian", where calls for the destruction of Jews and pagans are not

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[47] About Nisibis see: *Sturm J.* Nisibis // Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumwissenschaft. Stuttgart, 1937. Bd. 17.1. S. 714–757; *Russell* P. S. Nisibis as the Background to the Life of Ephrem the Syrian. Hugoye. 2005. № 8. P. 179–235.

[48] *Cramer W.* Frohbotschaft des Erbarmens: die Jonaerzählung in der Rezeption des Syrers Ephräm // Textarbeit: Studien zu Texten und ihrer Rezeption aus dem Alten Testament und der Umwelt Israels. Festschrift für Peter Weimar / Hrsg. von Klaus Kiesow und Thomas Meurer. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2003. S. 93–115.

uncommon. Another reference to Edessa may be the use by Jürgen Tubach of the rare word ܣܗܕܐ ("diadem") in the memra (v. 1503)[49], which appears in the Teaching of Addai[50]. However, both of these phenomena are not, of course, precise proofs of the Edessa origin of the memra.

Uwe Steffen, in his book, which is more of a popular science book, suggested that the memra was written in 350 during the third siege of Nisibis by Shah Shapur II of Persia (309–380). To prove it, he cites the general character of the text, a "sermon of repentance" suitable for a catastrophic situation[51]. In section 2.1 and other sections of the dissertation, we identify numerous similarities between the memra and the works of Ephraim the Syrian written in Nisibis and/or mentioning him, such as the hymns "On Nisibis", the memre "On Nicomedia", the 1st memra "On the Exhortation", the memre "On the Faith" etc. Perhaps it is simply a matter of literary *topoi* describing the catastrophe and the miraculous escape from it, common to this memra and other works, and/or the deliberate quotation of these works by the author of the memra.

Only references to *terminus ad quem* can be considered indisputable. Firstly, it is the oldest manuscript in which a memra has been preserved, dating back to the sixth century, and secondly, it is an interesting circumstance that the Latin paraphrase of the memra was probably known to the Gallic bishop Caesarius of Arles (d. 542)[52]. In his sermon "On the Repentance of the Ninevites" (Sermo 143), Caesarius quotes from the Memra an entire paragraph dealing with anti-Jewish criticism, borrowing such a designation of the Ninevites as "the progenies of Canaan" (*progenies Chanaan*)[53] , found only in the Syriac memra and its ancient translations. It must have taken some time to translate the memra into Latin, probably from Greek, before Caesarius could become acquainted with it, so the *terminus ad quem* of the memra can be taken from about the fifth century to the middle of the sixth century. The very fact that a Western theologian was acquainted with the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is very remarkable and deserves a separate study. Firstly, it confirms the influence of the Greek East on the Gallic Christian tradition that has been repeatedly

[49] According to manuscript T: ܒܓܕܐ "white robes", probably *lectio facilior*.

[50] *Tubach J.* Syr. Haudā = Diadem Oder Tiara? // Syria. Archaeology, Art and History. 1995. Volume 72. Paper 3-4. P. 381–385.

[51] *Steffen U.* The Jonah story: its interpretation and presentation in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Neukirchener: Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1994. P. 84.

[52] *Duval Y.-M.* The Book of Jonah in Greek and Latin Christian Literature: Sources and Influences of St. Jerome's Commentary on Jonah. 2 vols. Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1973. P. 311.

[53]Cf. Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis Sermones: nunc primum in unum collecti et ad leges artis criticae ex innumeris mss. recogniti. Pars prima, continens praefationem, sermones de diversis et de scriptura veteris testament / ed. Morin G. Turnholti: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii, 1953. (Corpus Christianorum Series Latina; 103). P. 588, 5–11: «Nimirum quantum de Assyriis laetatus est, tantum de sua est gente confuses: Ninevitas quotienscumque laudasset, *Abrahae filios* (emphasis is mine – S.F.) mox lugebat. *Progenies Chanaan* (emphasis is mine – S.F.) proficiebat, et *Iacob semen* (emphasis is mine – S.F.) errabat: hic praeputium gentium inveniebat, quod illic circumcisio stulta perdiderat; inter Iudaeos sabbata nuda servantur, et inter gentes integra praecepta conplentur» and the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" vs. 905–910. Cf. 588, 11–15 and the memra vv. 937–950.

noted by researchers, for example, by Father John Mayendorff[54], and, secondly, it testifies to the interest of the preachers in the Syrian memre which went beyond the boundaries of the Christian East.

1.5. The integrity of the text

Another important question is the integrity of the text. Edmund Beck has considered the greater part of the text as a unite written by a single author[55]. Only at the very end of the text he notes a small corruption[56]. On the other hand, Christine Shepardson has noted that it is possible that the preacher's addresses to the audience in the memre criticizing the author's Christian community may have been added later to the original anti-Jewish text[57].

In our opinion there are no sufficient arguments that would prove with certainty that certain parts of the text could have been added later, although this possibility cannot be completely excluded. The unity of the text is evidenced by the fact that all ancient translations, including the earliest, the Greek, contain both praises of the Ninevites and the preacher's address to the community, as well as anti-Jewish criticism. The text of the memra itself, in form and content, rather testifies to the inner unity. For example, in Chapter 6 we will show that the "praise of the Ninevites" and "blasphemy of the Jews" in large blocks are roughly symmetrical to each other, both in terms of content—the emphasis on social equality and social justice on the one hand, and their complete absence on the other—and in terms of the chosen rhetorical form. To divide the text into "anti-Judaic" and "praising the Ninevites as (proto-)Christians" is an oversimplification. Although there are many Christian texts that emphasize the virtue of the Ninevites and do not say a single word about anti-Jewish criticism (e.g., the sermons of Maximus of Turin or John Chrysostom), the memrah author's intent, clearly starting from such an idea, combines it with other concepts that contrast the virtue of the Ninevites with the wicked behavior of the Jews. In our study, we will show that the anti-Jewish criticism in the memra is a natural consequence of the author's worldview and is "attached" to the narrative of Jonah and the Ninevites through the use of the literature of Wisdom as the source of the teaching of the two paths. It is also important that the basis for such an understanding of the text is most likely the circle of liturgical readings during Lent, during which the book of the prophet Jonah, the book of Proverbs and the book of the prophet Isaiah with its internal anti-ideological criticism were read.

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[54] *Mayendorf I.*, Protopr. The Unity of the Empire and the Division of Christians: The Church in 450–680. Moscow: Orthodox St. Tikhon's Humanitarian University, 2012.

[55] *Beck E.* Ephrem of the Syrian's hymns... P. 363.

[56] Edmund Beck has noted that Ephraim the Syrian, apparently carried away by the New Testament anti-Jewish interpretation, interrupts the Ninevites' speech of thanksgiving, begun in v. 1959, and returns to it again only in v. 1971 (Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO; 312. Syr; 135.) S. 49, footnotes. 2, 3, 4.

[57] *Shepardson C.* Interpreting the Ninevites Repentance… P. 272.

1.6. The theological and exegetical themes of the memra

Next, we move on to the analysis of the text and consider the key theological and exegetical themes of the memra: the image of the pagan Ninevites and the image of the Jews in a broad Christian and Jewish context.

1.6.1. The image of the Ninevites in the memra and its context

A significant part of the memra is devoted to the description of the unprecedented repentance of the pagan Ninevites after the preaching of the prophet Jonah. From the laconic Bible verses (Jonah 3:3-10), the author creates a grandiose picture of the general repentance of the inhabitants of Nineveh, in which various strata of the population of both sexes take part. The Ninevites show ideal social behavior, true *Tugendkatalog*[58]: universal equality (ܫܘܝܘܬܐ) and harmony (ܫܠܡܐ), mutual affection (ܫܘܬܦܘܬܐ), love (ܚܒܐ), reconciliation (ܫܘܬܝܐ), tranquility (ܫܠܝܐ) and useful silence (All this the inhabitants of Nineveh teach each other, becoming one body in repentance[59] (e.g., vv. 180-226; vv. 981-1052).

A picture worthy of utopia unfolds before us: kings take off their crowns and humiliate themselves, creditors tear up letters of debt and give alms, the rich open treasuries to the poor, masters free slaves and slaves revere their masters even more, noble women humble themselves in sackcloth, judges cease to judge (vv. 49-96). Even individuals with antisocial behavior commit repentance: thieves give up their loot, and those who have been robbed forgive them, murderers confess their crimes (vv. 69-84):

> The kings heard him (i.e. the prophet Jonah) and were humbled, // they took off their crowns and humbled themselves.
> The nobles heard him and were horrified, // instead of beautiful garments they put on sackcloth.
> The venerable elders heard him, // and sprinkled ashes on their heads.
> The rich heard it, // and opened their treasuries to the poor.
> The creditors also heard him, // [and] with their debt letters [began] to distribute alms.
> Borrowers have heard [about] justice[60], // that they should not keep their debts.
> Borrowers began to reward, // and creditors forgave <... >.
> There was no one there, // who in any way cleverly remained a winner.
> They were in a fair competition, // in which each won his soul.
> Thieves heard Jonah // [and] returned the loot to the owners.
> The owners of the loot turned a blind eye to [this] // and forgave the thieves.
> Everyone judged himself[61], // and pitied his comrade <... >.
> Everyone blamed himself, // because everyone was accused [equally] by [Divine] wrath.
> The murderers heard him and confessed [their crimes], // for they despised the fear [of] the judges of <... >.
> Everyone sowed mercy, // to reap from it the harvest of salvation (vv. 49-84).

[58] *Cramer W.* Good News of Mercy... p. 104.
[59] Cf. the imagery from 1 Corinthians 12:12, but without mentioning Jesus Christ and the Church.
[60] Syr. “fairly”.
[61] Cf. Matt. 7:1.

The Syrian author paints vivid, multifaceted images, combining examples of individual virtuous behavior with the social justice of society as a whole. The role of the "whole", "everything" combined with the role of "everyone", emphasized by the image of Nineveh as a single body with many members, is one of the main ideas that the poet-theologian wanted to express.

He is clearly interested not only in purely religious details. The meager biblical lines (Jonah 3), where the Ninevites and their city are devoid of any specific historical, realistic features, turn into a description of a living city with walls and houses in which rulers, nobles, warriors, judges, creditors, merchants, homeowners, artisans, husbandmen, servants, peasants, etc. live. widows, wet nurses, maidens, girls, old women, brides, betrothed, etc.

It should be noted that in all these descriptions nothing is said about the rejection of such pagan sins as idol worship, human sacrifices, magical practices, fortune-telling, etc. Thus, in their speech of thanksgiving, the Ninevites thank God for that they renounced gluttony, drunkenness, greed, fornication, robbery:

The greedy also thanked Him (i.e. God – S.F.), // because He taught them [to give] alms.
The gluttons also thanked Him, // who had learned to fast a lot.
Drunkards also thanked Him, // who had learned to drink in moderation.
The robbers also thanked Him, // who changed and began to give [their] money.
Adulterers also thanked Him, // to whom marriage was enough.
The fornicators blessed Him even more, // who were freed from their wickedness <... > (pp. 1981–2096).

That is, there is the creation of an image of “virtuous” pagans, an ideal example for the Christian community. The Syrian author directly communicates this in his brief address to a real audience:

At the sight of that repentance, // it is ours, like a dream. At the sight of that prayer, // this prayer is ours, like a shadow. And at the sight of that humiliation, // this [our] is a likeness of humiliation. Few are those who [at least] forgave // debts during this [our] fast. The Ninevites gave alms. Can we [at least] exempt [subordinates] from complaints? (vv. 96-108).

At the same time, it is necessary to dwell separately on the fact that a large role in the memrah is given not just to the moral, but to *the deeply ascetic* model of behavior of the Ninevites after the preaching of the prophet Jonah. Thus, there is constant talk about their chastity (ܥܒܝܕܘܬܐ), abstinence, purity (ܥܒܝܕܘܬܐ), humility (ܡܟܟܘܬܐ), sorrow (ܐܒܠܐ), tears, spiritual competition (ܫܘܚܪܐ), competition:

They (i.e., the Ninevites) were in *a fair contest* (ܫܘܚܪܐ ܫܦܝܪܐ), in which each won his own soul (vv. 67-68).

*The blameless (*ܙܟܝ) who [were] among them could not // be saved without sinners (vv. 215-216).

Men and women freely // wrapped themselves in *chastity* (ܥܒܝܕܘܬܐ). // There, in fasting, without worry, // *purity* was observed (ܥܒܝܕܘܬܐ) <... > Young men [had] *chastity* (ܥܒܝܕܘܬܐ), // virgins had purity (vv. 1015-1018; 1033-1034).

The unclean also gave praise // and thanked Him (i.e. God) for having become *blameless* (ܙܟܝܘܬܐ) (v. 1981-1982).

It is chastity and other virtues that become the reason for the salvation of the Ninevites:

The pillars of the earth that trembled // upheld *chastity* (ܥܦܝܦܘܬܐ) (v. 967–968).

Such vocabulary, however, belongs to the vocabulary of asceticism in the early Syriac tradition[62]. The fact that Old Testament characters are viewed through the prism of Christian ascetic discourse, as we will see later, is an important component of the formation of Syriac Christianity.

However, the Ninevites in the memra are not only a model of "righteousness" but also a treasury of "wisdom". For example, as part of the King of Nineveh's address to the soldiers (vv. 513-822), it is said that from the "ancient tradition of the fathers" (ܕܡ ܕܡ ܡܠܦܐ ܥܡ ܠܒ ܡܕܡ ܫܡܥ ܡܢ ܐܒܗܬܐ ܡܢ ܝܗܘܕ)[63] (v. 555-570) that they were aware of God's justice and mercy (v. 555-570) and thereby receive His mercy. He supports his speech with a number of lengthy Old Testament examples about Noah, Moses and Job, which are designated as oral "history" (ܥܦܢܬܐ) or ancient "tradition" (ܡܠܦܐ) heard (ܫܡܥ) by the Ninevites "from the fathers" (ܐܒܗܬܐ) or "from the Jews" (ܝܗܘܕ ܥܡ). As we will show later, this kind of awareness, which turns the Ninevites into "wise men" is unusual enough for the image of the righteous pagans.

Now we will consider the image of the Ninevites created in the memra in the context of Christian literature. The function of the Ninevites as "virtuous" pagans, demonstrating an example of proper behavior, both for individuals and for society as a whole, has become quite widespread in Christian literature. We are talking about the use of the book of the prophet Jonah in sermons. Among such sermons of the 4th-5th centuries are the homilies "On the Statues" by the Greek-speaking theologian John Chrysostom (d. 407) and two sermons of the Latin-speaking theologian Maximus of Turin (d. 421) (81st sermon "On the Fast of the Ninevites" and 82nd sermon). It should be noted that in the Middle Ages a huge number of sermons were written on the subject of the repentance of the Ninevites[64], but in this study we limit ourselves only to these works, which are close to the Syrian memra in time.

Biblical exegesis in sermons is different from exegesis in commentaries. Often it has the character of an actualized reception, according to which biblical events are given as moral

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[62] *Griffith S.* Asceticism in the Church of Syria: The Hermeneutics of Early Syrian Monasticism // Asceticism. New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. P. 220–245. Here P. 233–234; *Idem*. Abraham Qîdunayâ, St. Ephraem the Syrian and Early Monasticism in the Syriac-speaking World // Il Monachesimo tra Eredità e Aperture / ed. by Hombergen D., Bielawski M. Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S. Anselmo, 2004. (Studia Anselmiana; 140.) P. 239–264. Here P. 242, 253, 257.

[63] Cf. the lexique and imagery of Psalm 77:2-4.

[64] Cf.: *Ristuccia N.* Christianization and Commonwealth in Early Medieval Europe: A Ritual Interpretation. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. P. 88–91, 123–130.

examples for the present time of the preacher[65]. The exegesis of the book of Jonah in such works focuses not on the prophet himself, but on the Ninevites and portrays them as a paradigm of ideal behavior for the preacher's community, often during some crisis situation, such as an earthquake, a military threat, a famine, etc.

For example, the representative of the Antiochian school, the great preacher John Chrysostom, more than once refers to the book of the prophet Jonah in his series of homilies "On the Statues"[66]. They were uttered by the theologian during the Lent in 387 to encourage the inhabitants of Antioch who were waiting in fear for the reprisals of the Emperor Theodosius I (379-395) for the destruction of imperial statues, which occurred shortly before the beginning of the Lent[67]. In these homilies, John Chrysostom uses the Ninevites as an example of the ideal religious-moral behavior in times of crisis, which should be followed by the inhabitants of Antioch. On the example of the events of the Ninevites, the theologian explains the significance of the present events taking place in Antioch. He compares Antioch, which was under the threat of emperor punishment, to Nineveh, which had received a sermon about the coming destruction and the wrath of the Lord. The preacher exhorts his congregation to imitate the example of the Ninevites in their fasting, repentance, and good works, so that the people of Antioch, like the Ninevites in their time, may receive God's mercy and salvation:

> Let us see, then, how the Ninevites fasted, and how they were delivered from that wrath <... > (On Statues 3:4)[68]. Thus, I beseech and beseech you, let us see to it that we too do not hear that "*the men of Nineveh will rise up and condemn this generation*" (Lk 11:32), because they, having heard it once, have improved, but we, having heard it many times, have not changed. They have done all kinds of virtues, but we are not alone. They were terrified when they heard of the destruction, but we, when we hear of hell, we are not afraid <... > (20, 8)[69] .

Such exhortations of the preacher are very similar to ones found in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah":

> At the sight of that repentance, // it's ours, like a dream. At the sight of that prayer, // this one of ours is like a shadow. And at the sight of that humiliation, // it is a kind of humiliation. There are few who have forgiven // debts in this [our] fast. The Ninevites gave alms. Can we [at least] absolve [subordinates] from complaining? (vv. 96–108).

Similarly, Maximus of Turin in a sermon delivered during the barbarian attack on Turin, tries to prevent the inhabitants from fleeing the city by exhorting them by the example of the Ninevites, who remained in their city despite the threat of destruction:

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[65] *Deeg A., Herzig F.* Homily (Genre) (Art.) / Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception, Vol. 12, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016. P. 287; *Brottier L.* L'actualisation de la figure de Job chez Chrysostome // Cahiers de Biblia Patristica. 1996. № 5. P. 63–110.

[66] *On Statues* 3, 4; 5, 5–6; 6, 2 and 20, 8.

[67] *Van de Paverd, F.* St. John Chrysostom, the homilies on the statues. An introduction. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1991. (Orientalia Christiana Analecta, 239.).

[68] Joannes Chrysostomus. Homiliae XXI de Statuis ad populum Antiochenum habitae // PG. 49. Col. 52.

[69] *Ibid*., Col. 210.

They [i.e., the Ninevites] did not abandon their city, which was about to be destroyed; Instead, they remained in it, knowing that what had been caused by the sins of the townspeople could be saved by their prayers, and that piety could save that which a life of wickedness had doomed to destruction. For it was just that that which endured sinners found them as its defenders; For destruction threatens the city only because of the sins of the inhabitants (82:1)[70].

The preacher praises the virtues of the Ninevites: constant fasting, humility, abstinence:

We read in the prophets that when the divinely ordained destruction threatened the city of Nineveh, and the time of its overthrow by God's judgment was approaching, there was no choice but to give up their bountiful meals and observe a constant fast, and, putting aside the pursuit of riches, put on the humility of poverty (81:1).[71]

Maxim of Turin concludes his sermon as follows:

Therefore, let us fast continuously, brethren, that we may be able to conquer our enemies by prayer and temperance! (81, 4)[72].

It is easy to see that these writings have a number of important similarities with the Syrian memra. First of all, in the sermons the material from the book of the prophet Jonah is also used selectively, and the focus is not on the prophet Jonah, but on the Ninevites. Many of these texts are called “On the Repentance of the Ninevites”. Secondly, in them, as in the memra, there is no interest in such an important Christian tool for interpreting the Holy text as educational exegesis. as “types”, “(proto)types” of the New Testament. The primary task for preachers is not to explain a complex theological problem, but to encourage listeners in a difficult situation. The example of the Ninevites, who demonstrated perfect behavior during the disaster and were saved for it, becomes very appropriate in this sense.

However, in addition to the similarities indicated, there are also important differences between the memra and the sermons about the Ninevites. First, the Latin and Greek descriptions of the Biblical pagans and their penance are small in length. They cannot be compared with the literary length of the Syriac work, which is characterized by a downright epic scope. Secondly, they have clear indications of the historical context, but in the memra it remains undefined. in these works a clear New Testament justification of the example of the Ninevites is used (Luke 11:32), but in the memra it is not so explicit. Other similarities and differences between these works will be discussed in more detail in the course of our analysis in section 1.6.2.

It should be noted that the image of the “righteous” pagans was used in Christian literature not only for edifying purposes. Such transformations of biblical characters into "Christian righteous" can be seen as part of a whole doctrine – a program of “Christianization” of the Hebrew Bible, the goal of which was, in the words of Doron Mendels, to create a “new collective memory” of

[70] The Latin text in: Maximus episcopus Taurinensis. Collectio sermonum antiqua nonnullis sermonibus extravagantibus adiectis / Ed. A. Mutzenbecher. Turnhout: Typographi Brepols editors pontificii, 1962. (CCSL; 23.). S. 336.
[71] *Ibid.* S. 332.
[72] *Ibid. S*. 334.

Christianity[73]. According to this strategy, the Old Testament figures are transformed into "Christians", including in opposition to Judaism. One of the first systematic attempts at such a transformation belongs to Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), who creates an image of Christianity as a triumphant world religion. In his works – "Church History", "Preparation for the Gospel", "Demonstration of the Gospel", the theologian systematically implements the program of "Christianization" of the realities of the Old Testament.

For example, Eusebius gives examples of Old Testament figures who did not observe the Mosaic Law, such as Melchizedek, Noah, and Enoch, who lived "a Christian rather than a Jewish life". He writes that the Jews before the law of Moses were righteous, God-fearing "Jews", in fact "Christians". The Christian religion, according to the theologian, is the religion that is older and more venerable than the religion of Moses, according to which Abraham and his forefathers[74] lived. At the same time, the "Church History" of Eusebius of Caesarea was translated into Syriac quite early. It is possible that some echoes of the doctrine of the "Christianization" of the Greek theologian could have influenced the author of the memra.

At the same time, Syriac Christians developed their own approaches within the framework of this common Christian doctrine. For example, asceticism played a special role in the early Syriac tradition. The researcher Naomi Koltun Fromm, using the example of the interpretation of the image of Noah in Christian and rabbinic literature, showed that the key discrepancy between them lies in the issue of the asceticism of this personage. that Noah had no more children after the flood is interpreted in the Syriac tradition, by Aphraates and Ephraim the Syrian, as evidence of his integrity, but in rabbinic sources it is considered as a direct violation of the commandment of Genesis 9:1 and is even often ridiculed[75]. Here is how Ephraim the Syrian describes Noah in his hymns "On Faith":

Oh, how glorious was Noah, who surpassed in comparison // all the sons of his generation. They were considered insufficient in the scales, // when they were weighed in *righteousness* (ܙܕܩܐ); one soul turned the scale [of the scales] // with the help *of the weapon of integrity* (ܙܝܢ ܕܫܠܡܘܬܐ). They drowned in the flood, // those who weighed little in the scales, // while he was lifted up into the ark.) and glorious, let him be glorified who was pleased with him (On Faith 49:1).

[73] *Mendels D*. Memory in Jewish, Pagan and Christian Societies… P. 115.
[74] *Schreckenberg H.* The Christian Adversus-Judaeos texts and their literary and historical environment... pp. 262–268.
[75] *Koltun-Fromm N.* Aphrahat and the Rabbis on Noah's Righteousness in Light of the Jewish-Christian Polemic // The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation /ed. by Frishman J., Van Rompay L. Lovain: Peeters, 1997. P. 57–71. Here P. 62–67.

As Laura Lieber points out, this verse clearly shows the connection between Noah's righteousness (ܙܕܝܩܐ) and purity (ܙܟܝܐ).[76] For the Syrian theologian, Noah's merits stem precisely from his sexual purity[77].

In the light of these notions, the insistence on the chastity of the Ninevites in the memra we discussed at the beginning of the paragraph begins to play a special role. To what has been said there, let us add that the Syrian writer expresses the same idea of the connection between righteousness and purity:

> We want to learn righteousness (ܙܕܝܩܐ) in your (i.e. the prophet Jonah's) land, // for the *blameless* (ܙܟܝ) people dwell there (v. 1619-1620).

But, as we remember, the Ninevites in the memrah are not only "righteous", but also real "wise men" who know "from the fathers" and "from the Jews" about the events of the Old Testament. This, as it seems, is one of the key differences between the memrah and the Christian mainstream. The fact is that it is traditionally emphasized that the Ninevites *did not have* any prior information before the preaching of Jonah. This paradigm is typical for most commentators on the Book of the Prophet Jonah. For example, St. John Chrysostom speaks of the ignorance of the Ninevites, calling them "barbarians", contrasting it with the fullness of knowledge of Christians:

> Let's imitate the philosophy of the barbarians (i.e. the Ninevites – S.F.)! <... > They do not know the quality of God's love for mankind, and they repent when they are not known. They could not see the other Ninevites repent and be saved. They (i.e., the Ninevites) did not read the prophets, nor did they hear the patriarchs; did not receive advice, did not have instruction <... > (On Statues 5, 6)[78].

So does John Chrysostom's friend and fellow disciple Theodore of Mopsuestia. To emphasize the depth of the repentance of the Ninevites compared to the Jews, he notes that while the Jews "originally had prophecy and teaching (τὴν μήνυσιν καὶ τὴν διδασκαλίαν)" about God[79], the Ninevites, on the contrary, "were pagans, and had not previously shown any form of instruction directed to the worship of God"[80]. However, they listened to Jonah's preaching, and the Jews did not change in their obstinacy and unbelief.

Jerome of Stridon, in his Commentary on the Book of Jonah, similarly notes that Jonah is sent "<... > to the enemy's capital, where paganism reigns, where ignorance of God reigns (*ubi ido(lo)latria, ubi ignoratio Dei*)"[81].

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[76] *Lieber L*. Portraits of Righteousness: Noah in Early Christian and Jewish Hymnography // Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte. 2009. Vol. 61, No. 4. P. 332–355, here P. 338.
[77] Cf. the hymns "About Nisibis" 1:9.
[78] Joannes Chrysostomus. Homiliae XXI de Statuis ad populum Antiochenum habitae // PG. 49. Col. 77.
[79] Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in XII prophetas / ed. H. N. Sprenger. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977. S. 175, 11-12.
[80] *Ibid*. S. 174, 28–29.
[81] Jerome. Commentary on Jonas / ed. Y.-M. Duval. Paris: Cerf, 1985. (SC; vol. 323). P. 174, 55–58.

Thus, Christian exegetes tend to emphasize the Ninevites' ignorance of the previous biblical tradition in order to express the unprecedented nature of their repentance. The Syriac author prefers a different path, apparently "confronting" two contiguous concepts, the Christian one, about the "righteous" pagans, and the Jewish one, about the wise Jews teaching the pagans.

In a number of Jewish texts from the Second Temple period, both Aramaic and Greek, the motif of "wise Jews teaching the Gentiles" can be distinguished. For example, in the Aramaic Apocrypha on Genesis (1 Q20) (c. 2nd century B.C.) there is a remarkable episode when three representatives of Pharaoh come to Abraham and ask him for the truth, wisdom, and knowledge of the scribes[82]. In another Aramaic text, also found at Qumran, the Testament of Levi (3rd century BCE), Josephus taught the Egyptians the knowledge of scribes (ספר), instruction (מוסר), and wisdom (חכמה)[83]. As Daniel Maciela notes, the two texts show great similarities in that "Abraham and Joseph both travel to Egypt, attract the attention of the royal court, are held in high esteem, and teach the Egyptians"[84]. The Judeo-Hellenistic writer Pseudo-Eupolemius (c. 150 BCE) presents Abraham as a teacher of astrology and other sciences for the Phoenicians and Egyptians[85]. In another Judeo-Hellenistic work, the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates (2nd century B.C.), wise Jewish interpreters teach the king of Egypt how to govern the state[86]. In the prologue of the Book of the Wisdom of Jesus, son of Sirach (2nd century B.C.), Israel is praised for its education and wisdom, which should also be accessible to people who are far from the Jewish teachings[87].

This list, of course, does not exhaust such texts, but it is sufficient for our study to consider the fact that in the period of the Second Temple Jewish texts appeared, the essence of which boiled down to the fact that the Jews – Abraham, Joseph, Enoch and others – were declared to be the founders of knowledge – writing, astrology, sciences – and passed this knowledge on to the pagans – the Egyptians, the Phoenicians, who sought to learn from them. It should also be noted that in many of these texts there is a pagan king who is favorable to the Jews. This can be compared to the role of the king of Nineveh in the memre receiving the prophet Jonah. It seems to us that the author of the memre enters into a dialogue with such texts. And he is not the only one, for example,

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[82] GenAp 19. 24. *Machiela D.* Wisdom Motifs in the Compositional Strategy of the Genesis Apocryphon (1Q20) and Other Aramaic Texts from Qumran // Hā-'îsh Mōshe: Studies in Scriptural Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature in Honor of Moshe J. Bernstein / ed. by Goldstein B.Y. et al. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2018. P. 223–247. Here P. 229–230.
[83] 4Q213 1i.11–19.
[84] *Machiela D.* Wisdom Motifs... P. 238.
[85] *Wacholder B.-Z.* Pseudo-Eupolemus' Two Greek Fragments on the Life of Abram // HUCA. 1963. № 34. P. 83–113. Here P. 102–103.
[86] Letter of Aristeas 187–294.
[87] Prologue 1–15.

in the anonymous memra of the fifth century, "On Abraham and Sarai in Egypt", it is said that that Sarah, Abraham's wife, was going *to teach* (ܐܠܦܢܐ) Egypt "about her Lord"[88].

However, the Syriac author's intention is to later create *a parody* of this motif. This is the narrative of the anti-Exodus, which we will examine in detail in section 1.6.2. In this apocryphal continuation of the biblical story, the Ninevites, after their salvation, in full accord with the motif analyzed above, expect from the Jews truth, wisdom, righteousness, and proper examples for the government of the state (vv. 1617-1648). they go to the homeland of the prophet Jonah, but see only pagan scenes there, after which they reject their former teachers.

We can draw the following conclusions from our analysis. Revealing the image of the Ninevites in his work, the Syrian writer makes a synthesis of several theological and literary concepts. On the one hand, his interpretation of the Ninevites as "righteous" pagans is part of a typical 4th-century program of Christianization of Old Testament characters. An important specifically Syrian element here is the emphasis on the asceticism of the inhabitants of Nineveh.

On the other hand, the Syriac work differs from most Greek and Latin writings in that the protagonists in it possess knowledge of the biblical tradition that preceded them, received "from the fathers" and "from the Jews", thus becoming not only "righteous" but also "wise" pagans. Thus, the author of the memra appeals to the ancient Jewish concept of the Jews as wise teachers of the pagans.

But the Ninevites in the Syrian work are a model not only in themselves, but also in opposition to their religious opponents, the Jews. In the next paragraph, we will consider the image of the Jews in the memra and its literary-theological context.

1.6.2. The image of the Jews in the memra and its context

From the very first line of the work, in a brief introduction (vv. 1-35), the Syriac author, following the Bible, emphasizes the ethnic self-determination of the prophet Jonah, the "Jew"[89] and adds the designation of the Ninevites as "uncircumcised", "pagan peoples", which is absent from the biblical book:

> Here in Nineveh Jonah preached, // *a Jew* (ܝܗܘܕܝ) among the *uncircumcised* (ܥܪܠܐ) (vv. 1-2) <... > The city *of the Gentile nations* (ܕܥܡܡܐ) was grieved // because of a *Jewish* (ܕܝܗܘܕܝ) preacher (vv. 5–6).

However, there is no mention of Jews other than the prophet Jonah himself. The next possible allusion to Jewish criticism does not appear until a few hundred verses later. Thus, after describing the repentance of the Ninevites, the king of Nineveh and his army, it is said:

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[88] «About Abraham and Sarah in Egypt», vv. 35–36. *Hopkins S.*, *Brock* S. A Verse Homily on Abraham and Sarah in Egypt: Syriac Original with Early Arabic Translation // Le Muséon. 1992. Vol. 105. P. 87–146. Here P. 108.
[89] Cf. Jonah 1:9 (MT and Peshitta).

> By the fact that they (i.e., the Ninevites) outwitted Jonah and stole // the victory by repentance, // Satan was defeated like Esau, // that teacher, as well as his disciple. And these overcame, like Jacob. Both the teacher and his pupils (vv. 831–836).

The Ninevites, the "disciples of Jacob", outwitted Jonah, just as Jacob outwitted Esau, who is here called "the disciple of Satan". This statement is similar to the interpretation of the confrontation between Esau and Jacob as a prototype of the confrontation between Jews and Christians, which was outlined in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans[90] and has been actively developed in patristic literature since the second century[91]. On the other hand, the Jews are not explicitly mentioned here, and the confrontation again unfolds only between Jonah and the Ninevites.

After this brief remark, the author returns to the description of the unprecedented repentance of the Ninevites, which occupies a large part of the work. A few hundred verses later, containing lengthy descriptions of the repentance of the Ninevites, other Jews appear for the first time than the prophet Jonah. Scenes of exemplary repentance by the Ninevites begin to be interspersed with the exact opposite — descriptions of the wicked behavior of the Jews. The confrontation between the Jews and the pagan Ninevites of the time of the prophet Jonah now becomes one of the main themes of the work: out of 2142 verses of the memrah, more than 400 are consecrated to this confrontation.

In three lengthy invectives (vv. 901-916; vv. 1089-1164; vv. 1737-1972), each longer and more dynamic than the last, the author, through the eyes of his characters, first the prophet Jonah and then the Ninevites, uses long rows of antitheses to contrast the virtues of the Ninevites, who demonstrate unprecedented repentance, with the wicked behavior of the Jews. For example, immediately after describing the repentance of the Ninevites, through the eyes of the prophet Jonah, the author of the memra recounts the following scene:

> He (i.e., the prophet Jonah – S.F.) saw the elders when they were weeping, // while the elders of his people indulged in excesses. He saw Nineveh when it mourned // and Zion when it rejoiced wickedly. He saw Assyria and was filled with contempt for the Jerusalem of the proud. He saw how the unclean [women] became blameless, // and the daughters of his people became unclean. He saw in Nineveh exorcists // who had calmed down and learned the truth. And he saw in Zion false prophets, who were full of deceit. He saw how clearly the idols // had been cast down from the nations. He looked and saw the inner chambers of the people, which are full of paganism (vv. 1099-1114).

Here, as in many other passages in the memre, the author first of all condemns the pagan sins of the Jews – idolatry, magic, divination, astrology, etc.

The author's anti-Jewish intention culminates in an extensive unbiblical continuation of the story of the Ninevites and the prophet Jonah (vv. 1491–2116), which is absent from any other

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[90] Cf. Romans 9:6-13: The election of Isaac and Jacob and God's rejection of Ishmael and Esau is seen as confirmation that in one family one son can be chosen and another can be rejected.

[91] *Yuval I.* Two peoples in your womb. Mutual Perception of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007. P. 25–33.

surviving text on Jonah, including Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. The memra describes how the Ninevites, after their salvation, accompany the prophet Jonah to his homeland to see "his land", which is further referred to as *the Promised Land* (ܐܪܥܐ ܕܝܢܘܚ) (Art. 1732, Art. 1811). They want to learn from the Jews a righteous way of life, justice, and purity (vv. 1615-1624). The Ninevites want to take from the Jews good and useful examples for their city, for their daughters, young men, children, kings, and judges (vv. 1657-1668). Ashamed of his sinful people, Jonah tries to persuade the Ninevites to abandon their decision to see his homeland by saying that the circumcised are now having a holiday in which uncircumcised Ninevites are not allowed to participate (vv. 1673-1712). The weeping Ninevites are ready to turn back but when Jonah leaves, and they are still standing on the border, they see a high mountain before them and decide to climb it, so that they can see the land of the Jews without entering it (vv. 1713-1736). And here the narrator moves on to his main task: to show how the Ninevites rejected theit opponents. Through the eyes of the Ninevites, he describes all the sinful abominations they saw in the land of the prophet Jonah, the Promised Land: idolatry, magical rites, human sacrifice, fornication, theft, social injustice, etc. (v. 1737-1862).

The Jews in the memra are described with the help of numerous negative terms: they are "foolish" (ܣܟܠܐ) (v. 1926 etc.), "impudent" (ܩܫܝܐ) (v. 1951 etc.), "wicked" (ܚܛܠܐ) (v. 1789) (ܚܝܒܐ) (v. 1790), "damned" (ܠܥܠܐ) (v. 1857). Their "wickedness" (ܚܛܐ) (vv. 1779, 1782, 1801, 1807, 1818, etc.), "vice" (ܥܘܠ) (v. 1782), "abomination" (ܪܓܘܫܬܐ) (v. 1742), "(moral) ugliness" (ܪܓܣܐ) (v. 1938, 1949) are stressed.

On behalf of the Ninevites, a veritable "catalogue" of vices of antagonists is introduced (vv. 1765–1780): insolence (ܪܓܙܘܬܐ), lust (ܪܓܘܫܐ), avarice (ܪܓܫܥ), greed (ܪܓܙܠܐ), intemperance (ܪܓܟܪܗܪ), drunkenness (ܪܓܫܘܝ), depravity (ܪܓܣܝ), deceit (ܪܓܠܚܕ), theft (ܪܓܫܚ), adultery (ܪܓܙܢ), spells (ܪܓܙܙܗܪ), sorcery (ܪܓܥܣ), magic (ܪܓܫܠ), divination (ܪܓܙܘܡ) and others.

It should be noted that among these numerous negative epithets of the Jews, however, the most important negative designations of the Jews as *oppressors* (ܪܕܘܦ) and *those who crucified (Jesus Christ)* (ܨܠܝ) are absent. They were commun for the Syriac anti-Jewish polemics of the 4th-6th centuries [92]. The explanation of this fact lies in the fact that both epithets appeal to what the Jews did to Jesus Christ, and since he is not involved in the memre, these epithets cannot be used accordingly.

[92] *Hayman P.* The Image of the Jew in the Syriac Anti-Jewish Polemical Literature // "To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity /ed. by Neusner J., Frerichs E. Chico; California: Scholars Press, 1985. P. 423–441. Here P. 433–435.

It is important to note that while other Christian writers say that the Jews no longer commit pagan sins, our author describes their biblical sins. Thus, the Jews in the Promised Land erect pagan heights (ܒܡܬܐ), worship idols (ܨܠܡܐ), mourn Tammuz (ܬܡܘܙ), worship Venus (ܥܫܬܪܬ), and worship the sun (ܫܡܫ), serve calves, practice sorcery and divination, draw the signs of the zodiac on doors (ܡܙܠܬܐ), bake sacrificial cakes (ܟܘܝܢܐ), place deities of fortune in gardens (ܓܢܝ̈ܬܐ), swear by the names of deities, perform pagan ablutions and pourings, sacrifice children, etc. Thus, the Ninevites see in the land of the Jews the exact opposite of what they wanted to learn from them, and they conclude as follows:

> The people, with their saviours, // how bad is their way of life! A people whose laws are pure, // how filthy are their deeds! The people are with these fathers, // how accursed is their upbringing! (vv. 1863–1867).

Seeing all these pagan sins of the land of the Jews, the terrified Ninevites conclude that the Jews have become Gentiles in their place:

> And just as they used to be very anxious // to enter and see the land [of the Jews], // so they were fed up with it and hated it, // and terrified and fled from it (vv. 1917-1920) <... > In the wickedness which the repentant have cast away, the Jews have clothed themselves. Paganism (ܒܥܠܬܐ), which was rejected by the pagan *peoples* (ܥܡܡܐ), // wears a stupid *people* (ܥܡ) (art. 1923–1926) <... > In Nineveh there is great confidence, // here is great fear (v. 1931-1932).

On the basis of this rejection of their antagonists, the Ninevites even conclude that it is possible to conquer their land, which is an allusion to the historical events of 722/721 BCE, when Assyria (whose capital was Nineveh) conquered the Northern Kingdom of Israel:

> *Perhaps* this [land] will be *destroyed* // *instead* of (ܐܠܐ) Nineveh, which was not destroyed. // Here is a people (cf. Jeremiah 7:28) who in truth // a people [deserving of] being destroyed and uprooted (cf. Isaiah 18:2, 7)! (pp. 1933–1936).

Thus, the content of the memra, which we have briefly conveyed, testifies to the fact that one of the important themes of the Syriac work, which, however, appears unevenly in different parts of the work, is the criticism of the biblical Jews. At the same time, it is expressed not in the form of polemics with the "wrong" understanding of the Bible, as in many other works of Syriac authors[93]. Rather, it is a matter of creating a negative visual image, and, as we will see later, consciously not going beyond the framework of the Old Testament narratives.

Next, we will consider the methods of polemical anti-Jewish argumentation in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah". The traditional Christian arguments in the memra include the following: 1) the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews, expressed in the form of vicarious theology; 2) the uselessness of Jewish rituals and the "false righteousness" of the Jews. Let's analyze them in more detail.

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[93] *Kessel M.* Isaac of Antioch and His "Second Mimra Against the Jews" // Theological Collection [St. Tikhon's Orthodox University]. 2002. № 9. Pp. 197–220; Mar Narsai. Against the Jews (Introduction and Translation from Syrian by D. F. Bumazhnov, S. V. Fomicheva) // Bogoslovskie trudy. 2019. Iss. 49. S. 320–355.

The author of the memra, designating the pagan Ninevites as ܥܡܡܐand the Jews as ܥܡ and emphasizing that the pagans threw off the paganism that the (Jewish) people had put on, quite clearly uses the Book of the Prophet Jonah as an illustration of the doctrine of the "theology of the supersessionism". According to the traditional formulation of the theology of the supersessionism the general Christian doctrine that is already present in the New Testament[94], the Church of the Gentile nations replaces the chosen people, the Jews, and becomes the New Israel. According to the formulation of this doctrine in the Syriac tradition, with the coming of Christ, the (pagan) nations (ܥܡܡܐ) replace the (ܐܠܗ) (chosen Jewish) people (ܥܡ). [95] An early exponent of this doctrine is the Syrian writer Aphraates (c. 270–345), who devotes a separate sixteenth Tahwit, [96] The Nations Who Replaced the People (ܥܡܐ ܐܠܗ ܐܡܡ ܥܡܡܐ), in which he lists numerous examples of such substitution in the Old Testament[97]. The author of the memra in his work "On Nineveh and Jonah", referring to the Gentile Ninevites as ܥܡܡܐ and the Jews as ܥܡ , emphasizing that the Gentiles had cast off the paganism which the (Jewish) people had endured, quite clearly uses the Book of Jonah as an illustration of such theology of supersessionism.

Although this approach to the Book of Jonah is not exceptional in itself[98], its concrete embodiment in the memra, using the motif of the Ninevites' campaign in the land of the prophet Jonah, has no parallel in other texts. It is also unusual that the author of the memra does not dwell on the theological meaning of the "replacement" of the people for the nations, but understands it *literally*, but he understands it literally, as the historical conquest of Israel by Nineveh (Assyria). Next, we will consider this motif in more detail.

The treatment of "the theology of supersessionism" in the memra has other peculiarities as well. For example, in comparison with the majority of commentaries on the book of Jonah of the fourth and sixth centuries, the Syriac work pays little attention to the typological interpretation of the events of the book. For example, there is no typological interpretation of the prophet Jonah as a type of Jesus, and his preaching to the Ninevites as a type of Jesus' preaching to the Gentiles, which is already presented in the New Testament (Luke 11: 29–30, 32, cf. Matt. 12: 39–41). In contrast, the memre's interpretation of the book of Jonah focuses primarily on the Old Testament context. In 1853, Henry Burgess, the first researcher of the Syrian memra, noted: "<... > it is

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[94] For example, in the Epistles of Ap. Paul (Rom. 9:6-33; Gal. 4:21-31), the Gospels (Matt. 21:33-43; 23:34-39; Jn. 12:37-43) and Acts (13:46; 18:6; 28:25-28).

[95] *Murray R.* Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition, revised edition. Piscataway (NJ), 2006. P. 41–68.

[96] Syr. "demonstration, show, example".

[97] *Aphraat.* Demonstrationes XVI, 1–8 // Patrologia syriaca. 1/1. Col. 759–764.

[98] For example, Isaac of Antioch, in his second Memra "Against the Jews" cites the Book of Jonah as an example that "the nations (ܥܡܡܐ) will be victorious, and the people (ܥܡ) will be accused in judgment" (Isaac Antiochenus. Sermones contra Judeos II, 434–435 // *Kazan S.* Isaac of Antioch's Homily Against the Jews // Oriens christianus. 1961. Bd 45. P. 30–53. Here 50.

noteworthy that in this work Ephraim *never* [emphasis added] on purely Christian topics, but strictly concentrates on the extent of knowledge possible within the Old Testament in Jonah's day"[99]. Of course, Burgess is too categorical here, and our further analysis will show that New Testament themes are touched upon in the memre, but in the background, as it were[100]. Jesus (Syr. ܝܫܘܥ), "the firstborn", is mentioned in the work at all (except for the final doxology) only once, almost at the end of the memra (v. 1963). The focus of the memra on the Old Testament context is evidenced by the ratio of quotations and allusions: more than 60 quotations and allusions from the Old Testament are used in the text (Jonah 1:9; 1. 4, 7, 10, 12, 15, 17; Jonah 3: 4, 6, 7; Jonah 4: 5, 6, 8, 10, etc.; Gen 1:26; Gen 7: 4, 11; Gen 22: 5, 7, 9; Gen 27:11; Exodus 3:1; Exodus 24:18; 1 Kings 12:28; 1 Kings 17:9; 1 Kings 19:8; 1 Kings 29:9; 2 Kings 18:4; 2 Par 33:7; Nahum 2:9; Ps 74 (75), 9; Ps 77(78): 2–4; Ps 22:15; Deut 4: 6–8; Deut 10:16; Deut 18: 9–14; Deut 34:1–4; Deut 28. 6, 19; Jeremiah 4:4; Jeremiah 7:18; Jeremiah 11:13; Jeremiah 19:5; Jeremiah 14:14; Jeremiah 23:14; Jeremiah 29:8-9; Isaiah 8:19; Lamentations 2:15; Isaiah 10:6; Ezekiel 7: 1, 2, 7, 12; Ezekiel 8:14; Am 2: 7; Os 8:11; Os 10:1; Ecclesiastes 7:26; Proverbs 11:31, etc.) and only about 10 quotations and allusions from the New Testament (allusions to 1 Corinthians 12:12-20, 25-27; Ephesians 6:10-17; Mt 5:13; Mt 21:19 and Mk 11:13; Mt 21:13 and Mk 11:17; Mt 25:33; Luke 15. 7, 10; Romans 2:29; Hebrews 12:9). Numerous Old Testament characters are mentioned in the memre: Jonah (more than 40 times), Abraham (7 times), David (1 time), Elijah (2 times), Esau (1 time), Isaac (1 time), Jacob (2 times), Jeroboam (2 times), Job (2 times), Amitai (4 times), Moses (3 times), Nimrod (2 times), Noah (1 time), Saul (1 time), Tammuz (1 time); Old Testament toponyms: Assyria (6 times), Dan (1 time), Gomorrah (1 time), Sodom (2 times), Israel (1 time), Judah (2 times), Jerusalem (1 time), Canaan (2 times), Nineveh (more than 16 times), Zion (4 times).

Since Jesus practically does not appear in the memra, there is no basis for most of the anti-Jewish arguments of Christian exegetes, such as accusing the Jews of rejecting and killing Christ, of not understanding the messianic meaning of the Old Testament prophecies, etc. Therefore, the anti-Jewish argument in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is primarily based on the Old Testament self-accusations of the Jews of paganism from the prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel. Such traditional Christian anti-Jewish arguments as accusations of adherence to the law, observance of the Sabbath, circumcision (vv. 901-916; vv. 1891-1904), boasting of names and righteousness (vv. 1873-1889) are also presented in the memra, but rather briefly. This looks quite

[99] *Burgess H.* The Repentance of Nineveh…P. 3–4, xxi.
[100] Cf. Fomicheva S. V. About Some Christian Symbols in the Memra "On Jonah" by Efrem the Syrian. 2015. Ser. 9. Vyp. 4. P. 115–124.

unusual within the framework of the main tendency present in many Christian authors of the 4th-6th centuries, in John Chrysostom, Narsai, James of Sarug, and others.

For example, as one of the anti-Jewish arguments, these writers use the fact that Jews are no longer Gentiles, but are still persecuted by God[101]. Therefore, they explain, the fault of the Jews is that they do not accept Jesus and the New Testament. For example, Narsai, in his memra "Against the Jews", says to his imaginary Jewish interlocutor:

> In the wilderness thou hast angered [God] by serving the calf and the daughters of Moab, but in the land of Canaan thou hast gone astray, and hast committed fornication with stones and trees <... >And behold, *[now*] *you do not suffer from the worship of demons as before, // nor do you offer the fruit of your belly to unclean demons"* (vv. 148, 150).

The author of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" focuses on what happened in Old Testament times, when the Jews committed pagan sins:

> The Jews sacrificed their sons and slaughtered their daughters to demons (vv. 1149-1150).

In order to identify other features of anti-Jewish criticism in the memre, let us consider how the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews was interpreted by Christian and Jewish exegetes, Ephraim the Syrian in his authentic works, the Syriac writer Narsai, and others.

The Book of Jonah is an unusual biblical book that poses many problems for both ancient exegetes and modern scholars. One of its peculiarities is that God does not send the prophet Jonah to the Jewish people, but to the pagan city of Nineveh. The third chapter of the book describes how the people of Nineveh perform an unprecedented repentance, as a result of which God reverses His judgment on its destruction. It would seem that there is no mention of any other Jews at all, except for Jonah himself, and all attention is focused on the Gentiles. But researchers have long noticed that when compared with other biblical texts, primarily with the Book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 18, 22, 26, 36, etc.), it is clear that the author may have intended to implicitly show the pagan city of Nineveh as the complete antipode of Jerusalem[102]. Since, according to most scholars[103], the Book of Jonah was written in the post-exilic period in Persia (5th-4th centuries B.C.), this implicit contrast between the exemplary conduct of Nineveh and the wicked conduct of Jerusalem may indicate that the text was written to explain the catastrophe that befell Israel and Judah through the Gentile nations.

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[101] *Frishman J.* Narsai's Homily for the Palm Festival – Against the Jews: For the Palm Festival or Against the Jews? // IV Symposium Syriacum 1984. Literary Genres in Syriac Literature (Groningen - Oosterhesselen 10-12 September) /ed. by Drijvers H., Lavenant R., Molenberg C., Reinink G. Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987. P. 217–229. (OCA; 229.). Here P. 225.

[102] *Wolff H.* Jona, Dodekapropheten 3. Obadja und Jona. Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1977. S. 120, 126. Compare, for example, the expression "great city", which, in addition to the book of the prophet Jonah (1, 2; 3. 2, 3; 4:11), is used in MT only 2 times, one of which is in the book of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 22:8) in relation to Jerusalem.

[103] *Sasson J.* Jonah: A New Translation with Introduction, Commentary and Interpretation. New York, 1990. (Anchor Bible; vol. 24B). P. 22–28; Sweeny M. The Twelve Prophets. Collegeville (Minn.), 2000. 2 vols. P. 306–307; Ben Zvi E. The Signs of Jonah: Reading and Rereading in Ancient Jehud. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003. (Journal for the Study of the Old Testament. Supplement Series; vol. 367). P. 7.

This is how some ancient Jewish exegetes understood the meaning of the book. For example, in the Mishnah, which developed by the second century C.E., the Ninevites are presented as a biblical example of right conduct and true repentance, and their fasting is said to be "not like the fast of the people of Israel, who shed blood during it"[104]. In the early midrash on the Book of Exodus, Mekhilta, it is said: "Jonah said, "I will go beyond the earth, to a place where the Shekinah did not appear, so as not to accuse Israel, for the Gentiles (הגוים) are nearer to repentance" (Mekhilta, Tractate Pischa 1:84-87)[105]. Consequently, according to the author(s) of the midrash, the prophet Jonah renounces his mission (cf. Jonah 1:3) because he understands that the repentance of Nineveh will have negative consequences for Israel. These negative consequences may well refer to the events of 722/721 B.C.E., when Assyria conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and took most of its inhabitants into captivity. After all, the Nineveh described in the Book of Jonah, although devoid of specific historical features, was almost inevitably bound to evoke associations with Assyria, of which it became its capital under Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.E.).

If we turn to the Christian exegesis of the Book of Jonah, we see a great deal of interest in the contrast between the Gentiles-Ninevites and the Jews. The earliest mention of this is already in the New Testament. Thus, in the passage of Luke. In Acts 11:29, 32, which belongs to the early source Q[106], Jesus gives the example of the Ninevites who will testify against the Jews at the Last Judgment in an argument with the Pharisees: "The Ninevites will stand in judgment with this generation, and will condemn them, for they repented of the preaching of Jonah, and behold, here is more than Jonah"[107]. This contrast between the Ninevites and the Jews is further developed by Justin the Philosopher (d. c. 165) in his Dialogue with Tryphon the Jew[108]. In the fourth and fifth centuries, when the first complete commentaries on the Book of Jonah appeared, it became the leitmotif of almost all Christian interpreters of the book. To make sure of this, let us cite some passages from the works of the Church Fathers.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. 428), author of the first surviving Greek commentary on the Book of Jonah[109], notes in the prologue to his interpretation: "Thus the blessed prophet understood from the events of time that the Jews might deserve the utmost punishment for not having learned

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[104] M. Taanit 2:1.

[105] The translation according to the Hebrew text in: Mekhilta De-Rabbi Ishmael. A Critical Edition, Based on the Manuscripts and Early Editions, with an English Translation, Introduction, and Notes / ed., trans. by J. Lauterbach. Philadelphia, 2004. Vol. 1. P. 5–6.

[106] *Hengel M.* Jesus as Messianic Teacher of Wisdom and the Beginnings of Christology // Sagesse et Religion. Colloque de Strasbourg Octobre 1976 /ed. par Jacob E. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1979. p. 147–188. Here P. 151.

[107] Luc 11:32 (Synodal translation); cf. Matt. 12:41.

[108] *Jusinus Martyr*. Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo 108, 1–3.

[109] The commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia, written in the last quarter of the fourth century, is considered in scholarship to be the first surviving complete commentary on the Book of Jonah. Theodore sometimes mentions certain interpretations of his predecessors, but their commentaries have not come down to us.

any of the instigations that had happened to them, while the Ninevites, who were partakers of godlessness and depravity, With a clear disclosure of the future, they have shown that they can turn the heart for the better" [110].

St. Jerome of Stridon (d. 419/420), author of the first commentary in Latin, echoes the Greek theologian: "Jonah was sent to the Gentiles (*ad Gentes*) to accuse Israel, because while Nineveh repented, Israel persisted in evil"[111].

St. Cyril of Alexandria (d. 444) emphasizes: "<...> This is what the Ninevites did. But foolish Israel does not obey the law, laughs at Moses, does not esteem the words of the prophets... He even became a murderer of the Lord <...>" [112].

Theodoret of Cyrus (d. c. 458), a follower of Theodore of Mopsuestia, writes: "... (Jonah. – S.F.) assumed that the obedience of the Ninevites would turn into an accusation against the Jews, because the Ninevites believed an unknown foreigner, while they (i.e., the Jews. – S.F.) did not believe their numerous consanguineous prophets <...>" [113].

It is easy to see that all these passages have great similarities. Beginning with the New Testament, Christian exegetes deduce from the Book of Jonah the opposition between Ninevites and Jews, Nineveh and Zion, Nineveh and Israel. Using the instrument of typological exegesis, they see it as a prefiguration of the confrontation between the Gentiles who accepted Christ and the Jews who rejected Him. Referring to these and similar passages, researchers such as Elias Bickerman, Beate Ego and others have long noted that structurally they are quite similar to the above passage from Mekhilta and to other Jewish sources[114]: Christian exegetes take on board the reference already given in the Book of Jonah to the opposition between Assyria and Jerusalem, or Assyria and Israel, and simply fill it with new Christian content. In this sense, Bickerman rightly noted that "the Church Fathers accept the Jewish interpretation, but they turn it against its authors" [115]. Now let us consider how Erphaim the Syrian and other Syrian writers interpret the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews in their authentic works.

Nine hymns dedicated to Jonah and Nineveh (hymns 42–50) are found at the end of the hymnbook On Virginity. This collection, consisting of 51 hymns, is undoubtedly authentic to the works of Ephraim the Syrian and was probably written already in Edessa, i.e. after 363 A.D.

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[110] *Theodorus Mopsuestenus*. Commentarius in Ionam // Theodori Mopsuesteni Commentarius in XII prophetas / ed. H. N. Sprenger. Wiesbaden, 1977. S. 175:3–7.
[111] *Hieronymus Stridonensis.* Commentarius in Jonam I, 1 // SC. 323. P. 168.
[112] *Cyrillus Alexandrinus*. In Jonam prophetam commentarius // PG. 71. Col. 627BC.
[113] *Theodoretus Cyrensis*. Interpretatio Jonae prophetae // PG. 81. Col. 1725BC.
[114] *Bickerman E.* Les deux erreurs du prophète Jonas // Revue d'histoire et de philosophie. 1965. vol. 45. P. 232–264; *Ego B.* For the Gentiles are close to repentance. Rabbinic interpretations of the penance of the people of Nineveh // The Gentiles. Jews, Christians and the Problem of the Stranger / ed. R. Feldmeier, U. Heckel. Tübingen, 1994. (Scientific Investigations on the New Testament; Vol. 70). P. 158–176, especially 162–164.
[115] *Bickerman E.* The Two Mistakes of the Prophet Jonah... P. 240.

Despite the title, "On Virginity", the hymns presented in the collection are heterogeneous in theme. The idea that unites all the hymns in the collection in one way or another is the educational Christological interpretation of the “symbols” (Syr. ܪܙܐ “mystery, symbol”; ܕܡܘܬܐ “image, symbol” from Greek. τύπος etc.) in Nature and the Old Testament. It is in the hymns “On Virginity” that one of the most famous passages of the Syrian theologian about the two sources of the knowledge of God is found:

Wherever you look, there is his (i.e. Jesus’) *symbol* (ܣܝܡܐ). And wherever you read, you will find his *images* (ܕܡܘܬܗ̈ܝ) <... > (On Virginity 20:12).

Within the framework of this cycle, the views of the Syrian poet-theologian on the “righteous” pagans are concentrated. A number of hymns are devoted to the educational role of the Old and New Testament pagans, and often precisely in opposition to religious opponents. Some stanzas from them coincide almost verbatim with the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah”. For example, in the 20th hymn of the cycle, there is a list of Old Testament Jews who found refuge with the pagans:

When Jacob was persecuted, he went to Haran (cf. Gen 27:43). // Moses went persecuted to Midian (cf. Exodus 2:15). // Elijah also fled to Zarephath (cf. 1 Kings 17:9). // The uncircumcised received the circumcised <... > (On Virginity 20:2).[116]

There is a similar passage in the memre:

That Jew (i.e. the prophet Jonah) had // experience on the part of the Gentiles: the pagan priest received Moses (cf. Exodus 3:1), // and Elijah the widow (cf. 1 Kings 17:9) <... > (v. 1115-1118).

In the light of the memra, it is especially important for us to interpret the New Testament story of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28). Ephraim the Syrian refers to the example of this pagan woman as part of his interpretation of the New Testament accounts of the twelve pagan women who accepted Christ. About the Canaanite woman, Ephraim the Syrian reports that by her faith she destroyed the boundaries that the Lord originally outlined, saying: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles” (Matthew 10:5):

The Just One set boundaries for the land of the Gentiles (ܥܡܡܐ) so that the message (ܫܠܝܚܘܬܐ) would not cross them (cf. Matthew 10:5). // Blessed are you, who destroyed the fence without fear! <... > (On Virginity 26:9).

In another hymn of the cycle, the Syrian theologian contrasts the Canaanite woman’s love for the Savior with the demand of his religious opponents:

<… > Our Lord through the Canaanite woman (ܒܬ ܟܢܥܢܝܐ) // whose love loudly proclaimed to intercede for Him, // shamed (ܐܬܒܫ) Jerusalem, which cried out to be crucified (cf. Luke 23:21) (On Virginity 34:7).

[116] The Syriac Text in: Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Virginitate / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1962. (SCCO; 223. Syr; 94.).

Concluding the hymn about the twelve pagan women, who, by analogy with Christ's disciples, Ephraim the Syrian calls Him “female disciples” (ܬܠܡܝܕܬܐ), the Syriac theologian draws the following polemical conclusion:

The heathen nations shone forth, purified and polished, // and the *people* became black and stained // with that blood <... > (On Virginity 26:15).

Within the framework of possible intertextuality[117] with these hymns, the fact that in the memrah “On Nineveh and Jonah” the Ninevites are repeatedly called “the seed of Canaan” (ܙܪܥ ܟܢܥܢ ܕܟܢܥ) (v. 905; 1601), which is quite unusual for the exegesis of the book of the prophet Jonah, is of particular importance[118]. If the memre “On Nineveh and Jonah” belongs to the pen of Ephraim the Syrian, or the author of the memra had a common worldview with him, then it can be assumed that that the Canaanite Ninevites in Memra, the “virtuous” pagans who lived long before the Incarnation and received the Good News (ܒܫܘܪܝܐ) in their salvation (v. 1891, 1294, 1329), become a kind of prototype of the Canaanite woman bearing witness to Christ. On the other hand, as we will demonstrate later, this designation has another function: it is the basis for the apocryphal account of the Ninevites, as descendants of the Canaanites, going to Canaan.

Now let’s move on to the analysis of the hymns dedicated to Jonah and the Ninevites. Let us note that these hymns crown the cycle, which means that they summarize its content, being a key example of the “righteous” pagan prototypes of Christians. In the first of the nine hymns, Ephraim the Syrian interprets in his characteristic poetic form, filled with antitheses and paradoxes, the first and second chapters of the book of the prophet Jonah. Describing through a series of paradoxes associated with the metaphor of motherhood and fertility, Jonah's sojourn in the fish and his miraculous deliverance from its womb, the poet-theologian introduces an educational typology of the prophet Jonah, whom he designates as a “mystery”, “symbol” (ܪܐܙܐ) of Christ:

The slave (i.e. the prophet Jonah – S.F.) *the symbols* (ܪܐܙܐ) of His Lord: in His conception, birth, and resurrection (On Virginity 47:29).

In this educational typology, Ephraim the Syrian continues and develops the educational remark in the Gospel of Matthew:

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[117] By 'intertextuality', a widely used term in modern literary and biblical studies, we refer to a phenomenon that biblical scholar James Nogalski describes as follows: “”Intertextuality” refers to a relationship between two or more texts that suggests that (1) it was intentionally established by ancient authors/editors, or (2) was intended by those authors/editors" (*J. Nogalski, p.* Intertextuality and the Twelve // The Book of the Twelve and Beyond: Collected Essays of James D. Nogalski. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017. P. 217.

[118] The author of the memra defines the Ninevites as “descendants of the hero Nimrod” (ܙܪܥ ܕܓܒܪܐ ܢܡܪܘܕ) (v. 532; 879). And Nimrod, according to biblical genealogy, was the nephew of Canaan (cf. Genesis 10:1-8).

For as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40).

In the next hymn, the Syrian theologian speaks of the prophetic role of Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites, likening it to the preaching of Simon Peter, who was called by Jesus (Matthew 4:18-20): Jonah, though unwittingly, catches thousands of spiritually dead Ninevites with his net and saves them; Simon Peter casts a net and saves the Gentile *nations* (ܥܡܡܐ). Here Ephraim the Syrian speaks for the first time about the "pagan" peoples, ܥܡܡܐ, whom he places in parallel with the Ninevites:

Jonah was grieved when he cast his net, // and gathered thousands of the dead with it to life (On Virginity 43:2).

Thus he caught fish (Simon – S.F.) and gave fish for food. // And he saved *the nations* (ܥܡܡܐ) from the Devourer (On Virginity 43:12).

At the same time, Ephraim designates the preaching of Simon Peter as *the Good News*, ܒܫܪܬܐ, which in Syriac is the designation of the Gospel:

His (i.e., Simon – S.F.) snare rejoiced in the mouth of men; // His *gospel* (ܒܫܪܬܗ) grieved the lips of death (On Virginity 43:13).

In the next, the third of the nine hymns "On Jonah", Ephraim the Syrian introduces for the first time the contrast between the people of the prophet Jonah, whom he designates as ܥܡܐ, "circumcised", and the Ninevites, whom he designates as ܥܡܡܐ, i.e. "pagan" peoples, "uncircumcised":

You, the son of the [Jewish] people (i.e. the prophet Jonah – S.F.), showed [the way of acting] of your people (ܥܡܐ), // and the [pagan] nations (ܥܡܡܐ) showed [the way of acting] of their brothers. // You showed the taste, you showed the taste *of the circumcised*. // And they showed the obedience of the *uncircumcised* (On Virginity 44:5-6).

He returns to this theme again in the penultimate hymn of the cycle:

Jonah, *the circumcised (*ܡܓܙܪ), *was ashamed of the circumcised* (ܡܓܙܪ), // because he saw *the uncircumcised (*ܠܐ ܡܓܙܪ) *circumcised* their hearts (cf. Deut 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:29) (on virginity 49:3).

Thus, the Syrian theologian, within the framework of the antitheses "people" *vs.* "nations" and "circumcised" *vs.* "uncircumcised", introduces the opposition of the people of the prophet Jonah and the "righteous" pagans, the Ninevites, which is absent in the biblical book. Ephraim the Syrian introduces this opposition within the framework of the typological exegesis of the prophet Jonah as a prototype (ܛܘܦܣ) of Jesus and the preaching of Jonah as a prototype of Simon Peter's preaching to the Gentiles (ܥܡܡܐ), which he designates as ܒܫܪܬܐ, *Good News*.

There are a number of important similarities between the memra and these hymns. Thus, the motif of shame of the prophet Jonah, together with the use of the biblical expression "circumcision of the heart", has an almost exact correspondence in the memre:

Jonah saw [this], and terror seized him, // he *was ashamed* (ܐܬܟܠܡ ܒܫܘܬ) of the sons of his people <... > He (i.e., the prophet Jonah) saw *the uncircumcised* (ܥܪܠܐ) *circumcise* their hearts (cf. Deut 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 2:29), // and *the circumcised made* their hearts hardened (ܥܒܕ ܠܒܐ) (cf. Deut 10:16) (vv. 907–908) <... >.

In both the hymns and the memre, the forty-day trial of the Ninevites is called "a contest" (ܡܕܝܢܐ)":

In the *contest* (ܒܡܕܝܢܐ) for forty days the circumcised were put to shame, and the uncircumcised *were victorious* (ܙܟܘ) (On Virginity 49:5).

In a fair competition (ܒܡܕܝܢܐ ܕܫܘܝܐ) they were, // where everyone *won* (lit. "bargained") (ܙܒܢ), his soul (memrah "On Nineveh and Jonah", verses 67-68).

Both works use a comparison of Nineveh with the Church, the community (ܥܕܬܐ):

With the fights that his (i.e., the prophet Jonah's) voice (evoked), he (i.e., the prophet) Jonah oppressed *Nineveh* — // *the community* (ܥܕܬܐ), which gave birth *to praise* (On Virginity 42:10).

Jonah saw that *Nineveh*, // as the *Church*, *the whole community* (ܥܕܬܐ) had gathered (ܟܢܫ) <... >// The Holy *Temple* (ܗܝܟܠ ܩܕܫܐ) in *Zion* // they turned the robbers into a cave (memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", vv. 1137-1140).

However, in the hymns, unlike the memra, there is no opposition between Nineveh and the Jewish Temple. It should also be noted that in hymns the comparison is given from the author, and in memre it is presented from the point of view of the character.

Thus, there are a number of important similarities between memre and hymns in theology and imagery. However, there are differences. First of all, hymns are alien to the freedom of interpretation of biblical history, which we observe in the memre. The madrash presents a poetic interpretation, full of paradoxes, antitheses and poetic imagery, but, unlike the memra, they end in the same place as the biblical book. In the hymns, the king of Nineveh plays no role, while in the memre his monologue is the core of the entire work. In the Madrash, the Ninevites are a theological construct devoid of gender and age, and in the memre they are living people with professions, possessions, children, etc.

Let us now consider the image of Jonah and the Ninevites in the memra of another Syriac poet, Narsai.

The East Syriac poet-theologian Narsai (d. 502/503) wrote the memra "On the Prophet Jonah. Unlike Ephraim the Syrian, of whose education we know almost nothing, by the time of Narsai two key East Syrian educational centers had already been formed, of which he was the director, first the theological school of Edessa and then, after its closure in 489, the theological school" in Nisibis[119]. By the time of Narsai, the schools of Edessa and Nisibis were already under

[119] *Van Rompay L.* Narsai // Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage: Electronic Edition, edited by Sebastian P. Brock, Aaron M. Butts, George A. Kiraz, and Lucas Van Rompay, Online ed. Beth Mardutho, 2018. https://gedsh.bethmardutho.org/Narsai.

the influence of the exegetical method of Theodore of Mopsuestia[120]. In contrast to Ephraim the Syrian, whose main genre was didactic hymns-madrashe, by the time of Narsai the main genre of Syriac religious speech became memrs; all the works of Narsai that have come down to us belong to this genre. The memra "On the Prophet Jonah" is written in isosyllabic meter 12+12. In form, the memra is a narrative, in which all four chapters of the book of the prophet Jonah are interpreted. As Felix Tomé has shown, this memra was clearly influenced by the commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia[121].

Narsai, following Theodore of Mopsuestia, builds his memra as an example of an educational interpretation of the mission of the prophet Jonah to the pagans. Like the Greek theologian, in his preface he speaks of a clear educational interpretation of the Old Testament books that is available to Christians:

> The Creator has put great wealth inside the books and has hidden it in secret until the appointed time is fulfilled. // He stretched out the similitudes as a garment upon the signs (of the Scriptures), // that the eyes of the flesh might not despise the treasury of the spirit <... > (Of Jonah the Prophet vv. 1, 2)[122] He cast fear upon them that knew his covenants, that the power of his wisdom might be greatly increased before their eyes (Jonah the prophet, v. 4).[123]

As for Theodore, the prophet Jonah is for Narsai a type (ܛܘܦܣ) of Jesus Christ; his three days' sojourn in the fish, and his coming out of it unharmed, is a type of Christ's resurrection (vv. 122-126). Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites is seen by Narsai as a type of Jesus' preaching to the Gentiles (ܥܡܡܐ) (e.g., v. 117–128, 203–204; 243–254). For example, God says to Jonah:

> "Arise, go and preach *the new Good News* (ܒܣܪ ܚܕܬܐ) *to the uncircumcised nations* (ܠܥܡܡܐ ܕܠܐ ܡܬܓܙܪܝܢ). // For thou hast become *a symbol* (ܪܙܐ), fulfill thy symbol by action (v. 167)" <[124]... >Through one man I will convert all to faith in Me, in *his image* (ܒܕܡܘܬ ܛܘܦܣܗ) I have called the Ninevites to your preaching. // *He* will gather *the nations and* the people (ܥܡܡܐ ܘܫܘܒܚܐ) in the unity of love for Me, and I have prepared the way before His coming in the way of Assyria (vv. 246-247)[125].

Like Theodore, the Syrian theologian explains the flight of the prophet Jonah by saying that he knows that preaching to the Gentiles (ܥܡܡܐ) will bring trouble to the Jews: it will break the "fence of the Law", i.e. the fence *of the Jewish* Law[126]:

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[120] *Kavvadas N.* Translation as Taking Stances: The Emergence of Syriac Theodoranism in 5th Century Edessa // Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum. 2015. Bd. 19. S. 89–103.

[121] *Thome F.* Jonah — Typos Christi. Narsai's Memra On Jonah in the Light of the Exegesis of Theodor of Mopsuestia on the Book of Jonah // Bible, Byzantium and Christian Orient. Commemorative publication for Stephen Gerö on the occasion of his 65th birthday / ed. by D. Bumazhnov, E. Grypeou et al. Leuven, 2011, pp. 363–385.

[122] The Syriac text in: Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina, vol. I. / ed. by Mingana A. Mossoul: Fraternity of Preachers, 1905. P. 134, 1–3.

[123] *Ibid.* P. 134, 5–6.

[124] *Ibid.* P. 144, 10–11.

[125] *Ibid.* P. 148, 24 – 149, 1–3.

[126] About "the fence of the law" in Narsai's works cf. *Fomicheva S.* Educational Background of Mar Narsai: Between the "Tradition of the School" and Theodore of Mopsuestia's Exegesis // Studia Syriaca: Beiträge des IX. Deutschen Syrologentages in Eichstätt 2016, 61-70 // Edited by Peter Bruns and Thomas Kremer, Eichstätter Beiträge zum Christlichen Orient 6. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2018. S. 61–70.

He (i.e., the prophet Jonah) preferred to flee rather than be sent into the way of the *nations* (ܥܡܡܐ), lest he break the fence of the law by his journey (v. 43)[127].

Thus we see that the memra of Narsai bears a great resemblance to the exegesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia. For Narsai, as for Theodore, the prophet Jonah is a type of Christ, Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites is a type of Jesus' preaching to the Gentiles (ܥܡܡܐ); the repentance of the Ninevites is a type of the future destruction of the Jewish people, Jonah wants to save his people by fleeing from his mission.

It should be noted, however, that the exegesis of the book of Jonah in the hymns "On Jonah and Nineveh" by Ephraim the Syrian, analyzed above, is not so far from this scheme. The Syrian theologian is the first to introduce the opposition of the Ninevites as pagan peoples, ܥܡܡܐ the, who put to shame the (chosen) people of the Jews (ܥܡܐ). And he introduces this opposition within the framework of typological exegesis: the prophet Jonah, like Narsai, the preaching of Jonah to the Ninevites is compared to the *Good News* (ܒܫܘܪܬܐ) to the Gentiles, not of Jesus directly, as in the case of Narsai, but of Simon Peter, who was called by Jesus.

Thus, it should be added to Thomé's conclusion that Narsai's memra "On the Prophet Jonah" demonstrates a clear influence of the exegesis of Theodore of Mopsuestia, that Narsai also develops some of the ideas of the previous Syriac tradition of exegesis of this biblical book. The biggest difference between the exegesis of the book of the prophet Jonah Ephraim the Syrian and the exegesis of Narsai and Theodore is that Ephraim the Syrian is not interested in the motivation of Jonah's flight from his mission, the explanation of which in Theodore and Narsai is precisely the opposition of the Jews and the Ninevites, about the educational role of which the prophet Jonah knows.

Based on the above analysis, we can draw some conclusions about what the interpretation of the book of Jonah in the commentaries and in the memra «On Nineveh and Jonah» have in common, and how do they differ?

The main similarity is that both in the memra and in the commentaries of Theodore and Jerome, the repentance of the Gentile Ninevites is considered in the context of opposition to the Jews, although the book of Jonah itself is unusual precisely in that other Jews besides Jonah seem to be absent from it.

In the same similarity, however, lies the most important difference between the memra and the commentaries. The fact is that the contrast between the Ninevites and the Jews in the memra and the commentaries differs radically in the temporal planes. For Theodore, Jerome, and Narsai, the confrontation between the Ninevites and their contemporaries is *a prefiguration of future*

[127] Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina… P. 137, 2–4.

events — the preaching of Christ to the Gentiles, who believed Him, while the Jews rejected Him. The author of the memra is limited only to the framework of the Old Testament. He does not care about the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews as a prototype of the coming confrontation between the Jews who rejected Christ and the Gentiles who accepted Him. The author of the memra focuses on the confrontation between the Ninevites and contemporary Jews in Old Testament times. That is why he blames the Jews primarily for their pagan sins, which they committed in Old Testament times, and for which they were criticized by the biblical prophets. The traditional polemics in Christian anti-Jewish literature against purely Jewish rituals, such as circumcision, Sabbath observance, etc., are given much less space in the memra than the description of the Old Testament idolatry of the Jews.

An important formal difference between the commentaries, other works, and the memra under study is also the scope of the material: the commentaries, the madrashi of Ephraim the Syrian, and the memra of Narsay interpret the entire book of the prophet Jonah in its entirety, while in the memra «On Nineveh and Jonah»the material is interpreted selectively, with virtually no interpretation of the first two chapters. In the following paragraphs, we will analyze the specific motives behind the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews in the memre.

As we have demonstrated in the previous pragraph, Christian exegetes speak first of all of the *prophetic meaning of the confrontation between the* Ninevites and the Jews. Even those exegetes who have tried to place Nineveh in a historical context as the capital of Assyria (St. Jerome of Stridon, Theodoret of Cyrus) or a city in Persia (St. Cyril of Alexandria) do not mention the actual historical events that would seem to follow directly from the of such an interpretation, namely the conquest of Israel by Assyria or Judah by Babylon. And only two of the Christian exegetes deal not only with the spiritual, but also with the historical military confrontation between Nineveh and Israel. We are talking about the author of the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” and the Greek exegete Theodore of Mopsuestia.

As we show, both exegetes see Assyria’s conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel as a continuation of the events described in the Book of Jonah. However, their assessment of this conquest is exactly the opposite. Theodore of Mopsuestia interprets the conquest of Israel by Assyria in such a way that the Ninevites, after their repentance described in the Book of Jonah, returned to the path of sin, for which they were punished by God. As for the author of the memra, the Syrian theologian fully justifies the conquest of Israel by Assyria, considering it a natural consequence of the wicked behavior of the Jews in comparison with the repentance of the Ninevites, that is, God’s punishment. In the end, we will try to answer the questions of why there is such a glaring difference in the assessment of Assyria’s conquest of Israel, and why these two

commentators, unlike most others, address this topic. Let us begin with an analysis of the commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Theodore, a representative of the Antiochian theological school, employs the historical-grammatical method in his commentary. According to this method, the theologian first interprets Old Testament events within the framework of historical exegesis, that is, considering their meaning, "usefulness" for Old Testament history, and only on this basis develops the educational meaning of the interpreted events, in which the truth of Holy Scripture is fully revealed[128]. As part of this approach, Theodore interprets historical events — that is, Jonah's preaching at Nineveh, which he refers to as "an Assyrian royal city living in godlessness, luxury, and lawlessness"[129]— as having educational significance for Christians. According to this type of exegesis, the repentance of the Gentile Ninevites compared to the unbelief of the Jews is a sign of things to come, when the Gentiles will accept Christ and the Jews will reject: "He (i.e., the prophet Jonah – S.F.) understood also that this happened as a sign of what would happen to the Lord Christ, and the same thing would happen to a higher degree, when the nations (ἔθνη) would be called by Divine grace and would pass en masse to Divinity, while the Jews remained disobedient and did not accept the Lord Christ, despite the fact that they originally had a prophecy and a teaching about Him..."[130].

The prophet Jonah's knowledge that Nineveh's repentance would have negative consequences for the Jews is used by Theodore as an explanation of the reason for his flight from his mission: "For these reasons the prophet chose to flee, thinking that in this way he would avoid prophesying to the Ninevites and prevent the possible consequences of it, to which the wickedness of the Jews makes it plain"[131].

As proof of such future events, which the prophet Jonah fears, Theodore cites the siege of Jerusalem and the conquest of the kingdom of Israel by Assyria: "What happened afterwards is a proof of this statement: The Ninevites, after turning for the better with such great haste, did not fight against the Israelites much later, and, taking those who remained captive, showed great enthusiasm for the plundering of Jerusalem"[132].

A Christian exegete interprets this behavior of the Ninevites negatively and reports that they will be punished by God for the conquest of Israel, as the prophet Nahum declared: "For this

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[128] About the exegetical method of Theodore of Mopsuestia: Theodorus Mopsuestenus. Commentarius in Ionam... S. 86–110.
[129] *Ibid.* S. 174:19–20.
[130] *Ibid.* S. 175:7–12.
[131] *Ibid.* S.176:7–10.
[132] *Ibid*. S. 176:10–14.

they received a great punishment from God, which the prophet Nahum foretold and recorded in his books..."[133].

It should be noted that this interpretation of the Book of Jonah is very similar to that presented by some Jewish exegetes. They sought to explain the contradiction that arises between the books of Jonah and Nahum: while in the book of Jonah Nineveh is saved from destruction, according to the prophet Nahum (and historical reality) it *was destroyed*. Jewish exegetes solved this problem in several ways[134]. One of them is presented in the Targum of Jonathan, where in the commentary on the Book of Nahum (Nahum 1:1) it is said: "Earlier the prophet Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet of Gath-hepher, preached against her (i.e., against Nineveh), and she repented of her sins; but when they began to sin again, then the prophet Nahum prophesied against them again, as it is written in this book."[135]

Thus, Theodore, like the Jewish exegetes, seeks to explain the contradiction between the books of Jonah and Nahum. While fully agreeing with their way of explaining, Theodore is also of the opinion that the Ninevites repented as described in the Book of Jonah, but then returned to their sinful ways. Theodore considers the conquest of Israel by Assyria to be a manifestation of these sins. For this, the Ninevites will be destroyed by God, as the prophet Nahum says. Let us now consider how the author of the Memra of Nineveh and Jonah interprets the Assyrian conquest of Israel.

We have already mentioned that after the journey to the homeland of Jonah, the Ninevites, horrified by the sins of the Jews, reject them, and the author of the memra puts into their mouths a speech justifying the conquest and captivity of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria, which is expressed through reminiscences of the biblical verses of Isa. 10, 6 and others:

"Perhaps this [land] (i.e., Israel – S.F.) will be destroyed in place of (ܐܬܠܟ) Nineveh, which *was not destroyed* (cf. Jonah 3:4). // Here is a people (ܥܡܐ) who are in truth // a people (who deserve to be) *stripped and uprooted* (ܥܡܐ ܕܚܠܝܟ ܘܕܚܡܝܢ) (cf. Isa. 18. 2, 7) (art. 1933–1936) <... >We wonder whether these cities will not be handed over to us, // so that we may enter, destroy, plunder, // capture and take to Assur (ܘܢܫܒܘ ܘܢܒܙܘ ܘܢܬܪܘ ܘܢܥܘܠ ܠܐܬܘܪ) (cf. Isaiah 10:6)" (vv. 1943-1946).

Here we can see how the writer of the memra here justifies Assyria's conquest of Israel as God's "just: retribution for the wicked conduct of the opponents of the Ninevites. Unlike the Targum of Jonathan and Theodore of Mopsuestia, the Syrian theologian makes no mention of Nahum and his prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh at all. On the contrary, he stresses that Nineveh was not destroyed (ܐܬܚܒܠܬ ܠܐ) (cf. Jonah 3:4), it is Israel that will be destroyed instead

[133] *Ibid.* S. 176:14–16.
[134] *Ego B.* The Repentance of Nineveh in the Story of Jonah and Nahum's Prophecy of the City's destruction: Aggadic Solutions for an Exegetical Problem in the Book of the Twelve // Society of Biblical Literature 2000 Seminar Papers. 2000. P. 243–253.
[135]Cf. Midrash Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer 43.

of Nineveh (ܢܝܢܘܐ ܡܠܟ). Thus, the author of the memra not only justifies the conquest of Israel by Assyria, but also turns this event into an Old Testament manifestation of the doctrine of the "theology of supersessionism," as we have already mentioned.

To sum up, we can say that the author of the memra and Theodore of Mopsuestia refer not only to the educational confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews, but also to the historical events of Assyria's conquest of Israel, which they consider as a continuation of the events that took place in the Book of Jonah. At the same time, the two theologians demonstrate a directly opposite approach to assessing these events. Theodore evaluates them negatively, saying that the Ninevites will be punished by God for their actions, and the author of the memra not only justifies Assyria's conquest of the northern kingdom, but also makes it a manifestation of the doctrine of theology of supersessionism.

This raises at least two questions: Why do these two commentators address the subject of Assyria's conquest of Israel, and why do they account for such a glaring difference in their assessments? Perhaps one of the reasons why the author of the memra and Theodore of Mopsuestia address the subject of the conquest of Israel by Assyria may be that both exegetes strive for some degree of "historical" accuracy in their interpretations of the Book of Jonah. As we have mentioned, Theodore is a zealous exponent of the historical-grammatical method; the author of the memra in his work also strives to create a certain historical background of the Book of the Prophet Jonah and not to go beyond the Old Testament historical context. The conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by Assyria, whose capital was Nineveh, is of interest to both exegetes as an important historical event immediately following the events of the Book of Jonah. Both the author of the memra and Theodore, like many Jewish exegetes, believe that the historical *Sitz im Leben* of the Book of Jonah is to explain why the Gentile nations conquered and captivated Judah and Israel. The glaring difference in the assessment of these events between the two authors is probably due to the differences in the view of the Jews demonstrated by the Syrian and Greek theologians.

If the author of the memra was indeed Ephraim the Syrian, then he was the exponent of a rather tough anti-Jewish position[136]. He did not compose a separate work devoted to this topic, but numerous anti-Jewish invectives are presented in many of his works, for example: in the memre "On the Faith", the hymns "Against Julian" or "Against the Jews", the cycle of hymns "On the Passover" and others. Ephraim's anti-Jewish argument, like that of many other Christian

[136] *Shepardson C.* Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy: Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria. Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008. (North American Patristics Society Patristic Monograph Series; 20.).

theologians, is based on the concepts of accommodation and the theology of supersessionism[137]. The accommodation in the anti-Jewish controversy means emphaszing the temporary character of the Jewish law, which was needed only to curb the paganism of the Jews, and lost all need with the coming of Christ. According to theology of supersessionism, Christ and Christians fulfilled in themselves all the "mysteries", i.e., the Old Testament "types" and replaced them in all their fullness and truth. Most of the works of the Syrian theologian were written in Nisibis, a city on the border of the Roman and Persian empires, where there was probably a Jewish community, the first information about which dates back to the first and second centuries A.D. As follows from Ephraim's writings, he apparently faced the same problems as, for example, St. John Chrysostom in Antioch, that is, with the attraction of Jewish customs and holidays for some Christians, which caused sharp polemics.

As for Theodore of Mopsuestia, unlike many of his contemporaries, he developed a somewhat more tolerant approach to the Jews, which Aryeh Kofsky and Serge Rouzer described as "*mitigated supersessionism*" [138]. In this approach, for example, the theologian departs from the direct doctrine of theology of supersessionism and the degradation of the Jews. Theodore emphasizes that the misperception of the Jews of the Bible was not caused by their religious narrow-mindedness and inability to understand the truth, as most of his contemporaries claimed in their anti-Jewish statements, but rather by the very objective nature of the revelation that was revealed to them — it was purposefully hidden from them by God. In his works, the theologian often praises Jews for their accurate understanding of the biblical text, for the techniques of memorizing the commandments of the Torah, for example, for wearing phylacteries[139]. The similarity between the conquest of Israel by Assyria and the subsequent punishment of God in its interpretation and the picture presented in the Targum of Jonathan is probably not accidental, for Theodore may have used Jewish sources. Perhaps it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that by this interpretation he expresses solidarity with the Jews, victims of such a terrible catastrophe. And despite Theodore's typological interpretation of the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews, which in his opinion stemmed from the events of the Book of Jonah, he, unlike other Christian exegetes, pays attention to the accusation of the Ninevites for the defeat of Israel.

Next, one more important circumstance should be mentioned. From the 1830's onwards there was a turning point in the East Syriac exegetical tradition. The model for East Syriac exegesis, which developed in the two key educational centers of Edessa and Nisibis, was the

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[137] Cf., for example, the hymns of Ephraim the Syrian, "On Unleavened Bread" 17; 18, 19, etc.; hymns "On Nisibis" 67, etc.

[138] *Kofsky A., Ruzer S.* Theodor of Mopsuestia On Jews and Judaism: Mitigated Supersessionism in Christological and Hermeneutical Context // Revue des études juives. 2015. Vol. 174 (3–4). P. 279–294.

[139] *Ibid.* P. 280–282.

historical and grammatical method of Theodore of Mopsuestia, whose works were translated into Syriac[140]. Among the reasons for this phenomenon, researchers name the closeness of the East Syrian and Antiochian traditions. Our analysis confirms that, at least as far as the interpretation of the Book of Jonah is concerned, the two theologians show considerable similarities in their historical interpretation of the Book of Jonah, but they use this interpretation to achieve opposite ends: the author of the memra to express a strong anti-Jewish polemic, while Theodore, on the contrary, to express some sympathy for the Jews.

It is the interpretation of the Book of Jonah that gives us a good example of how exegesis changed before and after the influence of Theodore, including with regard to anti-Jewish polemics. One of the first writers to adopt Theodore's ideas was the Syrian poet-theologian Narsai, whose memra "On the Prophet Jonah" we discussed above. In this memre, which is clearly influenced by Theodore of Mopsuestia, Narsai changes the anti-Jewish conception of theology of supersessionism of his predecessors to the language of unity and love. For example, Narsai does not speak of the replacement of the people (ܥܡܐ) with nations (ܥܡܡܐ), like Aphraates, Ephraim the Syrian, and Isaac of Antioch, and certainly not of justifying the destruction of the Jews, as in the memr "Of Nineveh and Jonah" and the union of Jews with Gentiles in the love of God (vv. 246-247).

The fact that the author of the memra refers to the historical events of the confrontation between Israel and Assyria and justifies them is not accidental, but is part of his strategy, which we call "*the use of Old Testament self-criticism*". As we have already said, the author of the memra is careful to ensure that, at least in the foreground, the work does not go beyond the historical Old Testament context. It is as if he is copying the biblical Book of the prophet Jonah in an anti-Jewish way. using biblical self-criticism. This can be seen, for example, in the terminology that the Syrian poet-theologian uses to describe the wicked Jewish people in the memre. Thus, he borrows definitions from various biblical books that denounce Judah or Israel, for example, he calls the Jews a "*foolish people*" (ܥܡܐ ܣܟܠܐ), as the prophet Jeremiah did to Judah (Jeremiah 5:21), or he uses the biblical characteristics of the Gentile nations to describe the Jews, thereby emphasizing that they are the real Gentiles: for example, he calls the Jews "*a people stripped and uprooted*" (ܥܡܐ ܡܫܠܝܐ ܘܡܥܩܪܐ) (cf. Isa. 18:2, 7), "*bold people*" (ܥܡܐ ܚܣܝܢ) (cf. Hab. 1:6).

One of the goals of this strategy is probably to appeal to the authority of Scripture, to "root" anti-Jewish intent in the biblical text itself, to justify the "rewriting" of the history of Jonah and the Ninevites as a natural continuation of the trends inherent in the Bible itself. We will analyze this strategy in more detail bellow. For the moment, let us emphasize that within the framework

[140] On this process, see: *Kavvadas N.* Translation as Taking Stances... P. 89–103.

of this approach, it is not surprising that the theologian turns to the events of Assyria's conquest of Israel and justifies them. After all, what, in fact, is the destruction and captivity of Israel or Judah, if not the most striking expression of the Old Testament "anti-Jewish criticism"?

It should also be noted that the author of the memra was not the only one in the Syriac tradition who interpreted the conquests of Assyria from an emphatically anti-Jewish position. So, in the comment (Pseudo?)-Ephraim on the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 10:5-6) says:

> He (i.e., the Lord – S.F.) called the Assyrian [king] *a rod of wrath* (Isaiah 10:5) and a smiting haughtiness, in order to punish the obstinate with it, and sent him against the Jews, an unrighteous and wrathful people. For they were wicked before their God, and did evil and dishonestly to their brethren. *To take captive and plunder* (Isaiah 10:6), that is, the Assyrian [king] will take captive with the captivity of wrath and rob the plunder of the insolent Jews[141].

A similar approach is appeared in the early Syriac ascetic work the "Book of Steps" (4th to early 5th centuries), where it is emphasized that in Old Testament times Assyria was a divine punishment for the impious behavior of the Jews[142]. Thus, some Syrian theologians, and especially the author of the memra in his memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", readily take up and develop in their anti-Jewish polemics a biblical approach to Assyria, Babylon and other pagan peoples who oppressed Judah and Israel as instruments of God's wrath for their transgressions (cf. Isaiah 10:6; Jeremiah 25 and other verses). In doing so, of course, they refrain from mentioning the "disadvantageous" biblical passages in which God's wrath is in turn inflicted on Assyria, Babylon, and other Gentiles who were proud of their victories (cf. Isaiah 10:12ff.; Jer. 51 and others). For example, the author of the memra does not cite Nahum's prophecy about the destruction of Nineveh in his memre. Let us now turn to another important element of the Ninevite-Jewish confrontation used in the memre, the image of Nineveh as the Church.

One of the important elements of the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews in the memra, expressed in the form of the doctrine of "theology of supersessionism" is the image of "Nineveh-Church". In the second indictment of the Jews, the author of the memra compares Nineveh with the "community, church" and contrasts Nineveh in this sense with the Temple in Zion:

> Jonah saw that *Nineveh*, // as a *church* (community) (ܥܕܬܐ), was all gathered (ܐܬܟܢܫ). // The bosom *of Nineveh* was cleansed, // the fast shone in it. // The Holy *Temple* (ܗܝܟܠ ܩܕܫܐ) (cf. Jonah 2:5, 8) in *Zion* // they turned into *a cave of robbers* (ܡܥܪܬ ܓܢܒܐ ܗܘ) (Jeremiah 7:11; Matt. 21:13; Mk 11:17; Lk 19:46) (vv. 1137-1140).

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[141] The Syriac text in: Sancti Patris nostri Ephraem Syri Opera omnia quae exstant Graece, Syriace, Latine… P. 38:9–15.

[142] Liber Graduum IX, 6 // Patrologia syriaca. 1/3. Col. 215–218.

Peter Hayman[143] and Christine Shepardson [144] see this comparison with the Church as an important element of the typological exegesis in memra. Within the framework of our analysis, we seek to show that the term “typological exegesis” does not exhaust the arguments used by the author in the memre. Memra is not a theological treatise, its didactic argumentation is developed within the framework of narrative. Meanwhile, in accordance with the principles of modern narratology, it is not only the content of a speech that is important, but also *who* delivers it and under what circumstances[145]. Therefore, it is not only the comparison of Nineveh with the Church itself, which researchers analyze from a theological point of view, that deserves attention, but also the fact that it is not introduced on behalf of the author-theologian, as in the commentary, but is shown from the point of view of the character, the prophet Jonah.

Meanwhile, the introduction of the figure of the prophet Jonah, in our opinion, is far from accidental, but is a necessary element of a special method of biblical quotation, which can be designated as “double” or “simultaneous” quotation. According to this method, the author deliberately uses expressions that occur in both the Old and New Testaments, and constructs a situation in the memre that is analogous to the biblical contexts of these expressions. Let us explain, what we mean. In the above passage from the memra the Biblical expression "the cave of thieves" is used, which is found both in the New Testament (Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17) and in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 7:11)[146]. At the same time, in both cases, the context of the use of the phrase is anti-Jewish. In the Old Testament, it is a question of inner criticism – the phrase "cave of thieves" is part of a speech from the book of Jeremiah that denounces the Jews: “Has not this House, over which My name is called, become in your eyes *a cave of robbers* (ܡܥܪܬ ܠܛܝܐ) <... >” (Jeremiah 7:11). In the New Testament, Jesus, quoting the prophet Jeremiah, accuses the Jews of his time.

In fact, it is impossible to say for sure whether the author is quoting the New Testament or the Old Testament here, but in our opinion, such uncertainty may not be accidental, but intentionally taking into account both options that pop up in the minds of listeners/readers. The author of the memra imitates the biblical Old Testament self-criticism and the New Testament anti-Jewish criticism, and although he does not put it directly into the prophet's mouth, as in the book of Jeremiah, he still uses the quotation from the point of view of the prophet, this time, Jonah, “Jonah saw”. Consequently, the Hebrew prophet in the memre, like Jeremiah and Jesus, criticizes the Jews, accusing them of turning the Temple into a cave of thieves. At the same time, an additional contrast between the Temple and the Church introduced in the memra clearly points to

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[143] *Hayman P.* The Image of the Jew… P. 430.
[144] *Shepardson C.* Interpreting the Ninevites Repentance… P. 265.
[145] *Genette J.* Figures. In 2 volumes. Moscow, Sabashnikov Publishing House, 1998. P. 201–212.
[146] Although it is found in this lexical form only in the Old Testament of the Peshitta and in the VS, in the New Testament of the Peshitta another word is used to convey “robbers? (Mt 21:13; Mk 11:17) — ܠܛܝܣܐ.

the possibility of a New Testament context. Thus, in this complex, multi-layered quotation, three temporal planes intersect: the time of the prophet Jeremiah, the time of the prophet Jonah, and the time of Jesus.

It should be noted that the contrast between Nineveh as a congregation (ܥܕܬܐ) of the Gentiles (ܥܡܡܐ) and the Jewish Temple is reminiscent of a quotation from the Syriac Didascalia of the Apostles (3rd century), one of the earliest evidences of the doctrine of theology of supersessionism in the Syriac tradition:

God left the *people* (ܥܡܐ) of the Jews and *the Temple* (ܗܝܟܠܐ) and came to the church of the *nations* (ܥܕܬܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ)[147].

But in the memre, the "Church of the Nations" is filled with concrete content: it is not Gentile Christians in general, but the city of Nineveh.

Meanwhile, the likening of a particular city to the Church from among the pagan nations is found in the authentic works of Ephraim the Syrian. For example, in the hymns "On Virginity" the Syrian theologian calls the Samaritan city of Shechem, in which Jesus met the Samaritan woman (Jn 4:4-26), "the beginning and likeness of the *Church from among the [pagan] nations* (ܫܘܪܝܐ ܘܕܡܘܬܐ ܕܥܕܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܥܡܡܐ)" (On Virginity 17:2). In the next verse, Shechem is likened to Nineveh:

> Blessed art thou, O Shechem! For in thee the True One // has broken His own words in order to save thee. // "Do not go to the way of the Gentiles, // Nor to the city of the Samaritans!" (cf. Matt. 10:5) // Blessed art thou, for thou hast become like *Nineveh*, in which thou hast abolished // Thy own just judgment and saved it <... > (On Virginity 17:9).

Ephraim the Syrian thus compares Nineveh and Shechem, two cities, Samaritan and Gentile, united by the fact that God breaks His own command for their sake (Jonah 3:4; Mt 10:5). Nineveh is also compared to the ܥܕܬܐ in the hymns "On Jonah and Nineveh", although, unlike the memra, there is no contrast with the Temple:

> By the struggles which his voice [evoked], // he oppressed Nineveh, // *the community [of the Gentile nations*] (ܥܕܬܐ), which gave birth *to praise* (cf. Ps 35:18) (On Virginity 42:10).

The imagery of pagan cities as a likeness of the Church is associated with another important image in the works of Ephraim the Syrian: the eradication of the Temple and the Jewish people. And this image, as we shall show later, also finds its counterpart in the memra.

We have already drawn attention to the fact that at the end of the memra there is a very harsh formulation of theology of supersessionism, the illustration of which is the physical destruction of Israel by Assyria:

> Perhaps this (land) (i.e., Israel – S.F.) will be *uprooted* (ܢܬܬܥܩܪ) // *instead* of (ܒܬܪ) Nineveh, which was not *destroyed* (cf. Jonah 3:4, 10). // Here is a people (ܥܡܐ) who are in truth // a *people* (deserving to be) stripped *and uprooted* (ܥܡܐ ܙܟܝܐ ܘܡܬܥܩܪ)! (cf. Isa. 18. 2, 7) (vv. 1933–1936).

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[147] Syr. Didasc. 23 // The Didascalia apostolorum in Syriac / ed. by Vööbus A. Louvain: Peeters, 1979. Vol. 2. Chapters XI– XXVI. (CSCO; 407. Syr.; 408). P. 226.

In this passage, the words with the root ܚܡܐ "to pluck out by the root" are used twice in relation to the Jewish people. Later in the same speech of the Ninevites, where the Jews are likened to a barren fig tree, this key word is used again:

Blessed be he who plucked *it (i.e. the fig tree – S.F.) from the ground* (ܚܡܢܗ), // so that through this the land *of nations* (ܕܥܡܡܐ) may be blessed (v. 1967-1968).

Although we do not find such a representation of Assyria's conquest of Israel in other works of Ephraim the Syrian, the very understanding of theology of supersessionism as the physical *eradication* of the Jewish people and the Temple and their replacement by the Church and peoples is one of the key images in the authentic works of the Syrian poet-theologian. For example, in the hymns "Against Heresies" he writes:

A church of the (pagan) nations (ܥܕܬܐ ܕܥܡܡܐ) (already) existed, // and then he *destroyed* (ܫܕܐ) *the Temple of the People* (ܗܝܟܠ ܕܥܡܐ). // And when he[148] *uprooted the Temple of the People* (ܕܚܡܐ ܗܝܟܠ ܕܥܡܐ), // *The Church* (ܥܕܬܐ) was built there (Against Heresies 24, 20). <... > The one who gave the order for the ark // built *the Temple of the people*. // The one who made them (both) disappear // founded the holy *Church* (Against Heresies 24:21) <... > He *uprooted* the people*, //* in order to fulfill the truth on the foundation. // He took it and scattered it, // to gather it for (eternal) life. // If they wish, they are invited to the (heavenly) marriage palace, // if not, then to hell (*Against Heresies 39:8*).[149]

We can conclude that, as in the memra, in relation to the Jews and the Temple, the works of Ephraim the Syrian use the same keywords with the root ܚܡܐ. Such a metaphor, which has its origins in agricultural activities — pulling weeds to denote fighting opponents — has its origins in the Bible, where it is often used in the prophetic books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Psalms, in relation to the Jewish people who commit wickedness, or the Gentiles. Ephraim the Syrian, like the author of the memra, uses this imagery to transform biblical self-criticism into anti-Jewish criticism.

Returning to the topic of likening Nineveh to the Church, we note that such a comparison is not found in Greek Christian writers, but in Latin ones. For example, Zeno of Verona (d. 371-372), a contemporary of Ephraim the Syrian, in his homily "On the Prophet Jonah" presents Nineveh as a prototype of the Church of the Gentiles, which will be formed with the coming of Christ:

As Jonah, who was swallowed up by the whale, was cast out by it after three days and three nights, and after that went to Nineveh, so our Lord, who after his death descended into the abyss of hell and destroyed the kingdom of Satan, rose up from the tomb on the third day, and after his resurrection, before ascending into heaven to his Father, appeared in Jerusalem. Finally, Nineveh represents *the image of the*

[148] As Edmund Beck points out, it is not entirely clear who is the subject here: God or the emperor Titus Flavius Vespasian, who destroyed the Second Jewish Temple in 70 C.E.? (Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen Contra Haereses / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1957. (CSCO; 170. Syr; 77.) S. 90. Anm. 18, 19). In the following verses, the subject who destroyed the Temple is clearly God.

[149] The Syriac tetx in: Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen Contra Haereses / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1957. (CSCO; 169. Syr; 76.).

Church (*imaginem portat Ecclesiae*). It is not without reason that God called it a great city; for He saw that the time would come when people scattered throughout the world, belonging to different nations, but who believed in Christ, would become one great citizen, His holy Church, under the rule of the eternal King-Christ. This comparison of Nineveh with the Church is also confirmed by the saving appeal of the Ninevites to God <...> [150].

Also, Jerome of Stridon, in his commentary on the book of Jonah, calls Nineveh a type of the Church of the Gentiles:

As for Nineveh, the great and most beautiful city, it *foreshadows the church* (*praefigurat ecclesiam*), in which the members are more than ten or twelve tribes of Israel <. >[151].

It should be noted that while the Latin theologians use explicit pro-educational terminology ("*praefigurat ecclesiam*") in their writings, the author of the memra simply compares Nineveh *(as the ܟܢܫܬܐ gathered*). Jerome operates within a clear pattern: Jonah is a type of Christ, and Jonah's preaching to the Ninevites is a type of Jesus' preaching to the Gentiles. Within the framework of this scheme, it seems quite logical that the pagan Ninevites represent for the theologian a prototype of the Church. Zeno of Verona similarly introduces a comparison with the Church as part of the typological exegesis of the book of Jonah. However, in the author of the memra, the prophetic typology of the prophet Jonah remains unused, so the comparison of Nineveh with "the community, the Church" does not look so typical. The Latin theologians place this image near the end of the work, thus summing up their comments, it is impossible not to notice it. The author of the memra, in fact, does not particularly emphasize this comparison with "the community, the Church", it is not central to him. In the next paragraph, we will look at another important image in the memra that is usually associated with theology of supersessionism: the image of the "Good News".

As we have seen, the book of Jonah is one of the most important links between the Old and New Testaments for Christian exegetes. In fact, this biblical book is regarded by commentators as a New Testament book. This is especially evident in the Syriac writers, who say that the Ninevites received the *Good News* (ܣܦܪܐ) in their salvation, which in Syriac is the equivalent of the Greek loanword ܐܘܢܓܠܝܘܢ to denote the gospel[152].

Thus, the "Good News" appears in the madrash "On Jonah and Nineveh" by Ephraim the Syrian. The Syrian theologian speaks of the prophetic role of Jonah's preaching, comparing it to the preaching of Simon Peter, who was called by Jesus (Matt. 4:18-20): Jonah, though unwillingly, catches thousands of spiritually dead Ninevites with his net and saves them; Simon Peter casts a

[150] S. Zeno. Tractatus XVII. De Jona propheta // PL. 11. Col. 448C–449A. Translated from: Holy Hieromartyr Zeno, Bishop of Verona On the Prophet Jonah // Christian Reading. 1843. Part II. S. 378–387 St. Petersburg: K. Zhernakov Printing House (with changes).

[151] Jerome. Commentary on Jonah... P. 314.

[152] Although the equivalence is not complete: ܣܦܪܐ did not seem to have the meaning of "book".

net and saves the Gentile nations (ܥܡ̈ܡܐ) (On Virginity 43, 12). At the same time, the Syriac theologian refers to the sermon of Simon Peter as “the Good News”:

> His (i.e., Simon’s) snare gladdened the lips of men; // His *gospel* (ܣܒܪܬܗ) grieved the mouth of death (On Virginity 43, 13).

Within the framework of the obvious prophetic significance of the book of Jonah, the Syrian poet-theologian Narsai uses the image of the “Good News”. For example, God says to Jonah:

> Arise, go and preach *the new Good News* (ܣܒܪܬܐ ܚܕܬܐ) *to the uncircumcised nations* (ܥܡ̈ܡܐ ܥܪ̈ܠܐ). // For thou hast become *a symbol* (ܐܪܙܐ), fulfill thy symbol by action (Memra, On the Prophet Jonah, v. 167).[153]

The memra of Nineveh and Jonah also describes twice that the repentant Ninevites received *the Good News* (ܣܒܪܬܐ) in their miraculous salvation:

> At the time when they (i.e., the Ninevites) thought they would perish, salvation came suddenly to them (vv. 1281-1282) <... > That shaking and trembling subsided at the same hour that *hope ceased* (ܦܣܩ ܣܒܪܐ). // The *Good News* (ܣܒܪܬܐ) of mercy was given, // when they saw (ܚܙܘ) the sign of mercy (vv. 1289-1292) <... > The clouds and gloom suddenly // vanished, passed. // Silence came, and *hope grew* (ܘܣܓܝ ܣܒܪܐ) // And the dead city came to life again. // Jonah wrapped himself in great sorrow, // and the Ninevites in the blossom of joy. // *The good news* (ܣܒܪܬܐ) was given to all, // when they saw the air brightened (vv. 1319–1330).

This passage is based on a play on *the words hope* (ܣܒܪܐ) and *Good news* (ܣܒܪܬܐ), which later in the memra receives a clear anti-Jewish interpretation:

> *The people* (ܥܡܐ) destroyed their *hope* (ܣܒܪܐ), // for *the pagan peoples* (ܥܡ̈ܡܐ) *hope* (ܣܒܪܐ) increased (vv. 1159–1160).

The Jews thus lost hope, but the Ninevites received, and, given the above play on words, received not merely hope, but, one might say, a type of the gospel. In this sense, the use of the gospel in memra is somewhat similar to its educational use in the interpretation of the New Testament account of the Canaanite woman in the hymns of Ephraim the Syrian’s On Virginity, as we discussed above. However, it should be borne in mind that in the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” the role of the Good News, which at first sight is clearly educational, in a deeper analysis, as we have already noted in the case of the assimilation of Nineveh to the Church, is not reduced exclusively to an educational interpretation. The educational character of the story of Jonah and the Ninevites, which is familiar to us from Christian exegesis, makes us see in this image, first of all, precisely the educational significance.

However, this image has other functions in the memre. First, as we noted above with the biblical expression “robbers’ cave”, the memra writer is clearly playing on the double Old Testament and New Testament uses of the word. The lexeme ܣܒܪܬܐ, which is a borrowing of the

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[153] Narsai doctoris syri homiliae et carmina… P. 144, 10–11.

Hebrew word and in [155], is found in the Peshitta, both in the New Testament (46 times)[154]בשׂורה the Old Testament (6 times)[156], and other words from the root ܒܫܪ are often found in the Eternal Testament, including in the theologically important verse Isaiah 61:1, which has received a messianic interpretation (cf. Lk 4:18; Mt 4). Therefore, when using the word ܒܫܘܪܬܐ, the author of the memra does not go beyond his "Old Testament" strategy, but plays with the Old and New Testament intertextuality in the use of this word.

Secondly, the "Good News" has in the memra another function. It is used as a literary *topos* to describe the catastrophe. Let us compare one of the passages from the memra, in which ܒܫܘܪܬܐ occurs, with a stanza from the Nisibis hymns of Ephraim the Syrian:

At the time (ܒܗܝܢ), when they (i.e., the Ninevites – S.F.) believed that they would perish, there came *for them suddenly* (ܟܕ ܐܠܦ) salvation (vv. 1281-1282) <... > That trembling and trembling subsided at the same hour (ܒܗܝܢ) when *hope* ceased (ܫܒܩ ܣܒܪܐ). // The *Good News* (ܒܫܘܪܬܐ) of mercy (ܒܫܘܪܬܐ ܕܪܚܡܐ) was given, // when they saw (ܚܙܘ) a sign of mercy (vv. 1289-1292) <... > The clouds and darkness *suddenly* (ܟܕ ܐܠܦ) // vanished, passed. // Silence came, and *hope grew* (ܣܒܪܐ ܐܬܝܠܕ) // and the dead city came to life again. // Jonah was wrapped in great sorrow, // and the Ninevites in the blossom of joy. // *The good news* (ܒܫܘܪܬܐ) was given to all, // when they saw the air brightened (Memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", vv. 1319-1330).

The thunder (of voices) of all the mouths is too faint to thank Thee, // For in the same hour (ܒܗܝܢ ܥܒܕ) when our light began to fade, // To be extinguished, // *Suddenly* (ܟܕ ܐܠܦ) it shone forth again, // For for Thee all things are simple. // Who has seen two miracles [at the same time]? // At the same time (ܒܗܝܢ ܕܡܫܟ) with *despair* (ܫܒܩ ܣܒܪܐ), // hope appeared and *increased* (ܣܒܪܐ ܐܬܝܠܕ). The Hour of Lamentation // became the *Good News* (ܒܫܘܪܬܐ) (Nisibis Hymns 2, 3).[157]

In both passages, it is depicted a situation of catastrophe that threatens people with death. But at the same moment (ܒܗܝܢ, ܒܗܝܢ ܥܒܕ) when all hope of salvation disappears, suddenly (ܟܕ ܐܠܦ) comes the salvation, characterized as the "Good News" (ܒܫܘܪܬܐ). The key word "suddenly" which appears in both passages, firstly, demonstrates the power of God intervening in the natural order of things — "*suddenly* <... >, because everything is simple for You", and, secondly, it is a marker of a catastrophic situation, when all states can very quickly change to the opposite. In the above verse from the Nisibis hymns, which speaks of the third siege of Ephraim's native city of Ephraim the Syrian by the Persians in 350, ܒܫܘܪܬܐ cannot have a clear typological significance. It is an analogy, an important theological and rhetorical method of the Syrian theologian: a miraculous

[154] The Syriac variant shows a metathesis of the consonants bś > sb. Sokoloff M. A Syriac Lexicon. A Translation from the Latin, Correction, Expansion, and Update of C. Brockelmann's Lexicon Syriacum. Winona Lake, New Jersey: Eisenbrauns, Gorgias Press, 2009. P. 965.

[155] Mf 4: 23; 9: 35; 24:14; 26: 13; Mk 1: 14, 15; 8: 35; 10: 29; 13: 10; 14: 9; 16: 15; Act 12: 24; 15: 7; 20: 24; Rom 15: 19; 1 Cor 4: 15; 9: 12 etc.

[156] 2 Sam 4: 10; 18: 25, 27; Ps 19: 5 etc.

[157] The Syriac text in: Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena (Erster Teil) / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1961. (CSCO; 218. Syr; 92.).

salvation comes to the people of Nisibis today as the Good News in ancient times. But the most important thing to us is the fact that, from *a literary* point of view, it can be a certain *topos* to describe a catastrophic situation and a miraculous salvation from it. The image of the "Good News" is a part of it. In addition, such "intersections" with the Nisibis hymns may, as we shall show in Chapter 2, be an intentional play between the "depicted" fictive world of memra and the real world: the fictive narrative of the memra quotes from works in which the real preacher is addressed in his congregation at a specific historical moment.

Thus, we have analyzed the main literary and theological elements of memra, which are in one way or another connected with the Christian anti-Jewish doctrine of theology of supersessionism. Let us now turn to the other traditional Christian anti-Jewish arguments used in the memre, which include the uselessness of Jewish rituals and the accusation of "false" righteousness against the Jews.

In the first indictment of the Jews the Syrian theologian, on behalf of the prophet Jonah, addresses the theme of the uselessness of the Jewish rituals of the Sabbath and circumcision:

> He (i.e., the prophet Jonah – S.F.) saw the Sabbaths that were not kept, // when the commandments were kept. // Without the Sabbath there was salvation, // And without circumcision there was victory. // Jonah despised his fellow-countrymen, // who were famous for the Sabbaths. // He also despised them, because circumcision // they placed between life and death[158] (vv. 909-916).

Such arguments represent the most common anti-Jewish arguments in Christian anti-Jewish polemics, including the writings of Ephraim the Syrian[159]. But in the memra they occupy a very small place in comparison with these works. For the most part, as we have repeatedly emphasized, the author of the Nineveh and Jonah memra does not attack purely Jewish traditions, such as the Sabbath and circumcision but the pagan customs of the Jews: magic, astrology, divination, idolatry, and so on.

In the memra in the speech of the Ninevites is spoken about the false "righteousness" of the Jews for polemical purposes:

> They are proud only of their names, // *the sons of the righteous* (ܒܢܝ ܙܕܝܩܐ) are called <... > Through *the righteous* (ܙܕܝܩ) names they bear // they fools think that they have already *become righteous* (ܙܕܝܩ) <... > Through Abraham they believe that they are *the sons of the righteous* (ܒܢܝ ܐܒܪܗܡ) (v. 1873-1874; 1877-1878).

Like the previous argument it is typical of Christian polemics. For example, in the writings of the Syrian writer Aphraates, righteousness (ܙܕܝܩܘܬ, ܙܕܘܩܐ) is used for polemical purposes against the Jews within the framework of the following opposition: the original righteousness of

[158] Cf., Aphraates has a similar expression for the Sabbath: Patrologia syriaca. 1/1. Col. 544, 1–5.
[159] Cf., e.g., Ephraim the Syrian, On Faith 3:273-38; 6, 67–160 etc.

the forefathers (Noah, Abraham) vs. the "righteousness" of the Jewish Law of which the Jews are proud[160].

After analyzing the more or less typical anti-Jewish arguments used in the memre, let us turn to the most important argument that has no parallel in the exegesis of the book of Jonah, the motif which we have designated as the "anti-Exodus"[161].

Perhaps the main feature of the Syriac memra in comparison with the biblical text is that after the miraculous salvation of the Ninevites (vv. 1319-1330) and the dialogue of the prophet Jonah with God (Jonah 4:1-11) (vv. 1391-1490), the story of the Ninevites in the memra does not end.

According to the author of the memra, the repentant Ninevites want to grow on the path of virtue, as he calls it, to become "righteous" (ܙܕܝܩܐ) from the "repentants" (ܬܝܒܐ) (vv. 1653-1654) and, according to the logic of the text, they can do this only with the help of the Jews, the people whose prophet helped them to be saved. Thus the Ninevites say to the prophet Jonah:

Do not rob us, O Jew, // of your attendants, for profit! Through you (ܒܟ) (i.e., the Jews) we have become repentants (ܬܝܒܐ) // we will also become righteous through you (ܙܕܝܩܐ)[162]! (p. 1651–1654).

The Ninevites consider the Jews to be a righteous people, adorned with many virtues, and hope that they can become a "mirror" for them, i.e., a moral example:

The people (ܥܡܐ) who instruct others // have no dirt with them. // The people who accuse the ugly // how far [they should be] from ugliness! // For others they have become a mirror (ܐܣܛܘܪ). //How beautiful they must be! // They taught strangers fasting. // Is it possible that they were immoderate? // They have taught others the truth. // Is it possible that they are deceitful? (p. 1639–1648).

Aware of the sinfulness of his people and ashamed of it, Jonah tries to persuade the Ninevites to abandon their decision to see his homeland (vv. 1673-1712). The sorrowful, weeping Ninevites are ready to turn back, but when they see a high mountain in front of them, they decide to climb it and at least see the land of the Jews from afar (vv. 1713-1736). The Ninevites are horrified to see scenes of magic, divination among the Jewish people (1737-1806), and human sacrifice (1859-1862). They see in the land of the Jews the exact opposite of what they wanted to learn from them (vv. 1863-1867):

The people (ܥܡܐ) with their saviours, // how bad is their way of life! // A people whose laws are pure, // how filthy are their deeds! // A people with these fathers, // how cursed is their upbringing! Seeing all these pagan sins in the land of the Jews, the Ninevites condemn them and hasten to return to their own country (vv. 1807-1920).

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[160] *Martikainen J.* Justice and goodness of God. Studies on the Theology of Ephraem the Syrian and Philoxenus of Mabbug. Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1981. P. 14–17

[161] *Fomicheva S. V.* Anti-Exodus in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" by Rev. Ephraim the Syrian († 373) // Vestnik PSTGU. Series III: Philology. 2021. Vyp. 69. P. 116–129.

[162] In a sense, these verses echo Romans 9:30-31: "The Gentiles who did not seek righteousness (ܙܕܘܬܐ) received righteousness, righteousness by faith. But Israel, who sought the law of righteousness, did not attain to the law of righteousness". It is only in memra that the Gentile Ninevites *seek* righteousness.

Horrified by the deeds of the Jews, the Gentile Ninevites conclude that the Jews have become Gentiles in their place:

> And just as they used to be very anxious // to enter and see the land (of the Jews), // so they were fed with it and hated it, // and terrified and fled from it (vv. 1917-1920). In the wickedness which the repentants cast away, // the Jews clothed themselves. // The paganism (ܥܒܕܐ) which was rejected by the Gentile peoples (ܥܡܡܐ)// is worn by a foolish people (ܥܡܐ) (v. 1923-1926). In Nineveh there is great confidence, // but here there is great fear (vv. 1931-1932).

On the basis of this rejection of the Jews, the Ninevites, as we have shown above, even conclude that their physical destruction is possible (vv. 1933-1936), which refers to the conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel by Assyria in 722/721 (vv. 1941-1946). As a result, the Ninevites return to their homeland and thank God for putting the Jewish people to shame through the Gentiles .vv) (1953-1976.

Even at the first acquaintance with the plot developed by the authors of the memra, researchers quite legitimately ask questions: why does the author create this plot, and what theological and rhetorical foundations does he rely on? Until now, scholars have limited themselves to remarking that this story was born of the rich imagination of Ephraim the Syrian[163]. However, if we consider the story of the Ninevites' campaign in the Promised Land in the context of a number of relevant texts, the "fantasy" of the Syrian author will find a clear theological foundation and a firm footing in the literary tradition that had developed by that time.

First of all, it is necessary to trace the connection of this fictive continuation of the biblical story with the Old Testament books, and in this case, of course, the plot of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt cannot be ignored[164]. On the one hand, as in memra in general, direct quotations to the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy do not occur in memre, but on the other hand, there are many allusions and a whole group of keywords that confirm the intertextual connections between these two stories. For example, in the memre, as we noted in section 1.4, the author twice refers to the Ninevites as "descendants of Canaan" (vv. 905; 1601), and the homeland of the prophet Jonah is repeatedly called the "Promised Land" (vv. 1732, 1811). In addition, the main concepts of the biblical narrative, such as the way, the road, and the journey, are important to the author of the memrah, since the Ninevites accompany the prophet Jonah on his return to his homeland. The story how the Ninevites look down on the land of the prophet Jonah from the mountain but do not enter it (vv. 1723–1736), is undeniably constructed as an antipode to the biblical narrative of Moses contemplating the Promised Land from Mount Nebo but was not allowed to enter it[165]. This

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[163] Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrians Sermones II / Beck E., ed. Louvain, 1970. 312. Syrian; 135.) p. vii; Cramer W. Frohbotschaft... P. 105.
[164] Ex 1–15.
[165] Deut. 34:1–4.

analogy was rightly pointed out by Rodoljub Kubat[166], but he did not continue the selection of correspondences between the Exodus and the memra. Meanwhile, it is the book of Deuteronomy that becomes the most important intertext for the author of the memra to create the motif of the "anti-Exodus".

Deuteronomy 28 is structured as an antithetical description of blessings and curses for the two possible paths of the people of Israel, the righteous way and the wicked way. A series of blessings will be with the Jewish people if they "obey the voice of the Lord God" (Deut 28:1). In this case, God will place him "above all the nations of the earth" (ܥܠ ܟܠ ܥܡܡܐ ܕܥܠ ܐܪܥܐ) (Deut 28:1).

But if the people of Israel do not obey the Lord and keep His commandments (Deut. 28:15), the exact opposite will befall them – a series of curses and numerous calamities will fall upon them until they are completely cut off from the Promised Land (Deut. 28:21, 63 etc.). Of course, such an intra-biblical critique of the people of Israel provided fertile ground for the expression of anti-Jewish Christian views. It can be said that that the author of Memra, fully aware of this fact, places the Jews within the framework of his work on the second "branch" of these two possible paths, the wicked path, which naturally ends in their extermination, which in memra is the conquest of Israel by Assyria. The Ninevites who contemplate the pagan sins of the people in the Promised Land see, for example, the following:

Engraved images on their doors, // whoever *enters and* exits behaves like a pagan (ܕܥܒܪ ܘܢܦܩ ܐܝܟ ܥܒܕ) (art. 1743–1744).

The expression used here ("enters and goes out") refers to the symmetrical antithetical blessing and curse of Deuteronomy 28:

Blessed are you *when you go in* and blessed are you *when you go out* (ܒܪܟ ܐܢܬ ܒܥܠܠܟ ܘܒܪܟ ܐܢܬ ܒܦܢܝܟ) (Deut. 28:6).

Cursed art thou *when you enter* and cursed art you *when you go out* (ܐܪܝܪ ܐܢܬ ܒܥܠܠܟ ܘܐܪܝܪ ܐܢܬ ܒܦܢܝܟ) (Deut. 28:19).

The author of the memra seems to realize the negative scenario of the Divine warning to the people of Israel. To the image of the entrance and exit of the Biley verses, he adds a specific description of pagan sin: the Jews engraved pagan images (ܓܠܝܦܐ ܕܥܒܕܘ) on the doors, and therefore by entering and exiting through these doors, they commit a pagan sin.

In the text of Deuteronomy, in a series of blessings, it is also said that all the nations of the earth will see that the name of the Lord is called upon in the midst of this people and will fear it (Deuteronomy 28:10). But in a symmetrical response, in a series of curses, it is said that the people of Israel, who have fallen into pagan sins, will become "wonder, parable, and meditation to all the

[166] *Kubat R.* Memra of Ephrem the Syrian of Jonah and the Repentance of the Ninevites // ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ. 2014. Т. 85. P. 193–210. Here P. 204.

Gentile nations < . . . >" (ܥܡܡ̈ܐ ܕܠܐ ܝܕܥ̈ܝܢ ܐܢܘܢ ܠܐܠܗܗܘܢ ܕܥܒܕ̈ܝ) (Deuteronomium 28, 37). This scenario was realized in the memra: the Gentile Ninevites were horrified (ܐܬܬܗܪܘ) and trembled when they saw the idols, high places, and other pagan sins of the Jews in the Promised Land (vv. 1737 ff.).

It should also be noted that in the Deuteronomy is presented a polemic against such pagan sins of the peoples of Canaan as divination, witchcraft, necromancy etc.:

> And *when you enter the land* (ܟܕ ܬܥܠ ܠܐܪܥܐ) which the LORD your God gives you, *you shall not learn* to do (ܠܡܥܒܕ) as the deeds of these nations (ܥܡܡ̈ܐ)[167]: he who leads his son or his daughter through the fire shall not be in your midst, nor the one who prophesies *divination* (ܡܢܚܫ ܢܚܫܐ), nor the sorcerer, nor *the diviner* (ܡܢܚܫ ܥܘܢܢܐ), and *sorcerer* (ܡܢܟܫܦ ܟܫܦ̈ܐ), and *necromancer* (ܘܫܐܐܠ ܒ̈ܥܠ ܐܒ̈ܐ) <... > For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination (ܬܥܒܬܐ) before the Lord thy God, and because of these abominations (ܬܥܒ̈ܐ) the Lord thy God shall cast them out from thee. Thou shalt be blameless (ܬܗܝܐ) before the LORD thy God, for these nations to whom thou inheritest hear the *diviners and the soothsayers* (ܥܡܡ̈ܐ ܗܠ̈ܝ ܕܐܢ̈ܐ), but the Lord thy God hath not given thee <... > (Deut 18:9–14).[168]

A very similar description is presented in the memra:

> Their sacrificial cakes on the rooftops (cf. Jeremiah 7:18), // and in their gardens the deities of good fortune. // *Soothsayers* (ܩܣ̈ܡ̈ܐ) in the streets, // and *fortune-tellers* (ܥܘܢ̈ܢ̈ܐ) (v. 1749–1752) <... > There was *an incantation* (ܐܚܫܘܬܐ), // and its initiate, *sorcery* (ܟܫܦ̈ܐ). There was magic // and its retinue, *divination* (ܢ̈ܚܫ̈ܐ) (v. 1775–1776) <... > Among the plantations is paganism, // and among the trees *is an abomination* (ܬܥܒ̈ܐ) (v. 1741–1742).

In this passage, almost all the key words from Deuteronomy 18:9-14 are used with negative connotations: diviners (ܩܣ̈ܡ̈ܐ), necromancers (ܥܘܢ̈ܢ̈ܐ), incantation (ܐܚܫܘܬܐ), sorcery (ܟܫܦ̈ܐ), abomination (ܬܥܒ̈ܐ).

From our analysis it becomes clear which biblical narratives served as intertexts for the continuation of the Book of the Prophet Jonah in the Syriac work. The connections of the memra with the biblical Exodus are obvious, and, for all the author's seemingly literary freedom, the inscribed nature of his motif in the biblical context is beyond doubt[169]. We are presented with an almost literary treatment of the biblical plot, pursuing a certain theological goal. The Ninevites going to the Promised Land are not just an "exodus", but rather an "anti-Exodus". The author of the memra uses the biblical Exodus as a framework narrative, the association with which must necessarily arise in the listeners or readers of the memra. But he builds his story as an antithesis to the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. In the anti-Exodus of the Syriac writer, everything is reversed: the pagans, the Ninevites-Assyrians, descendants of Canaan, go to the Promised Land and throw off paganism, which the chosen people "put on" instead of them, since they themselves preferred the state of pagan Canaan. This narrative is, of course, based on the doctrine of vicarious theology,

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[167]Cf. Lev 18:3 without the use of vocabulary related to learning.
[168]Cf. Wisd 12:3–6.
[169] See: *Fomicheva S.* Anti-Exodus... P. 121.

but it transcends purely theological boundaries and becomes a literary, artistic, and at the same time deeply rooted in the Bible illustration of this doctrine.

On the other hand, it is possible that the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy were not the only sources for the story of the Ninevites' journey to the Promised Land. In section 6.2.1 we have already spoken of the circle of Jewish texts of the Second Temple period in which there is a motif of "wise Jews who taught the Gentiles". These works could be parodied in the Syrian memre, because in it, as if in contrast, the emphasis is on the "wise pagans". After our analysis of the anti-Exodus narrative, we want to turn our attention more closely to one such writing, the Judeo-Hellenistic Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates (2nd century BCE) (hereinafter referred to as the "Letter of Aristeas"). The fact is that in it the biblical story of the Exodus also became the subject of a significant author's transformation.

The Letter of Aristeas relates the circumstances of the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek by seventy-two commentators at the court of King Ptolemy of Egypt[170]. The narrator is a pagan named Aristaeus, and the addressee is also a pagan named Philocrates. Aristaeus tells of his journey to Jerusalem, of his meeting and conversations with the high priest Eleazar, of his return to Egypt with seventy-two interpreters, of the seven-day feast during which the interpreters wisely answered the king's questions, of the translation of the text of the Holy Scriptures and of the return of the interpreters.

Scholars have long drawn attention to the fact that the description of the translation of the Pentateuch into Greek in the Letter of Aristeas is lexically and conceptually very similar to the biblical description of the giving of the Torah. However, it was only relatively recently that Sylvia Honigman[171] and Noah Hacham noticed [172] that this Judeo-Hellenistic text refracted not only the key event of the Exodus, the giving of the Torah, but also the entire biblical narrative about the Exodus as a whole. Researchers identify a number of motifs common to the biblical narrative of Exodus and history in the Letter of Aristeas: for example, in both narratives, the Jews were captives in Egypt and were numerous; In both narratives, albeit for different reasons, the slaves were freed by the king, with the emancipation decree being carried out very quickly; the question of property and money, among others, plays an important role in both narratives. But these common elements of the "frame"[173] of the Exodus story undergo important transformations in Judeo-Hellenistic writing.

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[170] I.e. Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BC).

[171] *Honigman S.* The Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the Narrative of the Letter of Aristeas. London, New York: Routledge, 2003.

[172] *Hacham N.* The Letter of Aristeas: A New Exodus Story? // Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period. 2005. Vol. 36. N 1. P. 1–20.

[173] On frames as a data structure for the representation of a visual stereotyped situation, see Minsky, M. Frames for the Representation of Knowledge. by O.N. Greenbaum. Moscow, Energiya Publ., 1979.

First of all, of course, there is a difference in the "points of final arrival" of the Jews. In the biblical narrative, they leave Egypt and go to Canaan, in the Letter of Aristeas, they do not go anywhere, but remain in Egypt, becoming an important part of it. Therefore, as Hacham writes, "the narrative in the Letter of Aristeas is not the story of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt, but rather the story of their liberation from slavery and their integration into Egypt"[174]. As Honigman put it, this is a "non-Exodus" story[175], although, as we shall see, the Promised Land also appeares in the Letter of Aristeas.

Another important transformation of the biblical intertext is the role and behavior of the pagan king. Pharaoh is absolutely hostile to the Israelites and refuses to release them until he is subjected to a series of terrible divine punishments. The king Ptolemy, on the other hand, willingly agrees to free the Jews from slavery. The biblical narrative also describes the hostility and conflict between the Egyptian sages and sorcerers on the one hand, and Moses and Aaron on the other. The Letter, on the other hand, emphasizes the king's positive and respectful attitude toward the Jewish sages and interpreters. In general, the framing of the Exodus transforms the Judeo-Hellenistic text into an apology for Egyptian Judaism.

Especially important for our study is the fact that in the Letter of Aristeas, the description of the culminating point of the Exodus, the Promised Land, arises after the Egyptian king's request for the translation of the Torah and the liberation of the slaves. It is contemplated by the pagan Aristaeus (83-120), who was sent to Jerusalem by Ptolemy. At the same time, as Ekaterina Matusova emphasizes, the description in the Letter contains all the elements of the description of the Promised Land in Deuteronomy[176]. The researcher notes in this regard: "Anyone familiar with the text of Deuteronomy should notice clear lexical allusions to it in the narrative of Aristeas. Their presence in the text transforms the ideal description of the country (as may be understood by a reader unfamiliar with the Hebrew Bible) into a description of the Promised Land, the land where the Jews have come and live"[177]. Aristeas, a Gentile, admires Jerusalem, the Temple and the Temple service, he is shocked by the spectacle that opens up to him, the incomparability of what is happening is emphasized, expressed with the help of numerous positive epithets, for example:

The service of the priests is incomparable, neither in regard to the bodily strength they exercise, nor in the decency and silence of what is happening (Letter of Aristeas 92) <... >There is complete silence <... > everything is done with reverent fear and in a manner worthy of divine majesty (95). We were greatly shocked when we looked at Eleazar during his ministry <… > (96) "The sight of all this inspired us with awe and confusion, so that one would think that we had passed from this world to the next. And I am

[174] Hacham *Op. Cit.* P. 8
[175] Honigman on. Cit. P. 56.
[176] *Matusova E.* The Meaning of the Letter of Aristeas... P. 29–30. The researcher points out, for example, the similarities between Deut. 8, 9 and the Letter of Aristeas 119; Deut. 11, 11 and Letter of Aristeas 107; Deut 8: 7 and Deut 11: 11 and the Letter of Aristeas 115; Deut 8: 8-9 and Letter of Aristeas 112, etc.
[177] *Ibid.* P. 30.

convinced that any person who joined in the contemplation of the above service would have been shocked and inexpressibly delighted, having been inwardly changed by the holiness manifested in all things"[178].

In order to get a better view of the city, Aristaeus and the embassy climb to a hill:

> In order for our acquaintance with the city to be complete, we climbed to its upper part and began to look around the <...> (100).

In the memre, as we have seen above, a mirror situation occurs: the pagan Ninevites, like the pagan Aristeas, are sent by the king to Jerusalem and contemplate the Promised Land, whose description is also built on the basis of Deuteronomy. But the characters see not an ideal, utopian Promised Land with God-pleasing worship, but its complete opposite:

> They climbed and ascended, and reached the summit, // to see the Promised Land, // that, though they could not enter within, // not be robbed by its contemplation. They arose, and lifted up their eyes, and saw the whole earth. They were terrified and trembled, // and they were seized with mortal terror <... > (vv. 1731–1738).

The very impulse of such Jewish texts obviously arises from the content of the book of Deuteronomy, with its emphasis on the wisdom of the Jewish people and their teaching function[179]. And as we have shown above, the memra also has numerous semantic and lexical intersections with this biblical book. Perhaps we have before us a parallel development of the same biblical story in Jewish and Syriac literature, due to their cultural affinity. On the other hand, it is impossible to exclude the acquaintance of the Syrian author (and his audience) with certain non-biblical texts about the "wise Jews". Moreover, as we have already mentioned, this motif is clearly used in the Syrian memre "On Abraham and Sarah in Egypt".

In general, it should be said that all early Christian literature, beginning with the New Testament, develops its own response to the motif of the wise Jews teaching the Gentiles. After all, most Christian works concentrate on the fact that it is the *Gentiles* who teach the Jews, and not vice versa. Thus, Ephraim the Syrian says in his memras "On Faith":

> *The Gentile peoples* (ܥܡܡܐ ܥܡܡܐ) [180]who came // to the feasts of the blind, on the contrary, *taught* (ܐܬܦܠܚ) *the Jews*, // they were informed of them. // *The uncircumcised* called out to the *circumcision*: // "This is Jesus, the Nazarene". // This is the name that is written // in the books of the blind. // His interpretation began to *be taught* (ܠܡܦ) // *The Jews* from the *pagans* (ܥܡܡܐ). // The reading of their own books // *was taught* (ܐܠܦ) by their strangers (ܒܪܝܐ) (On Faith 6, 149–160)[181].

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[178] We quote "Letter of Aristeas" in accordance with the translation by E. A. Druzhinina and S. A. Takhtajyan, posted on the website: Project "DHonorare" // URL: https://dhonorare.ru/aristeas/ (accessed: 29.10.2023).

[179] Cf. Deut 4:6-8.

[180] In Syriac, there are two vowel variants for the word ܥܡܡܐ, which differ in meaning: "Aramaic" ܥܲܡܡܵܐ and ܥܲܡܡܳܐ "pagan". See *Salvesen A.* The Genesis of Ethnicity? // The Harp. 2008. Vol. XXIII. P. 369–382. Here P. 371, footnote. 5.

[181] The Syriac text in: Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones De Fide / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1961. (CSCO; 212. Syr; 88.).

The poet-theologian emphasizes in this stanza that the pagan peoples teach their opponents the "correct" "deciphering" of the Old Testament, that is, pro-educational, Christological exegesis. But in the memre "On Nineveh and Jonah" there is no "book", no Jesus, no educational exegesis. The Syriac writer uses the biblical narrative itself as an argument against his religious opponents, without any external tool in relation to it.

In addition to intertextual connections with the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, it is important to trace the semantic threads that go from the memrah to other biblical books. We have already mentioned above that in the memrah there are often examples of the use of the strategy of "double" quotation, when the author deliberately uses Old Testament expressions that are quoted in the New Testament, for example, "the cave of thieves". Now we will continue the analysis of this phenomenon. For example, in the memrf, within the framework of one of the invectives, there are the following verses:

> When Jonah saw [this], he was seized with terror, // he *was ashamed* of the sons of his people (ܐܫܬ ܥܡܐ) <... > He (i.e. the prophet Jonah) saw how the *uncircumcised circumcised* their *hearts* (cf. Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4; Rom 2:29), and the *circumcised* made their *hearts hard* (ܐܟܫ ܡܥܐ) (cf. Deut 10:16) <... > (vv. 907–908).

Here, from the point of view of the prophet Jonah ("Jonah saw"), it is introduced the biblical expression "circumcision of the heart" that is found both in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 4:4) and in the New Testament (Rom 2:29). In addition, is used the same verb (ܡܥ) as in Deut 10:16:

1. "Circumcise the edge of your heart (ܠܒܟܘܢ ܥܘܪܠܬܐ ܗܘܘ) and do not be cruel again (ܠܐ ܬܬܩܫܘ ܠܒܟܘܢ)" (Deut 10:16).
2. "Circumcise yourselves (ܗܘܘ) for the Lord, and remove the foreskin (ܥܘܪܠܬܐ) (with) of your hearts (ܠܒܟܘܢ), men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My wrath come out like fire and burn without exhaustion because of the evil of your deeds (ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܒܝܫ ܥܠܠܝܟܘܢ)" (Jeremiah 4:4).
3. "For it is not the Jew who is outwardly so, nor the circumcision (ܡܘܼܠܬܐ) which is seen in the flesh, but the Jew who is inwardly so, and the circumcision which (circumcision) of the heart (ܗܝ ܕܒܠܒܐ ܝܗܘܼܕܝܐ ܘܡܘܼܠܬܐ), according to the spirit, and not according to what is written: his praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom 2:28-29).

We see a clear connection between all three uses of this expression in the Bible: it appears in the context of the self-criticism uttered by the Jews – Moses, Jeremiah, Paul. Thus, the prophet Jonah, by the will of the author of the memra, clearly continues this series.

Imitation of intra-biblical criticism is the main polemical strategy of the Syrian writer. In fact, everything that the Ninevites see in the Promised Land is "pasticcio" from the descriptions of pagan sins in the books of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, and others, for example,

<… > Heights (ܪܡܬܐ) on the mountains, // and idols on the heights < ... > (cf. Jeremiah 19:5, etc.). Their sacrificial cakes (ܟܘܢܣܐ) on the rooftops (cf. Jeremiah 7:18), // and in their gardens of the deity of good fortune (ܓܕܝ). // Soothsayers (ܚܙܝ) (Deut 18:14; Jer 29:8-9; Jer 14:14, etc.) in the streets, // and in their alleys fortune-tellers (ܥܝܢܝ) (cf. Deut 18:14; Isaiah 8:19; etc.) <... > They saw there the sins of Sodom, // the wickedness and deceit of Gomorrah (cf. Jeremiah 23:14). The man and his son, as it is written, // went to the harlot (Amos 2:7). His mother, his bride,[182] and also her daughter were trapped in the streets (cf. Ecclesiastes 7:26) (v. 1739ff.).

The Syriac writer, seeing the intertextual connections between the various biblical books, deliberately imitates and develops this approach in his work. He adds new "roll-calls" between the story of Jonah and the Ninevites, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, and other biblical books, using expressions such as "circumcision of the heart", "cave of thieves", "rooting out", "foolish people" and others. Expressions. He selects the accusatory Old Testament quotations that *warn* the Jews of the dangers and punishments of "inappropriate behavior", and transforms them so that these warnings become *a reality*.

But in addition to using Old Testament intertexts to create his polemical narrative, the author of the memre is also guided by the New Testament. Clear evidence of this is the designation of Jewish paganism in the memra as ܥܡܡܐ (e.g., v. 1630, 1741, 1925), while the Gentile Ninevites are designated exclusively as ܐܡܡܐ. This distribution corresponds specifically to the New Testament of the Peshitta, where, in general, the lexeme ܥܡܡܐ is used in those passages where the negative meaning of "pagans = unbelievers" is meant[183], and ܐܡܡܐ in those cases where a positive context is assumed, i.e. we are talking about pagan prototypes of Christians[184].

After the story of how the Ninevites accompanied the prophet Jonah to his homeland, contemplated the sins of the Jewish people and then rejected them, the author proceeds to describe how the Ninevites return to their homeland. He puts into the mouths of his protagonists a lengthy speech listing almost all walks of life and professions who thank God for their salvation (vv. 1953–2096). In fact, the author introduces here a fictive doxology, i.e. doxology from the perspective of the Nineveh characters. At the same time, at the end of the work, there will be a doxology of the

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[182] ܡܚܠܐ] ܚܠܐ "bride" **Y**.

[183] Mt 6:7; 10:5; 18:17; 1Кор 5:1 и др. см. *De Blois F.* Naṣrānī (Ναζωραῖος) and ḥanīf (ἐθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam // Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies. 2002. 65 (1). P. 1–30, here P. 21, footnote 107.

[184] Thus, in the Epistles of Paul, see. *Ibid.* p. 21, sn. 108. That is, in fact, a process similar to that described by Ignacio Carbajoso for the distribution of ܟܢܫܬܐ and ܟܢܘܫܬܐ: both words mean "assembly", but the former is used in Peshitta, where the "positive" context of the assembly is concerned, and the second, where the "negative" one is referred to (*Carbajoso I.* The Character of the Syriac Version of Psalms: A Study of Psalms 90-150 in the Peshitta. Leiden: Brill, 2008).

real communicative situation on behalf of the narrator. The fictive doxology begins with the fact that the Ninevites thank God for *putting to shame* the chosen people) ܥܡܐ) through the *pagans* (ܥܡܡܐ):

And they all (i.e., the Ninevites) spoke in understanding, // rejoicing truly: // "Praise be to God, // who put the *people* to shame (ܥܡܐ) through *the nations* (ܥܡܡܐ), // who *gave in advance the pledge of the coming great salvation* (ܕܝܗܒ ܠܢ ܥܪܒܘܢ ܕܦܘܪܩܢܐ). Through His *Firstborn* (ܒܟܪܐ) there will be plucked // the fig tree that did not bear fruit (cf. Mt 21:19; Mk 11:13), // which stole from the whole earth // the fruits of repentance. // Blessed be he who plucked it out of the earth, // so that through it the land *of nations* (ܥܡܡܐ) may be blessed. // From our new seedlings // May we give Him new fruits! // And *sacred branches* may we give praise to Him!" (vv. 1957–1972).

This final passage of the memra is especially important for understanding the author's anti-Jewish intention. Here we have the only explicit use in the memra of the pro-educational interpretation of the confrontation between the Gentile Ninevites and the Jews. God put the Jews to shame through the Gentile Ninevites, which is "the pledge of the great salvation to come" (ܕܝܗܒ ܠܢ ܥܪܒܘܢ ܕܦܘܪܩܢܐ). This prophetic interpretation is supported by the explicit use of New Testament quotations in the text, which is rare in the memre: the quotation from Mt 21:19 (Mk 11:13) is combined with Lk 13:7. Both quotations are given a clear polemical interpretation. Only in this passage is Jesus mentioned in the memre, who is called by one of the names used in the Syriac tradition, "the Firstborn" (ܒܟܪܐ) (v. 1963). Also important is the mention of sacred branches (v. 1957) among the pagan Ninevites. This image is reminiscent of the branches of Hosanna, a holiday that often has anti-Jewish connotations in the Christian tradition[185].

You should also pay attention to another significant fact. It seems to us that the fictive doxology of the Ninevites may have been constructed by the author as a parody of a certain range of Jewish liturgical texts containing anti-Christian elements. For example, during the morning liturgy, before the public reading of the Torah, a series of three blessings, the Blessing of the Torah, was read. The third of these blessings reads as follows:

Blessed (ברוך) are You, the Name, our God, the King of the world, who chose us among all the nations (אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים) and gave us the Torah[186].

If we now read the beginning of the doxology of the Ninevites within the framework of possible intertextuality with this blessing:

Praise be to God (ܫܒܝܚܐ ܠ), // who put the *people* to shame (ܥܡܐ) through *the nations* (ܥܡܡܐ), // who gave the pledge in advance // of the coming great salvation (v. 1959–1960) <... > *Blessed be* (ܒܪ

[185] See, e.g., *Frishman J.* Narsai's Homily for the Palm Festival... P. 217–229. Many Syrian anti-Jewish works are associated with this holiday, for example, the memra "Discourse Against the Jews Spoken on the Sunday: Hosanna" attributed to Ephraim the Syrian, the Narsai memra "Against the Jews" and others.

[186] The Hebrew text in: Siddur Rinat Yisrael. Jerusalem: Moreshet, 1984, 2-3.

ܥܡ) who plucked it (i.e. the fig tree) from the earth, // so that through it the land *of nations* (ܐܡܡܐ) may be blessed (vv. 1967-1968).

Then, with all the differences, there is a feeling of a certain "insertations". The Jews thank God for being chosen among all the Gentile nations and for giving the Torah; Gentile Ninevites thank God for putting the Jewish people to shame and giving them a sign of future salvation, i.e. functionally the same Torah, the way to salvation. The Ninevites bless God for destroying the Jews—for uprooting the hollow fig tree, making room for the Gentile nations. Another early liturgical monument, the prayer *Teqi'ata debe Rav* (3rd century A.D.) begins with the following lines:

> We must praise (לשבח) / the Lord of all things, // and magnify / Him who created in the beginning,
> He did not make us as *the nations of the land* (כגיי הארצות) and did not count us as the families of the earth[187].

Such texts emphasizing the chosenness of the Jewish people from among the Gentile nations, appear in the Jewish liturgy, apparently precisely in response to the Christian doctrine of theology of supersessionism. The author of the memra, in turn, can make them the target of his parody attack.

Christine Shepardson noted the affinity of the memre with another Hebrew text originating from the same region, the Babylonian Talmud (c. 6th century CE). In this work, the fast of the Ninevites is also presented as righteous, true, and numerous examples of the virtuous deeds of these pagans are given[188]. It should be noted that in recent years there has been a large number of studies proving intensive contacts between the wise men of the Babylonian Gemara and Syrian Christians in the period of about the VI century AD.[189] For example, the creators of the Babylonian Talmud were clearly familiar with Syriac legislative texts[190] and some exegetical approaches[191]. Syrian authors, such as Narsai, use imagery, terminology, and methods of interpretation similar to those of the Jews: "the fence of the Law" (ܣܝܓ ܕܢܡܘܣܐ), "Bat Kala" (cf. Heb. "Bat Kol"), inclination (to evil) (ܡܨܝ) (cf. Hebrew יצר), a method similar to the Hebrew *notarikon,* etc.[192] This is quite understandable, since Babylonian Aramaic and classical Syriac are genetically very

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[187] The text according to the *Yahalom J*. Early Rhyme Structures in Piyyut and Their Rhetorical Background // The Faces of Torah: Studies in the Texts and Contexts of Ancient Judaism in Honor of Steven Fraade / ed. by Bar-Asher S. et al. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016. P. 635–657. Here P. 635.

[188] C. Taanit 16a. Cf. Bawa Kama 66b.

[189] Cf. Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium / ed. by Butts A., Simcha G. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum; 180.).

[190] Cf. the acquaintance of the wise men of the Babylonian Talmud (v. Shabbat 116a-b) with the Syriac text of the Book of Syro-Roman Law (or Syro-Roman Codex) (Syriac text of the 6th century CE) (Syro-Roman Law Book). *Paz Y.* The Torah of the Gospel: A Rabbinic Polemic Against the Syro-Roman Lawbook // Harvard Theological Review. 2019. Vol. 112(4). P. 517–540.

[191] Cf. the use of the Syriac cipher named "Alphabet of Bardeisan" by Jewish exegetes: *Paz Y., Weiss T.* From encoding to decoding: The ATBH of R. Hiyya in Light of a Syriac, Greek and Coptic Cipher // Journal of Near Eastern Studies. 2015. Vol. 74(1). P. 45–65.

[192] See: Mar Narsai. Against the Jews... Pp. 330–338.

close to each other. However, as far as the memre is concerned, it is difficult to assume that the Jews could have become acquainted with its contents. For, as we will demonstrate later, it was originally written for a liturgical context, for sermons during the Lent (§ 2.4). Therefore, with a high probability, its content was intended exclusively for a Christian audience during divine services[193].

In this sense, it is interesting that the author of the Syrian work seems to have assumed that there could have been Jews among his audience. For example, the text of doxology mentions the "circumcised":

> From the uncircumcised, who have made the Father glad, // and from *the circumcised (*ܓܙܝܪܐ) [194]who have grieved the Son, // may the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit be praised! Amen, Amen (vv. 2139-2142).

Edmund Beck called the mention of Jews here "unusual."[195] But we have found a very similar doxology in one of the Nisibine hymns of Ephraim the Syrian:

> From *the Jews* (ܝܗܘܕܝܐ) and the Gentiles, and also from the angels, glory to Thee, and through Thee also praise to Thy father! (67:19).

Given the liturgical context of the works, most likely, we are talking here not about real, but about “rhetorical” Jews, literary and theological constructs. For example, in the polemical writings of Narsai and Jacob of Sarug, there are frequent exhortations such as “Come, Jew...”, with which the authors label their “true” messianic interpretations of the Old Testament.

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[193] Cf. Narsai's memra "Against the Jews".

[194] ܓܙܝܪܐ] om. **Y**.

[195] Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO; 312. Syr; 135.) S. 53.

Conclusions of the chapter 1

One of the main themes of the memra is the sharp anti-Jewish criticism expressed through the confrontation between the pagan Ninevites who demonstrated unprecedented repentance and became *de facto* "Christians" and the wicked Jews fallen from their high level. With all this vehement, the anti-Jewish argument in the memra is stripped of its main foundation, Jesus, and focuses primarily on the Old Testament self-criticism of the Jews.

From a literary point of view, the paraphrase of the biblical story with dramatic elements, such as the numerous extended monologues of the characters, provides additional opportunities for expressing anti-Jewish sentiments, which cannot be found, for example, in a theological commentary. For example, the anti-Jewish passages in the memra are introduced not on behalf of the author as a theologian, but on behalf of the biblical protagonists, the prophet Jonah and the Ninevites. This adds credibility to the anti-Jewish judgments, since they are uttered by the biblical characters themselves. In addition, it provides an opportunity not only for "scientific" theological judgment but also for emotional judgment.

The main strategy of the author of the memra is to realize in the Syriac work the potential for anti-Jewish criticism that is inherent in the biblical intertexts chosen by the author. He selects rebuking biblical quotations that warn Jews of the dangers of inappropriate behavior and the punishment for it, and transforms them in such a way that these warnings become a reality in the memre. By inserting these verses into the speech of the Ninevites, the author of the memrah thus makes the biblical characters witnesses and instruments of God's threats against the Jews.

The very mechanism of quoting the Bible in memra deserves special attention. There are practically no special markers for entering quotations, which creates a single space of the biblical text and the author's word. At the same time, not only key words and expressions are borrowed from the Bible, but also plots, imagery and structural elements. The author often employs, as we have demonstrated, the "double" quotations when he deliberately chooses biblical expressions found in both the New and Old Testaments, both in anti-Jewish contexts. Perhaps by this he means to emphasize the unity of the Bible as a whole, and in particular the unbroken line of anti-Jewish criticism in it.

In our further analysis, we will try to demonstrate what literary mechanisms of the text make it possible to move from its characters to a real audience. We will show that the peculiarity of this Syriac memra lies in the fact that its polemic and accusatory function is directed at two objects at once: the Old Testament Jews in terms of the polemical narrative and the Christians contemporary with the author in the framework of praise of the Ninevites.

Chapter 2. The literary strategy in the memra: the intersection of the "real" and "depicted" worlds

Basically, the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is an epic narrative where the narrator does not identify himself ("I"), he is as if dissolved in the text. However, there are also two brief direct addresses of the author to the audience, to his community where he identifies himself with his community and says "we" and "our". They are placed closer to the beginning (vv. 96-108) and the end (vv. 2097-2116) of the memra forming thus the frame of the work. In these apostrophes it is clearly stated that the conduct of the Ninevites is an example to a preacher community that does not reach the level of these repentant Gentiles, for example:

> At the sight of that repentance (i.e., the Ninevites – S.F.), // it is *ours*, like a dream. // At the sight of that prayer, // This one *is ours* like a shadow. // And at the sight of that humiliation, // This [our] is a kind of humiliation. // There are few who have forgiven // debts in this [our] fast. // The Ninevites gave alms. // Can we [at least] absolve [subordinates] from complaining! (vv. 96–108).

This paradox, the combination of anti-Jewish polemics with criticism of one's own Christian community, has confused some scholars. For example, Christine Shepardson has suggested that the preacher's addresses to the audience in the memra, criticizing the author's Christian community, may have been added later to the originally anti-Jewish text[196]. We would argue that the opposite is more likely: an anti-Jewish polemic could be added to a text praising the repentance of the Ninevites. After all, we said above that there are sermons that give a positive description of the behavior of the Ninevites, and that there is no anti-Jewish controversy. It should also be noted that addresses to the audience are already present in the oldest manuscript of the text, Br. M. Add. 14573 (6th century), and the first address to the audience (vv. 96-108) is present in all early translations of the memra. Second, as we shall show later, even if these invocations are added later, the inner critique is transmitted not only through them, but also, implicitly, through the narrative itself.

The fact is that the memra presents a certain literary strategy that allows the audience to identify with the protagonists of the memra. This was noted by Emanuele Zimbardi in one of the monologues presented in the Syriac work, that of the king of Nineveh (vv. 513-822). The researcher drew attention to the fact that the words of encouragement with which the king addresses his soldiers actually correspond to the address of a real Christian preacher to the audience: "<... > two planes, the real communicative situation and the fictive one created by the narrator, coincide from the functional point of view <... >"[197].

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[196] *Shepardson C.* Interpreting the Ninevites Repentance… P. 272.
[197] Ephrem the Syrian Sermon on Nineveh and Jonah... P. 36.

Developing the ideas of E. Zimbardi, we can assume that this is true not only for the speech of the king, but for the work as a whole: a special strategy is clearly used in the memre, the purpose of which is to achieve the largest possible area of intersection of the "fictive" and "real" communicative levels in the memra. However, before analyzing specific examples of this strategy, it should be noted that when talking about the "fictive" and "real" communicative levels in the memra, we must be aware of the fact that we are on rather shaky ground here. The fact is that from the point of view of modern narratology, *the fictiveness of* the world depicted in the text is one of the main features of a literary text[198]. But the Syrian memra is not a literary text like "Anna Karenina" or "The War and the Peace" but a religious text that, as we will show in 5.9.4, also has a ritual function. However, some signs of a literary text can still be found in it. For example, it is very often described in the memra what the characters (ܣܗܕܐ) think[199]. If we turn to the biblical book of the prophet Jonah, we will not find *a single* example of this. Meanwhile, such mental characteristics of characters are, according to the German narratologist Kathy Hamburger, an important feature of a literary text[200]. In this way, we are presented with the "omniscient author", a device that is more characteristic of fiction. The narrative of the "anti-Exodus" in which the biblical story of the Ninevites continues, can be characterized as a kind of "construction" of reality, which narratologists also attribute to the features of a literary text[201].

But despite the fact that certain features of a literary text can be found in the Syriac memre, it is certainly not yet a fiction *stricto sensu*, so one should be cautious about speaking of the "fictive" in this case. In our opinion, it is better, following the researcher of hagiographic literature Maria Munholt, to speak here about the "narrated" ("depicted") world and the world beyond this narrated world. i.e. the real world[202]. The strategy of intersecting these two worlds allows the author to address the audience beyond the "depicted" world for didactic and other purposes.

After this theoretical explanation, let's look at specific examples of this strategy in the mem. The desire for an intersection between the "depicted" and the real worlds can be traced at various levels of the text. Thus, at the level of *vocabulary*, the speeches of the characters are replete with pronouns like "we" and "our": for example, the king speaks of *our* city, *our* country (vv. 799-800); "History is near *to us*" (v. 597); "we have heard" (v. 749); "Between *us* (ܒܝܢܢ) [told] a story

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[198] *Schmid V.* Narratology. Moscow, Languages of Slavic Cultures Publ., 2003. Pp. 15–22.
[199] Cf. Articles 327, 1067, 1202; 1273–1279 etc.
[200] *Hamburger K.* On the Structural Problem of Epic and Dramatic Poetry // German Quarterly Journal for Literary Studies and Intellectual History. 1951. Vol. 25. P. 1-26.
[201] *Schmid V.* Narratology... P. 16.
[202] *Munkholt Christensen M.* „Ach, meine Herrin und meine Lehrerin!" Die narrative Etablierung von Frauen als Lehrerinnen in der spätantiken Hagiographie // Narratologie und Intertextualität: Zugänge zu spätantiken Text-Welten / Brunhorn C., Gemeinhardt P., Munkholt Christensen M. (Hrsg.). Tübingen 2020, S. 105–121 (SERAPHIM – Studies in Education and Religion in Ancient and Pre-Modern History in the Mediterranean and Its Environs, 7.).

(v. 775), "... on the history of *our* fathers" (v. 782) etc[203]. Hearing such a repeated "we" the audience was bound to identify with the protagonists of the memra and follow their example. The same goes for the reusable pronoun "you" (cf. vv. 361-392, 417, 801-822, etc.) where the audience identified itself with the fictive addressees of the speeches.

Another important lexical signal — the "litmus test" of the coincidence of the fictive and real levels — is the address to the addressees in speeches. Thus, the king of Nineveh addresses his soldiers as "my brethren" (v. 631) and "my beloved" (v. 535; 772); The Nineveh fathers address their children as "beloved" (v. 381). Meanwhile, both addresses in a *real* communication are addresses of the preacher to his audience.

At the level *of imagery*, as we understand from the examples given in the previous chapter, the "fictive" speeches of the characters have many similarities with the real works of Ephraim the Syrian. In other words, the characters speak as the real preacher speaks in other works. At the same time, the image of a mirror is the key image-signal of the transition between the "real" and "fictive" communicative levels, a kind of "register switch" in the memra. It links the individual speeches in the work into a single whole subordinate to the overall strategy. Upon hearing this "signal" the audience should have understood that the message addressed to the "fictive" characters applied equally to them. For example, the fathers of Nineveh call their instruction on divine pedagogy a "mirror" (vv. 403-404), and the king of Nineveh likens the biblical stories of the righteous and the wicked to a "mirror", i.e., a standard for all who look at it, in which one can see one's own shortcomings:

> We have also heard of the wicked, // how they dared and how they were destroyed. // And *a mirror* is also placed (ܐܬܬܣܡ ܒܗ ܡܬܚܙܝܐ), // so that he who is ugly may be reproached. // A sign (ܣܡܝܐ ܕܥܒܕ) is placed in the creation, // so that it may be imitated (ܢܬܒܥ) by the beholders (vv. 585-590).

Naturally, such information is intended not only for the addressees of the speech within the framework of the depicted world, but also for real readers/listeners of the memra. As the narrator sums up, Nineveh becomes a "mirror" "for the whole world" (vv. 1565–1568).

At the level of *narrative*, the very literary method used in the memra – the presentation of biblical examples in the speech of characters in the form of "interpolated stories" – mirrors the speech of a real preacher who cites biblical narratives as an example. A signal of the "reality" of fictive speeches is also the use of many biblical allusions and references in the speeches of seemingly *pagan* characters. And finally, the *length* of the speeches in the memra helps to reinforce the illusion of the reality of what is happening, when the listeners/readers could even forget that

[203] Cf. vv. 357–368, 633, 689–699, 772 etc.

they are not listening to a real preacher, but to the speech of a "fictive" character. In this sense, it is significant that in verses from the speech of the Nineveh fathers to their children:

> Learn, then, *my beloved*, // from the trial of chastisements, // and learn from the wise staff of your fathers, // that He chastens us to help us, // as a father who teaches us (vv. 381-384).

there are discrepancies in the manuscripts: according to manuscript W, it should read ܚܒܝܒ i.e. "my beloved ones", and in manuscript T there is a variant ܚܒܝܒܝ, i.e. "beloved ones". The variant "my beloved" is not appropriate in the context, since it is the fathers of Nineveh who refer to their children in the plural. On the other hand, this mistake is quite understandable: the very style of speech is so similar to the address of a real preacher, that the scribe might well have been carried away by this illusion.

What Zimbardi calls the intersection of the real and fictive communication levels in the memre, and what we call the intersection of the depicted and the real worlds, may have other names in the scientific literature. For example, Laura Lieber, a specialist in Hebrew and Aramaic liturgical poetry, describes methods similar to those listed above as rhetorical methods of engaging audiences in a liturgical narrative, "*rhetoric of participation*"[204]. It should be emphasized that such methods are resorted to above all in liturgical poetry when there is a need to transform the biblical past in such a way that it becomes relevant to the community at any given time. The repeated use of the pronouns "we" and "you" that blurs the line between protagonists and addressees, the image of a "mirror" that turns a fictive action into an illustrative example, appeals taken from communication in the real world, etc., are all tools of this kind of transformation, important features of the homiletic character of the memra, to which we will return.

The examples of intertextuality from the work of Ephraim the Syrian, which refer to the "real" world, and are transferred to a fictive context in the memre, can also be attributed to the signs of the intentional intersection of the "fictive" and "real" worlds in the Syriac work.

2.1. The intertextuality between the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" and the works by Ephraim the Syrian of the period of Nisibis

Thus, among the descriptions of the repentance of various segments of the population of Nineveh in the memre, "blameless men and women" (ܐܢܫܐ ܘܢܫܐ ܬܡܝܡܐ) appear:

> The heads *of immaculate men and women* (ܐܢܫܐ ܘܢܫܐ ܬܡܝܡܐ ܕ) // became bald in prayer (vv. 241-242).[205]

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[204] *Lieber L.* The Rhetoric of Participation: Experiential Elements of Early Hebrew Liturgical Poetry // The Journal of Religion. 2010. 90:2. P. 119–147.

[205] This verse requires some explanation. Most modern scholars translate it as follows: "*The heads* (ܕ) of the immaculate men and women // tore their hair while praying (ܒܨܠܘ ܕ) (lit. got their hair torn (variant: "bald heads") in prayer (variant: "in weeping")" (Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970.

In the works of Ephraim the Syrian, ascetic men and women (ܒܢܝ ܘܒܢܬ ܩܝܡܐ) are designated as “sons and daughters of the covenant”[206]. These people took ascetic vows but continued to live in the city and be part of the community[207]. Female ascetics played a leading role in the literary and theological activity of Ephraim the Syrian, probably it was they who sang his teaching hymns-madrashe.[208] Edmund Beck remarks, referring to the “unexpected” appearance of these ascetics in the memre, that “Ephraim uncritically transfers this Christian status to pagan Nineveh”[209]. However, tt is unlikelythat the author of the memra is doing anything rashly. It was rather a deliberate literary strategy in which he encouraged his listeners to identify with the heroes of the Memra — the virtuous Ninevites — and to follow their example.

It should be noted that a similar method is used by Ephraim the Syrian in his original work, of which Edmund Beck was not yet aware, in the cycle of memre “On Nicomedia”. In this cycle, probably written between 358 and 363 A.D.[210] it is told about the earthquake in the city of Nicomedia in 358 A.D. It is not really about Nicomedia as such, as it becomes clear from the content of the work but about the significance of the tragic events that took place there for the audience of Ephraim the Syrian in Nisibis. Within the framework of this analogy, the Syrian poet-theologian transfers to Nicomedia many of the realities of his native city. For example, in particular, he speaks of the presence of the “covenant” in Nicomedia (Arm. *nւխun*), for which the “covenant” (Armenian: *nւխun*) in Nisibis should weep[211]. Probably we are talking about the communities of ascetics “sons and daughters of the covenant” – the Armenian nւխun corresponds

(CSCO; 312. Syr; 135.). S. 7; Efrem siro Sermone su Ninive e Giona... P. 74). Thus, the Syriac ܪܥܝܐ is translated as “heads”, “chiefs”. This translation, in our opinion, should raise inevitable questions, since there is no mention of any "superiors" of ascetics, men and women, in the works of Ephraim the Syrian. Meanwhile, the word ܪܥܝܐ, as well as its Russian equivalent, denotes not only the “head”, the boss, but also the head, as a part of the body. And this is how Henry Burgess understood this verse: “*The heads* of blameless men and women have become bald because of their weeping” (*Burgess H.* The Repentance of Nineveh... P. 16). The researcher’s version is also confirmed by the ancient Armenian translation of the memra: “The heads of men and women received baldness in their prayers” (*Garitte G.* La version arménienne... P. 34). At the same time, in the Armenian translation, there is no designation of men and women as ascetics.

[206] Cf., e.g., Nisibis Hymns 21, 5, where the “blameless (women)” (ܒܬܘܠܬܐ) are mentioned in the same context as the “covenant” (ܩܝܡܐ), as well as the memre “On Nicomedia” 8, 553–554 (Renoux C. (éd., trad.) Mēmrè sur Nicomédie, d’Éphrem de Nisibe. Patrologia Orientalis 37, fasc. 2 et 3., № 172–173. Turnhout: Brepols, 1975. P. 147).

[207] About the asceticism as one of the striking features of early Syriac Christianity, *Murray R.* Symbols of Church and Kingdom... P. 11–19.

[208] The connection between the madrash and female ascetics can be traced in many works of Ephraim the Syrian. Cf., for example, the madrasha “On the Resurrection” 2, 9, which speaks of “the blameless (women) (ܒܬܘܠܬܐ) with their *madrashe”* (Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Paschahymnen (de Azymis, de Crucifixione, de Resurrectione) / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1964. (CSCO; 248. Syr; 108.). S. 84). The special role of these women, the “female teachers of the community” for Ephraim the Syrian is mentioned by the Syrian poet-theologian Jacob of Sarug in his panegyric dedicated to Ephraim the Syrian (memra “On Mar Ephraim”, v. 97 “this wise man (i.e. Ephraim – *S.F.)* composed *madrashe* and gave them *to the virgins*” (A Metrical Homily on Holy Mar Ephrem by Mar Jacob of Sarug / Ed. and transl. by J. Amar. Turnhout: Brepols, 1995. P. 1–76 (Patrologia Orientalis; 47, fasc. 1, n. 209). P. 36, 44).

[209] Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II. S. 7

[210] *Renoux v.* Mēmrè on Nicomedia... P. xxiv.

[211] Memra 8, 553–554 (Renoux C. Mēmrè on Nicomedia Renoux... P. 147).

to the Syriac ܩܝܡܐ, “covenant”. But, of course, it cannot be inferred from this that the same communities of ascetics existed in Nicomedia as in Nisibis. This passage speaks of the realities of Nisibis, not Nicomedia, and shows a certain strategy of the author: the audience should identify the events in Nicomedia with what is happening in their own city.

It should be noted that the mention of ascetics in the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” is akin to a certain circle of works by Ephraim the Syrian, i.e. works dedicated to Nisibis and written in the late Nisibis period: the Nisibis hymns[212], the first memra “On the Exhortation”, the memre “On Nicomedia”[213]. In addition to the reference to “blameless men and women” there are other intertextual connections between the memra and these works.

For example, in the lengthy description of the repentance of the Ninevites in the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah”, there are the following verses:

There were no concubines (ܣܓܝܬ ܚܕܐ ܠܐ ܗܘܬ), // jealousy disappeared (ܐܫܬܟܚ ܩܢܐ) because of [divine] wrath (vv. 1039–1040).

We would like to draw attention to the fact that in the first memra “On the Exhortation" (ܡܐܡܪܐ ܕܬܘܟܚܬܐ) of Ephraim the Syrian there are almost identical verses:

Jealousy (ܩܢܐ ܐܙܠ) was gone: therefore, there were no concubines (ܣܓܝܬ ܚܕܐ ܠܐ ܗܘܬ) and prostitutes (vv. 31-32).

This work describes the destruction of a city because ofthe many sins of its inhabitants[214]: “The city perished, and with it the vices that were in it” (vv. 25–26). The author of the memra “On the Exhortation” clearly uses the fate of the lost city as a warning to his audience: “Let us therefore destroy our vices, // lest we also perish with our vices” (vv. 27-28). As the text follows, it is unequivocally a call to the inhabitants of Nisibis: “Rebuke your daughters, Nisibis” (v. 354). Consequently, both the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” and the memra “On the Exhortation” describe the disappearance of vices among the inhabitants of an entire city. However, the reasons for this disappearance are different: if in the memra “On Nineveh and Jonah” the vices disappeared as a result of the repentance of the inhabitants, then in the memra “On the Exhortation” as a result of their death.

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[212] Cf. Hymns of Nisibis 19, 3 (Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Carmina Nisibena (Erster Teil) / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1961. (CSCO; 218. Syr; 92.) S. 50); 21, 5 (*Ibid.* S. 56).

[213] 359, 368 (Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones I/Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO 305/Syr 130). S. 7).

[214] Garegin Zarbkhanalyan, having only the Armenian translation of the first memra “On the Exhortation”, believed that it was about the city of Nicomedia, destroyed as a result of the earthquake of 358 A.D. Haykakan T‘argmanut‘iwnk Naxneac‘ (dar IV–XIII). Venise, 1889. p. 464), also translated into Armenian. However, the researcher was not yet aware of the existence of the Syriac text of the memra, which was part of another cycle, the memre cycle “On the Exhortation”. Edmund Beck believed that the ruined city in the memra “On the Exhortation” should be understood as one of the fortresses located in the vicinity of Nisibis, for example, the fortress of Anacyte, which was destroyed in 359 (Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones I/Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO 305/Syr 130). S. 1). This fortress is mentioned in the 10th Nisibis Hymn.

The similarities between the two works do not end there. In the memr "On Nineveh and Jonah" the author praises all kinds of religious repentance of the various social strata of the inhabitants of Nineveh, including women — virgins, maidservants, noble women, for example:

The young men have *chastity* (ܥܦܝܦܘܬܐ), the virgins (ܒܬܘܠܬܐ) have purity, // Between *maids* and *mistresses* (ܥܠ ܡܐܢ ܥܒܕܬ ܒܝܬ) // One was established, // One was a contemptible appearance, // One was *a garment* (ܠܒܫܐ) of humiliation (vv. 1033-1036).

In the memra "On the Exhortation" Ephraim the Syrian reproaches the women of Nisibis of the same social categories for the same vices that have disappeared from the Nineveh women:

Rebuke your daughters, Nisibis! // For Zion did not reproach his daughters. // *Thy maids* (ܐܡܗܬܟ) are luxurious, // Thy *mistresses* (ܣܝܒܬܟ) are thy dishonorable, // Behold thy *immaculate* [virgins] (ܒܬܘܠܬܟ) insolent, // their *garment* (ܠܒܫܟ) defiantly, // provocative the shoes of their feet (vv. 354-361).

We may conclude that the inhabitants of Nineveh are praised with mirror image precisely for the absence of the vices attributed to the inhabitants of Nisibis[215].

In our article, we interpreted these similarities between the Nineveh and Jonah memra and the original works of Ephraim the Syrian as follows: "such similarities, in our opinion, indicate that, with a high degree of probability, all these works could have been written by the same person. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that the revealed intertextual connections between the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", the first memra "On the Exhortation" and the Nisibis hymns point to a very specific historical situation that could have caused the appearance of such works - one of the sieges of Nisibis by the troops of Shapur II[216].

At the present stage of the study, this conclusion seems to us to be too straightforward. What can be said with certainty is that there are clear intertextual connections between the Nineveh and Jonah memra and the writings of Ephraim the Syrian on Nisibis. If the audience of the memra knew these works, they may well have regarded them as signals of implicit inner criticism, since the exemplary behavior of the people of Nineveh is the exact opposite of the behavior of some real Christians. in particular, the inhabitants of Nisibis. The utopian ideal behavior of the Ninevites would make any Christian want to come even remotely close to the virtues of these "heathens".

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[215] The above passages are only a small fraction of the inner criticism presented in the first meme "On the Exhortation" by Ephraim the Syrian. In this work, various segments of the population of the city of Nisibis are sharply criticized. Female ascetics (ܥܕܬܐ) are criticized for indulging in worldly cares, dressing up and adorning themselves defiantly instead of teaching and ascetic practices. They had a name that was more precious than all creation, but they neglected it (vv. 359-395; vv. 455-466). Young people are criticized for negligence in teaching, students, like teachers, teach and learn only for the sake of fame and a big name. As soon as they begin to teach, the young begin to instruct their elders (vv. 396–415). The clergy are sharply criticized: instead of caring for their spiritual flock, they are concerned with buying up real cattle and vineyards (vv. 466-547).

[216] *Fomicheva S. V.* On the Question of the Authorship of Ephraim the Syrian for the Memra Of Nineveh and Jonah // FONS SAPIENTIAE VERBUM DEI. Collection of Scientific Articles in Honor of the 80th Anniversary of Professor Anatoly Alekseevich Alekseev / Ed. by A.V. Sizikov, E.L. Alekseeva. St. Petersburg, ILI RAN Publ., 2022. pp. 1-10 250–260. Here P. 258–259.

Phil Botha correctly saw in this message of the memra an argument *a minori ad majus*: if the pagans behaved like this, then how should we Christians behave?![217]

From a literary point of view, it is important that we have before us a set of topoi to describe a catastrophic situation, its causes and salvation from it, as was the case, for example, in the case of the image of the "Good News". These topoi pass from work to work when it is necessary to describe a catastrophe, and do not necessarily testify to the same authorship. In the light of the previous paragraph, it is also worth noting that if in the works of Ephraim the Syrian such imagery is used within the framework of a real communicative level: *a real* preacher addresses a real audience at a specific historical moment, then in memra it is transferred to *a fictive* context. That is, there is a situation similar to the one when modern writers deliberately arrange a game with the intersection of the real and depicted worlds, inserting into their works of fiction, for example, excerpts from the works of other authors or from real scientific works.

Taking into account the fact that in the memr in the praise of the Ninevites there may be an implicit internal critique of the Christian audience, let us consider the seemingly paradoxical assumption that anti-Jewish criticism in the memra may also be aimed (among other things) at Christians.

2.2. The anti-Jewish polemics in the memra as an internal criticism?

We have already mentioned that one of the features of the criticism of the Jews in the memra is its synchronization with Old Testament times. This is expressed, in particular, in the fact that the author focuses primarily on the *pagan* sins of the Jews: sacrifices, magic, divination, astrology. Edmund Beck[218] and Emanuele Zimbardi[219] made an important suggestion on this point. The fact is that a Syrian theologian could kill two birds with one stone – criticize the Jews and, at the same time, his Christian community for the observance of pagan customs.

Indeed, in many of his works, especially those related to the genre of memra, Ephraim the Syrian often criticizes the Christian inhabitants of Nisibis for their observance of pagan customs. For example, the 10th and 11th memre of the cycle of memre "On Nicomedia" are devoted to this theme[220]. The main purpose of these works, as we have already mentioned in the previous paragraph, is not so much to describe the catastrophic events in Nicomedia as to make of them a

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[217] *Botha P.* Antithesis and Argument in the Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian // Hervormde Theologiese Studies. 1988. Vol. 44. P. 581–595. Here P. 585–587.

[218] Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones II / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO; 312. Syr; 135.). S. 42.

[219] Ephrem the Syrian Sermon on Nineveh and Jonah... P. 54–55.

[220] *Renoux C.* Mēmrè sur Nicomédie... P. 194–225; P. 228–229. The text of most of the memre "On Nicomedia" has been preserved only in Armenian. These works have many similarities with the first memra "On Exhortation" mentioned above. For example, the first memra "On the Exhortation", was also translated into Armenian, and in the manuscript Jérusalem 326 follows the memre On Nicomedia (folio 278r–385v). Obviously, this is not accidental, as there are many substantive similarities between these works.

warning example for Nisibis, who is mentioned more than once in them and whose realities are described there[221] . From these memre we can learn, for example, that magic and astrology were actively practiced in Nisibis. Magicians, fortune-tellers, astrologers immersed themselves in their books, observed the stars, made horoscopes. Their help was primarily sought by the barren women, but other inhabitants of Nisibis also willingly turned to them. A Syrian theologian says that a similar situation arose in Nicomedia, which was one of the reasons for the destruction of the city as a result of God's wrath. Therefore, the fate of Nicomedia, where death united the practitioners of pagan rites and those who turned to them, is a very fitting example for the inhabitants of Nisibis. Thus, Ephraim the Syrian exclaims:

> Look at the city: fortune-tellers and fortune-tellers died in it at the same time. The soothsayer has gone away with his duty, // and the mad women with their sins. The astrologer departed in his wickedness, // and those who obeyed him in their sin. The wicked sorcerer is gone, // and those who rewarded him are worse than he is (Memre "On Nicomedia" 11, vs. 307-314).

In his 10th memra "On Nicomedia" Ephraim discusses in detail the negative consequences of observing pagan customs in Old Testament history to warn the people of Nisibis. Thus, Assyria, the mother of diviners, was destroyed (vv. 217-244). Egypt received the mercy of Joseph and the justice of Moses, but her heart was hardened by sorcerers, and she perished at sea (vv. 245-270). Even Zion, the mother of the prophets, received the heathen leaven from Egypt (v. 403), and was destroyed for ever, in spite of the intervention of God, who, through the prophets and his Son, desired to bring him the healing of truth. Ephraim the Syrian provides the example of Zion with particularly sharp criticism. "Zion, mother of the prophets, why are you destroyed forever?" (vv. 291-292) asks the Syrian preacher. "He loved false prophets, and destroyed true ones. He was completely bathed in sin (vv. 293-295)" replies Ephraim the Syrian to his question. Further, the Syrian theologian employs a critique of paganism in Zion very similar to the anti-Jewish criticism in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", for example,

> False prophets in public and astrologers in *the inner chambers* (vv. 297-298).[222] <... > Sacrifices were offered in open places, // and sacrifices on terraces (vv. 359-360) (cf. Jeremiah 32:39). Since the earth was full of sorcerers, the prophets fled into the wilderness (cf. Isaiah 2:6) (vv. 361-362). Crazy earth, // magic and divination reign supreme in you. If there is error in you, the truth is gone from you (vv. 405-408).[223]

The people of Nisibis should learn from the examples of Assyria, Egypt, and Zion. It is significant that, citing as an example a rather lengthy and sharp polemic against Zion, Ephraim the

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[221]Cf, 12th memra vv. 82–88 (*Renoux C.* Mēmrè sur Nicomédie… P. 276–277). Cf.: *Bundy D.* Vision for the City: Nisibis in Ephraem's Hymns on Nicomedia // Religions of Late Antiquity in Pracrice /ed. by Valantasis R. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. P. 189–206.

[222] Cf. the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah": "He (i.e., the prophet Jonah) looked and saw *the inner chambers* (i.e., of the Jews), which are full of paganism" (vv. 1113-1114).

[223] Cf. the lengthy descriptions of the pagan sacrifices of the Jews in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", e.g., vv. 1737 ff.

Syrian focuses primarily on Old Testament times and pagan customs of the Jews, and not on their rejection of Jesus. Thus, the same strategy of focusing on the Old Testament context is evident as in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah". The detailed description of Zion's pagan sins in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" as well as in the memre "On Nicomedia", serves not only as an expression of anti-Jewish polemics, but also as a warning to the Christian community: the preacher warns that if the audience sins like the Jews, they will suffer the same fate.

Perhaps such a literary-theological device, when the Jews are not a real adversary, but a certain paradigm of negative behavior, can be considered in the context of an interesting phenomenon in Syriac Christianity: the process of transferring the paradigm of anti-Jewish polemics to internal criticism. A prominent scholar of Syriac literature, Adam Becker, in his recent article, analyzes a striking example of such a process, the homily "On the Exhortation" by the Syriac poet-theologian of the fifth century Isaac of Antioch[224]. In particular, Becker quotes the following passage from the writings of Isaac:

> Who then gave us (responsibility), // as the quick-witted Moses, // to come and reproach now // the servants (of God) (i.e., Christians) as *oppressors* (ܦܠܚܐ)? // For behold, the calf which Moses drowned // in the wilderness, // has now jumped out of the inner chambers // and is revered by all[225].

Using this passage as an example, Adam Becker clearly shows how Isaac of Antioch uses the typically anti-Jewish motifs of Ephraim the Syrian, such as the motif of the golden calf, and key offensive designations of the Jews, such as "oppressors" (ܦܠܚܐ), but against their own Christian community, which commits the same sins as the Jews. As part of his analysis, the researcher concludes that the process of transferring the paradigm of anti-Jewish polemics to internal criticism appears after Ephraim the Syrian, which he thinks is quite natural, since "Ephraim was part of an orthodox community that felt besieged and challenged by other forms of Christianity, while Isaac may have been writing more than a century later, when the inability of Christianization to destroy sin became apparent"[226]. However, Becker does not set out to analyze in detail the inner criticism in the works of Ephraim the Syrian. The examples we have analyzed above from the memra "On Nicomedia" and from the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" show that already in the time of Ephraim the Syrian one can find the germ of the idea of the Jews as an example of negative behavior for the Christian community.

Hence, the memra has a strategy that is clearly aimed at achieving the largest possible area of intersection between the "depicted", "fictive" world of the memra and the real world of the

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[224] *Becker A.* Syriac Anti-Judaism: Polemic and Internal Critique // Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium / Ed. by A. Butts, S. Gross. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020. (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism; 180). P. 47–66. Here P. 60–65.

[225] *Bedjan P.* Isaac of Antioch. Homiliae. Paris; Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1903. P. 185, 1–4. *Becker A.* Syriac Anti-Judaism… P. 63–64.

[226] *Becker A.* Syriac Anti-Judaism… P. 64.

author and listeners/readers. This can be seen on several levels: at the level of vocabulary (very frequent use of pronouns *we* and *you* in fictive situations, addresses *my beloved*, *my* brothers etc.), at the level of imagery ("mirror"), at the level of narrative as a whole (the speeches of the characters in the memra and the memra itself as the same speech in the mouth of a real preacher), etc.

Within the framework of this strategy, our analysis of the intertextuality of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" with such works of Ephraim the Syrian as the hymns "On Nisibis", the 1st memra "On the Exhortation", and the memre "On Nicomedia" is of particular importance. We have found that the memra has many similarities with these works, often almost verbatim. Thus, in the "fictive" context of the memra, where there is no indication of the real place of action, the situations and imagery from the "real" addresses of the preacher to the audience are transferred. At the same time, the similarities have the character of internal criticism: the Christian audience of the Memra receives a signal of their own unworthy behavior through the ideal image of the Ninevites. Even criticism of Jews may implicitly hint at criticism of one's own community.

In the next section, we will proceed to consider the rhetorical form of the Syriac memra, which, first, is very closely related to the theology "inserted" into this rhetorical form, and, second, is often determined by intertextuality with biblical and non-biblical texts, which influence both the form and the content of the work.

2.3. The rhetoric, implicit theology and intertextuality in the analogies by the author and the "fictive" speeches of the characters in the memra

In the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is used the dramatic elements, that are typical for the genre of narrative memra, i.e., lengthy monologues of the characters and excursions from the author. We will analyze the main speeches in the memara — the speech of the fathers of Nineveh to the children (vv. 349–422), the introduction to this speech (the author's analogy with Abraham and Isaac) (vv. 301–346) and the speech of the king of Nineveh (vv. 513–822), in terms of their rhetorical form, the implicit theology and intertextuality with biblical and non-biblical texts. We will show that these speeches are the "core" elements of the whole work: first, they contain the "quintessence" of the theology embedded in the memra, and, second, it is to these speeches that the anti-Jewish critique is "attached". The first speech in the memra is the speech of the Ninevite fathers to the children. But this speech is preceded by the author's lengthy analogy about Abraham and Isaac, with which we will begin our analysis.

As a biblical analogy for the Nineveh fathers who want to comfort their children in the face of the impending catastrophe on Nineveh, the narrator chooses a story from Genesis 22 about Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac. Abraham, answering his son's question "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (Gen 22:7; v. 304), finds, according to the memra, a "workaround" (ܥܝܕܐ

ܐܒܗ), not revealing that the sacrifice would be himself, but telling Isaac that there would be another sacrifice:

1. Isaac asks about the sacrifice: // "*Where is the lamb for the burnt offering*?" (cf. Gen 22:7)
The talking lamb asks // about that silent lamb.
Abraham did not reveal to his son that "thou art the lamb to be burned";
So that he would not answer with lamentation, // and his victim would not be stained.
In comforting, *he bound* (ܥܩܕ) (cf. Gen 22:9) *his only one* (Gn 22:2), // before he drew his *knife* (Gen 22:9).

2. Abraham, who saw // that his son's question was heavy,
He did not take advantage of silence, // so as not to grieve his son,
And he did not explain the [necessary] pain, // so as not to confuse the victim.
Abraham *found a workaround* (ܐܒܗ ܥܒܕܐ), // how to persuade his beloved.

3. Fleeing (ܕܢ ܚܙܐ) from the manifest [things] (ܐܬܓܠܝ), // the hidden secret (ܐܬܟܣܝ ܐܝܟܐ) prophesied,
Wishing to conceal it, // showed him the manifest truth.
He was afraid to tell him, "It's you". He prophesied to him that it was the other.
He thought it was him. He prophesied that it was not him.

4. For Abraham's tongue // knew more than his heart.
The mouth has learned from the heart, // the heart has learned from the mouth.
Reason threw away knowledge, // when the tongue became a prophet.
And the mind that has become wise, // has become wise from the tongue.

5. "We, they say, I and the lad, will climb" (cf. Gen 22:5), Abraham said to the servants.
"And we will return to you again" (cf. Gen 22:5). // He wanted to deceive (ܕܢ ܐܙܠ), but he prophesied.
Not that he was a liar (ܓܐܠܐ), // he who fought for the truth.
His word became prophetic, // when he *found a workaround* (ܥܒܕܐ) to help (vv. 303–344).

A few preliminary remarks should be made about this complex and rich part of the memra. First, as far as intertextuality with the biblical text is concerned, there is not only the use of key words and frames from the biblical narrative, but also the use of almost verbatim quotations, which is rare for memra (Gen. 22:5, 7). One of the quotes is even marked with a special marker (ܠܛ) (v. 337), such markings occur only twice in the extensive memre. Both quotes are about the same thing — Abraham's "lie", which eventually turns into the truth. The first time Abraham tells a "false" when he tells the young men that they *will both* return to them, although he knows that Isaac will be brought to the Jehovah (Gen 22:5). The second time Abraham tells a "lie" when he evasively answers Isaac's question "who will be the offering" (Gen 22:7).

Second, the borrowed biblical material is closely intertwined with the author's non-biblical interpretation. The Syriac author constructs an analogy between (at least) two situations that have no explicit connection in the source texts: the Nineveh fathers and their children, on the one hand, and Abraham, the father who is about to sacrifice his son Isaac, on the other. The analogy rests on

several points of similarity. First, the author makes amplification[227] from the laconic description of the inhabitants of Nineveh, he deduces a specific motif of fathers and sons, which allows him to relate this situation to another biblical account of father and son. Secondly, he connects the two situations with the help of key words: in both cases, the fathers resorted to seeming "lies" to *console* (ܠܡܬܒܥܝ) their children – they found *a workaround* (ܐܝܟܢܐ), they invented *a trick* (ܡܫܠ ܒܪ). As a result, the comforting lies of Abraham and the Ninevites became *prophecy* (ܢܒܘܬܐ). The transformation of consolation into prophecy is rhetorically emphasized with the help of *paronomasia*: the consonant composition of both words and their derivatives is almost identical ("comfort" (*nby'n*), "prophet" (*nby'*), "prophecy" (*nby'wta*) etc.). From a theological point of view, this transformation was possible only because Abraham was a *righteous man* (cf. Gen 15:6; Rom 4:11-13, James 2:21-24), and the Ninevites also became *repentant* and *righteous*:

> He (i.e. Abraham – S.F.) wanted to deceive (ܠܡܓܠ), but prophesied (ܐܬܢܒܝ). // Not that he was a liar (ܓܠ), // he who fought for the truth. // His word turned into *a prophetic* word (ܢܒܘܬܐ), // when he *found a workaround* (ܐܝܟܢܐ) to help <... > (pp. 340–344).
>
> Wishing *to console* (ܠܡܬܒܥܝ), // they (i.e., the Ninevites) *prophesied* (ܐܬܢܒܝ) about the world. // Because they quickly became *repentant* (ܬܒ) // they *prophesied* (ܐܬܢܒܝ) as true (vv. 427-430).

Thus, the author of the Syriac memra examines the biblical accounts of the sacrifice of Isaac and the Ninevites through the prism of the paradoxical relationship between truth, falsehood, and prophecy. After these preliminary remarks, we proceed to a more detailed analysis of the analogy constructed in the memre. Given the fact that memra is characterized by a high degree of connection between *form* and *content*, it is first necessary to identify its rhetorical structure.

First, this speech can be broken down into 5 verses, the first of which has 5 verses and the others 4 verses. The key stanzas to our further analysis are stanzas 3 and 4. Both stanzas, which consist of 4 verses of 2 half-verses each, use antithetical patterns[228], which we will clearly demonstrate with the help of the table. For example, the 1st pattern is based on the antithesis of the "hidden-explicit": The verse is because Abraham tries to *hide* the fact that Isaac is to be sacrificed by saying that he will not be the victim, but it is this statement that becomes *explicit* and true (vv. 321-328):

Table 1. The antithesis of "hidden *vs.* explicit"

Abraham wanted to hide:	**As a result, it became clear:**
running away from the obvious	prophesied a hidden secret
wanting to hide	showed the manifest truth

[227] The term "amplification" is used by Gérère Genette to describe what the Baroque writer Saint-Amant do with the biblical text (Genette J. Figures... P. 227).

[228] We use the term "rhetorical patterns" for Syriac literature according to Robert Murray: *R.* Some Rhetorical Patterns in Early Syriac Literature // A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus / Ed. by Robert H. Fischer. Chicago: the Lutheran School of Theology, 1977.

I was afraid to say: “It’s you”	prophesied: “This is the other”
I thought: “It’s him”	prophesied: “It isn’t he”

The second pattern builds on the original opposition (and eventual exchange) between reason and language of Abraham, with the addition in the last two verses of the new antithesis “knowledge (human) vs. wisdom (divine)” (vv. 329–336):

Table 2. Antithesis «reason *vs.* tongue»

Tongue/Mouth	**Mind/Heart**
The tongue of Abraham	knew more than heart
The mouth learned from the heart	the heart has learned from the mouth
Mind/Heart and Knowledge vs. Wisdom	**Tongue/Mouth and Knowledge vs. Wisdom**
The reason has discarded the knowledge	the tongue has become a prophet
The mind that has become wise	has become wise from the tongue

The rhetorical form of these patterns can be represented in the form of the following schemes:

1. A // B, where A, B, etc., are antitheses, and A'≈ A"≈ A'", the same for B.

A' // B'

A" // B"

A'"//B'"

2. A // B, where A and B are antitheses.

A' B// B A', где a≈b

B' C // A D, где A≈B', C≠ D

B'D' // A D', где A≈B', D'≈D

The first pattern is a synthetic parallelism with an antithetical parallelism between the half-verses of each verse. In terms of content, the purpose of the pattern is to fit Isaac’s biblical question (“who will be the offering”) and Abraham’s answer (“not you”) into the "frame of reference" of the theologically important opposition “hidden vs. explicit”.

The second pattern is more complicated. In verse 1, the opposition "mind vs. language" is introduced. In the second verse there is a kind of “interchange”: both half-verses contain both elements of opposition, so in effect this opposition *is erased*. In verses 3 and 4, identical with the former opposition “reason vs. tongue”, it is introduced a new opposition “knowledge vs. wisdom”. The form of the second pattern is more complicated, as its content is more complex: the author

seeks to convey the dynamics of the transformation of the apparent opposition of reason and language into their paradoxical identity.

If we continue the analysis of the content of these rhetorical patterns, then in the first of them we can identify two sets of terms with a negative, i.e. incorrect and positive, i.e. correct connotation:

Table 3

A number of terms with negative connotations	**A number of terms with positive connotations**
to run away from the obvious	to prophesy a hidden secret
wish to hide	to show the manifest truth
afraid to say	to prophesy
think	to prophesy

If we reduce the series to only verbs, we get the following contrasts:

Table 4

A number of verbs with negative connotations	**A range of verbs with positive connotations**
to run away	to prophesy
to hide	to show
to be afraid to say	to prophesy
to think	to prophesy

In our opinion, several important conclusions can be drawn from this table. First, the chosen rhetorical form, the antitheses, allows us to reveal that the author clearly opposes two sets of actions. A series with positive connotations includes such actions as prophesying, showing (truth, hidden mystery). That is, within the framework of this fragment of the text, actions aimed at revealing, showing, prophesying, speaking, are true, sanctioned by God. Wrong actions include the desire to run away, to hide, and the fear of speaking[229]. The verb "to think" falls into the same negative series. In other words, all actions related to the processing of information *within* Abraham or the refusal of this processing are wrong, and the actions related to *external* processes, i.e. the release of this information, are correct: Abraham *thought* that Isaac would be sacrificed, but *he said* he is not. To illustrate this more clearly, let's construct the following a "truth table" for the statement "Isaac is a sacrifice" from the point of view of Abraham and God, where T is true and F is false:

[229] Here it is clearly seen that the description of Abraham's actions is superimposed on the "matrix" of the behavior of the prophet Jonah in the biblical book.

Table 5

The point of view	Action	Saying: "Isaac is a sacrifice"	Saying: "Isaac is not a sacrifice"
Abraham	Thinks	T	F
	Says	F	T
God		F	T

Thus, the subjective "lie" uttered by Abraham coincides with the objective truth of God. In the next stanza, within the framework of this dichotomy*, the internal* (i.e., coming from the person) vs. *external* (sanctioned by God) introduces a new dichotomy: *mind/heart* vs. *language/mouth*, where the mind responsible for thinking falls into the category of "internal" and the language responsible for speech falls into the category of "external". And, as we have already noted, at the beginning of the verse these two categories are contrasted with each other on the basis of having the right information: "the tongue of Abraham *knew more than the* heart". In the verses that follow, however, there is an interchange between the "opposite" categories, and the oppositions are destroyed: "Mouth learned from the heart, // the heart learned from the mouth".

Of course, in order to understand the peculiarities of the interpretation of the story of Abraham and Isaac in the memre, it is necessary, first, to compare it with the one presented in the authentic works of Ephraim the Syrian, and, secondly, to consider this biblical episode in the context of Jewish and Christian exegesis. First of all, it should be noted that the rhetorical form of antitheses and paradoxes used in the memr is one of the main rhetorical tools of the theological language of Ephraim the Syrian, used in his main poetic genre, madrash. At the same time, the opposition is *hidden* vs. *the explicit* framework within which Abraham's sacrifice in memra is considered is one of the key oppositions in the theology of the Syrian poet[230]. According to Ephraim the Syrian, there is an "abyss" between man and God that cannot be bridged. The question is how, under such conditions, mankind can come to know God even partially. A limited knowledge of God is available to man only because God Himself, out of love for man, reveals to him certain Divine things mysteries, hidden symbols, making them accessible to human perception:

> If God did not want to reveal Himself to us, then the created world would never be able to express anything about Him[231].

[230] *Brock S.* The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1992. (Cistercian Studies Series; 124.). P. 27–29.

[231] Hymns "On Faith" 44, 7. Syriac text in Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Fide / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1970. (CSCO; 154. Syr; 73.). S. 142.

Accordingly, all human knowledge of God is the result of God's self-revelation, which manifests itself in two different spheres: in nature, i.e., in the surrounding world, and in the text of Scripture:

Everywhere you look, His symbol (ܣܡܠܐ) is present, // And wherever you read [the Scripture], you will find images of Him (ܕܡܬܚܙܝܢ) <... > [232].

In this way, God reveals to people a part of Himself in the text and in nature in the form of visible "symbols", "mysteries" — key terms in the theology of Ephraim the Syrian. Moreover, these "mysteries" can be seen and unraveled only by a believer who has a "clear eye" (ܥܝܢ ܚܕܐ), an "eye of faith", a "spiritual eye" that sees not the obvious, like the physical eye, but the hidden[233]. And yet, paradoxically, God continues to be hidden, secret:

Who will not give praise to the Secret, the Most Secret of all, to Him who came to proclaim the Revelation, to proclaim it to all?[234]

Emanuele Zimbardi analysing the memre interpretation of the story of Abraham and Isaac notes that it fits well into this theological paradox: "Ephraim's account of the episode emphasizes the theological level of functional opposition between divine truth, which often remains hidden from man, and fictive truth, invented in order to ensure the fulfillment of the former. The poet also draws attention to the paradox of the inversion of normal logical relations: at the moment Abraham asserts something which in his heart he believes to be false, but which in fact, on the contrary, turns out to be true (vv. 321-324), and his mind and heart have learned the truth from his mouth, and not *vice versa*, as is usually the case (vv. 329-336)" [235]. Zimbardi makes some very important observations here, which became the basis for our own analysis.

But, on the other hand, the interpretation of the episode about Abraham and Isaac in the memr is very original, especially in comparison with the commentary on the Book of Genesis by Ephraim the Syrian. In this work, as well as in the memre, the Syrian theologian interprets Genesis 22: 5, 8 as a prophecy motivated only by the fear of Abraham. On consolation as a trick and a "workaround", which is a key characteristic of Abraham's "lie" in the memre, there is not a word in the commentary. Abraham's words about returning to the young men together with Isaac (Gen 22:5) are explained by Abraham's belief in the resurrection of his son, and the ram slain in Isaac's place receives a Christological prophetic interpretation[236]. Thus, all the explanations of the commentary are very traditional and cannot be compared with the "psychologism" of the memra.

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[232] Hymns "On Virginity" 20:12; Cf. "On Paradise" 5:2.
[233] *Brock S.* The Luminous Eye… P. 71–79.
[234] Hymns "On Faith" 19:7.
[235] Ephrem the Syrian Sermon on Nineveh and Jonah... P. 59.
[236] Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commentarii / ed. by Tonneau R. Louvain: Peeters, 1955. (CSCO; 152. Syr; 108). P. 84.

Such a difference, of course, does not necessarily imply different authorship for these works. Interpretation in theological commentary and liturgical poetry can be quite different due to their specificity. The commentary uses traditional theological methods, such as educational interpretation. In liturgical works, the role of this method is leveled, and the argumentation is freer. Liturgical poetry is aimed at contact with the audience, the description of emotions, experiences of the characters, psychologism, and the desire to involve the audience in the narrative play an important role in it, which we see in the example of the description of Abraham's behavior in the memre.

Having made this brief comparison with the writings of Ephraim the Syrian, let us now turn to the broader context of the interpretation of the episode of Isaac and Abraham. Looking ahead, we have already mentioned above that the educational Christological interpretation of Isaac's sacrifice becomes the cornerstone of Christian exegesis from the Epistle of Barnabas (I –II century)[237]At the same time, many Christian exegetes, for example, Clement of Rome, Clement of Alexandria, in contrast to the biblical text, emphasize the fact that Isaac knew about his sacrifice and voluntarily agreed to sacrifice himself[238].

Thus, on the one hand, Ephraim the Syrian, using the typological exegesis of Isaac in his commentary, is in the mainstream of Christian exegesis, while the interpretation of the memra, completely devoid of such an interpretation, stands apart. On the other hand, the commentary says nothing about Isaac's voluntary sacrifice. Recall that in the memre the author also follows the biblical text as far as Isaac's passive role is concerned — Abraham does not reveal to Isaac the truth about the impending sacrifice. But at the same time, the Syrian author introduces a motivation for this action that is not in the biblical text: Abraham is afraid that Isaac may perceive this situation negatively, he may be frightened, begin to complain, refuse etc., thereby the victim will be made unfit:

Isaac asks about the sacrifice: // "*Where is the lamb for the burnt offering*?" (cf. Gen 22:7) <... >
Abraham did not reveal to his son that "thou art the lamb to be burned";
Lest he answer with lamentation, // and *make a stain on his victim* (vv. 303-310).

This seems somewhat strange in light of the fact that, as we have shown above, many Christian exegetes emphasize the voluntary nature of Isaac's sacrifice. In our opinion, this "strangeness" can be explained by the reaction not to Christian, but to Jewish writings.

In the post-biblical Jewish tradition, the story of Isaac's sacrifice, called *Aqedah* (lit. "binding") plays a special role. For example, it is beginning to be seen as an example of voluntary

[237]Cf. Barnaba. Ep. 7. 3. Cf. Tertull. Adv. Marcion. III 18; Melito. Pasch. 59; 69; Cypr. Carth. De bono patient. 10; Orig. In Gen. hom. 8. 1 et al.
[238] Clem. Alex. Strom. II 20. 2; Clem. Rom. Ep. I ad Cor. 31. 2–4.

martyrdom for the faith[239]. But in the light of our study, it is important that in a number of texts Isaac is ascribed not just a passive role, as in the biblical text itself, but an active one, as in some Christian writings. Isaac knows that he must be a victim, voluntarily agrees to it, and even helps his father[240]. Thus, in the Targum of Neophyti, Isaac asks Abraham on the altar:

> Father, bind me better, lest I kick thee and make thy sacrifice disagreeable[241].

And it is precisely this aspect of Jewish exegesis that takes on special significance in the light of the interpretation presented in the memre. In our opinion, especially in view of the "overlapping" of the memra with other Jewish works[242], it can be assumed that the author of the memra deliberately emphasizes the possibility of Isaac's refusal to sacrifice within the framework of a polemic with the corresponding interpretation of events in some Jewish writings.

Our analysis allows us to better identify the many intertextual connections between the various biblical pretexts used in this memra fragment. Thus, in our opinion, the author of the memra builds not only an obvious analogy between the biblical account of Abraham and Isaac and the fictive situation of the Nineveh fathers and their children, but also implicit analogies, which may not be so noticeable without a detailed analysis. For example, the repeated repetition of key words about Abraham as a seeming "liar":

> He (i.e. Abraham) wanted to *deceive* (ܕܢܓܠ), but he prophesied. // Not that he was *a liar* (ܓܠܐ), // he who fought for the truth <... > (vv. 340–342).

Combined with the repetition of the negative connotation keyword "to run away":

> *Fleeing* (ܕܚܣ) from the clear, // the hidden secret prophesied <... > (vv. 321–322).

are clearly intended, in our opinion, to evoke in the memory of the listener/reader the frame associated with the flight and lies of another prophet, the prophet Jonah. In Chapter 1 we talked about the fact that, unlike other Christian and Jewish exegetes of this biblical book, the author of the memra says very little about the flight of the prophet Jonah from God and his motivation. However, we would now like to clarify our previous conclusion. The author of the memra says very little about Jonah's flight explicitly, but *implicitly*, at the level of intertextual connections, it is possible to trace subtle signals that make it possible to identify how the Syrian theologian nevertheless uses the motif of Jonah's flight and his "falsehood" in his work.

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[239] The earliest of these texts is in 4 Maccabees (13:9-12; 16:18-20). On the interpretation of Abraham's sacrifice in the Jewish and Christian traditions, see, e.g., *P. Flesher, B. Chilton.* The Targums: A Critical Introduction. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011. P. 439–473.

[240] Cf., for example, Flav. Antiq. I 13. 4, Bereishit Rabbah. 56. 4, Bereishit Rabbah. 56. 8; Sifre on the book of Deuteronomy. 32.

[241] Targum Neofiti on Gen 22:10.

[242] Cf., for example 1.6.2.

For example, he often says that Jonah, knowing that his prophecy against Nineveh would not be fulfilled, was afraid of being called a liar:

He was afraid (ܕܚܫ ܠܡܐ) lest he be mistaken for *a liar* (ܟܕܒܐ), // that messenger who was sent <... > (vv. 1121–1122).

Combining this characterization with the fact that Jonah ran away (ܐܬܚ) from God (v. 21; cf. Jonah 1:3), we get an almost complete reversal of the situation of Abraham and the consolation of the Ninevites: Abraham, according to the memra author's interpretation, "lie" about a favorable outcome in order to console his son. And his good "lie" became the truth, the prophecy. Likewise, the Ninevites "lie" about the favorable outcome of their situation: "*It will not*, children, the city be destroyed, // and neither will our state be overthrown". Since, like Abraham, they had become righteous through their repentance, their consolation had also become a prophecy—the city had indeed been saved. The prophet Jonah, on the other hand, preached a bad outcome to their catastrophic situation, and his negative prophecy did not come true. Abraham wanted to "escape" from the manifest truth, which he believed was that Isaac would be brought to God, but his "flight", dictated by a good desire, turned out to be a prophecy. The flight of the prophet Jonah turned out to be an unfulfilled prophecy. Abraham, having "lie", was not afraid to be a liar; Jonah, as is constantly emphasized in the memra, was afraid of his lies.

By finding the necessary intertextual connections, we discovered how deeply the analogy of Isaac's sacrifice is embedded in the fabric of the interpretation of the biblical story of Jonah and the Ninevites. We can point to other important intertextual connections with the Old Testament narratives. For example, the consolation of the Ninevites is compared in the memra to a prophecy of *peace* (vv. 427-428), which inevitably evokes associations with the numerous Old Testament false prophets prophesying a false peace for Israel[243]. In the narrative constructed by the author of the memra, the righteous Ninevites become a kind of "inversion" of the Jewish false prophets.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the analogy between Abraham and Isaac and the Ninevites fathers and sons, in our opinion, is the possible extension of this analogy to the real world, i.e., we see it as a case of intersection of the "fictive" and "real" contexts.

In the theological analysis above, we have shown that the author of the memra does not employ in his interpretation of the sacrifice of Isaac the prophetic Christological interpretation so typical of Christian exegesis, including that of Ephraim the Syrian. The interest of the author of the memra in the phenomenon of prophecy within the framework of the analogy analyzed above is not only "theological" and "exegetical", but, it would be more correct to say, "psychological" and "literary". Based on the similarity of Syriac words "prophecy" and "consolation", he reflects

[243] For example, Jer 8: 11.

on the following: all consolation is akin to prophecy. Indeed, when we calm someone, for example, a child, and tell him, “Everything is good” it is as if we are predicting the future, saying a prophecy. And it is in this vein that the author of the memra interprets the “prophecy” of Abraham. In the same way, he forces the Ninevites to act, reassuring their children by the example of Abraham. It is no coincidence that in his “psychological” interpretation, he turns to the example of parents and children, a situation where, perhaps, the desire to calm and console is most strongly manifested. Of course, this is a religious work, and this “psychological” interpretation still has an important theological justification: consolation becomes prophecy if and only if it comes from *a righteous person*. Therefore, the false prophets who foretold peace to Israel told a lie: the necessary condition was not fulfilled, they were not righteous. But if we consider this analogy in the context of the intersection of the “depicted” and the real worlds, we get, that the whole memra as a fictive narrative, and any consolation in a catastrophic situation constructed in a similar way to this memra, if uttered by a righteous person, will indeed come true.

The author of the memra “Of Nineveh and Jonah”, launching a powerful tool of analogy, which appears again and again in different parts of the work, in the speech of the Ninevites and in the speech of the king of Nineveh, turns his work into an “analogy of analogy”: Abraham comforts Isaac, the Ninevites console their children with the example of Abraham, the preacher pronounces the memrah itself as a consolation to his flock; the listeners of the memra, in turn, can give it and other biblical examples to their children, etc. Thus, the content of the memra “breaks through” into the real world, i.e. in the author’s worldview, the pronunciation of the narrative turns into a ritual, magical action.

We can now return to the question of the “fictive” and “real” cummunicative levels in the memre. The author of the memra, of course, does not yet know about the fictiveness of fiction. However, he begins a certain path to this understanding. Abraham, trying to console Isaac, according to the memre, does not remain silent, does not explain (explains) (ܐܡܪ ܡܫܬܥ), but comes up with *a workaround* (ܐܡܪ ܐܝܟܢܐ). This workaround refers to consolation, which eventually becomes a saving prophecy. If we extend this analogy to the real world, then Abraham's action can be compared to the creation of the work itself: the author is not silent, does not write a theological commentary, but finds a workaround, a trick, i.e. invents a memra, a “false” narrative. This, of course, is not fiction. His narrative is ritualized, it's a white lie. The construction of a “deceitful” memra can only be justified if its purpose is to comfort the listeners during a catastrophic situation. At the same time, pronouncing/listening to this narrative must be accompanied by proper religious behavior, only in this case will the uttered memra turn into a prophecy. This statement is well illustrated by the following verses:

Although (ܐܠܐ ܕ) they (i.e. the Ninevites – S.F.)said so*, // they* did not refrain from weeping.

And though (ܐܦ ܥܠ ܕ) they *comforted* (ܢܚܡ) in this way, // they *did not neglect sorrow* (vv. 433-436).

The rhetorical form with strict parallelism, sealed by the anaphora "although", establishes a direct connection between the acts of pronouncing, speaking (narrative) ("talking", "comforting") and religious behavior ("weeping", "mourning"). Now consider the speech of the Nineveh fathers to their children.

In a lengthy speech, the Nineveh fathers comfort their children by answering their question about how many days are left before the destruction of the city (vv. 261-276). The Ninevites do not want to tell the children the truth, but invent a trick (ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܒܚܝܠܐ) (vv. 345-346), like Abraham who told his son that he would not be the victim (vv. 301-302). This "trick" consists in conveying to children with high rhetorical skill the idea, which can be described as "Divine Pedagogy": God will not destroy cities, but only, like a loving father who instructs his son, will rebuke and admonish its inhabitants to come to their senses:

God is good and pleasant, // and will not destroy the image that has created <... >
The city will not be destroyed, children, and neither will our state be overthrown.
With the threat of death // He calls us to repentance,
And through [God's] mighty wrath // brings us back to purity.
You, dear[244] children, // How often have you received blows from us,
So that you stop behaving *unreasonably* (ܕܠܐ ܣܟܠܬܢܘܬܐ), // and *become wiser* (ܢܬܚܟܡܘܢ) when you receive blows.
It was not in anger that // that *staff* (ܡܚܐ) was raised to destroy.
We punish ((ܕܢ because you behave *unreasonably* (ܕܠܐ ܣܟܠܬܢܘܬܐ), // and we rejoice because you confess.
You also *found out* (ܐܬܝܕܥܬ), // that out of love we threatened,
You also *understood* (ܐܬܝܣܪܬ), // that you were punished out of mercy.
In the *instruction* (ܡܘܣܪܐ) you have found help, // and through it you have become heirs. <... >
Learn, then, (ܐܠܦ), my beloved[245], // from the trial of punishments, //
And learn from *the wise* (ܚܟܝܡ) // the staff[246] of your fathers,
that in order to help us (,(ܕܠܥܙܪܢ He punishes us (ܠܢ ܡܕܒ), // as a father who makes us *wise* (ܡܚܟܡ).
His staff is lifted up in anger, // to terrify us and make us *wise* (ܕܢܚܟܡ).
As we, fathers, admonish you (ܐܒܗ ܕܢ) with reproach,
To instruct you (ܠܡܘܣܪܟ) and to get you, // to help you through pain.
Also good and pleasant (God) // by reproach (wants) *to instruct* us (ܠܢ ܡܕܒ),
And in His goodness to save us, // And pour out the treasure of His mercy upon us <... >
If (ܐ) it is true for you, // that we punish you out of love,
How can we then believe that God does not instruct us out of love (ܠܐ ܡܕܒ)?
This is our *instruction* (ܡܘܣܪܐ) // let it be like a mirror to you (ܡܪܐܝܐ),
In which you will see that *instruction* (ܡܘܣܪܐ) // [Divine] mercy and Goodness.
We, beloved, are not able // to love you so completely,
How God loves people in His mercy.
Far less is our love for you, // than this love of His for you.
And though great is His instruction (ܡܘܣܪܐ), // Greater than His Goodness,
for in His *instruction* (ܡܘܣܪܐ) is given // a gift to all men.
Sorrowful children, be comforted (ܢܬܢܚܡ), // stop your tears in haste!
The earthquake will depart from us, // and the wrath will pass us by.

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[244] ܚܟܝܡ] ܡܚܟܡ "wise" **YT**.
[245] ,ܚܒܝܒ] ܚܒܝܒ "beloved" **T**.
[246] ܡܚܐ] ܥܢܝ "torment" **T**.

The city will soon be comforted (ܢܬܢܚܡ), // the state will soon rejoice!
And *the Educator* (ܡܪܕܐ) will rejoice when he sees // that you, children, will become *well-mannered* (ܡܬܪܕܝܢ)! (pp. 349–424).

So, within the framework of the rhetorical argument *a minori ad maius* (...ܐܦ ܠ **The**Nineveh fathers draw an analogy between the punishment that a loving father inflicts on his children in order to make them wiser, and the Nurturing God (ܡܪܕܐ), who infinitely loves his human children and subjects them to discipline (ܡܣܬܪܐ), in this case, catastrophe, in order to correct them. At the same time, punishment/admonition is related to the idea of physical punishment – blows with a staff/rod (ܫܒܛܐ). Winfried Cramer confines himself to the brief remark that the parents' response used the "ancient pedagogy" according to which "God acts as an educator" [247]. Meanwhile, the researcher does not cite a single source from which this pedagogy is borrowed. In our analysis, we will try to illuminate various aspects of this multifaceted speech, starting with the role of intertextuality with various biblical books, including the literature of Wisdom.

First, it should be noted that all the key words of speech have semantics related to cognitive activity and the idea of admonition/punishment: to make wise (ܐܬܦ) (2 times), to become wise (ܐܬܦܬܪ) (1 time), wise (ܚܟܝܡ) (1 time), to instruct (ܝܪܐ) (6 times), to learn (ܠܡܕ) (1 time), to learn (ܐܬܠܡܕ) (2 times), to understand (ܐܬܒܝܢ) (1 time), to behave irrationally (ܐܬܗܘܠ) (2 times), instruction (ܡܣܬܪܐ) (5 times), educator (ܡܪܕܐ) (1 time), staff/rod (ܫܒܛܐ) (3 times), mirror (as a moral example) (ܡܬܟܣܐ) (1 time).

Secondly, all the imagery of this speech has a specific source in the imagery of punishment/instruction in the Hebrew Bible and post-biblical Jewish literature. The most frequent words of speech: the verb ,ܝܪ "to admonish, punish" (6 times) and the noun ܡܣܬܪܐ "admonition, punishment, reproach" (5 times) are used in the Peshitta, where they correspond to the Hebrew words יסרand מוסר. Hebrew verb יסר and its Syriac counterpart ,ܝܪ have very similar semantics: they are both associated with education, instruction as *a process* in the form of reproach, punishment, including physical punishment[248]. Often it is a question of a father punishing his children or God punishing[249] a person. The word מוסר is most often found in the Hebrew Bible, in the book of Proverbs[250], but it is also found in other books[251]. Let's look at some examples:

My son, do not reject the *chastisement* of the Lord (ܡܣܬܪܐ ܕܡܪܝܐ), nor renounce His rebuke (ܡܬܟܣܝܢ). For whom the Lord loves (ܪܚܡ) he *punishes* (ܡܠ ܝܪܐ), as a father chastises his son (ܐܒ ܒܪ ܕܒܗ ܝܪܐ) (Proverbs 3:11-12).

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[247] *Cramer W.* Frohbotschaft des Erbarmens... P. 103.
[248]Cf. Prov 22, 15; 23, 13; Ier 2, 30; 5, 3; 30, 14.
[249] Deut 21:18; Prov 19:18; 29:17.
[250] Prov 3:11–12; 10:17; 13, 18; 15:10, etc.
[251] Deut 8: 5; 21:18; Job 5: 17; 33: 16; 36:10; 37:13; Is 26:16; Is 53:15; Ier 2:30; 5: 3 etc.

Blessed is the man who is rebuked (ܬܝܟܚܢܘܗܝ) by God, and *do not reject the chastisement* (ܡܣܝܪܬܐ) of the Almighty (Job 5:17).

And know in your heart that just as a father instructs his son, so does the Lord your God *instruct* you (Deut 8:5).

From these examples, we can conclude that the idea of divine pedagogy — the comparison of God to a father who punishes, rebukes, and admonishes his son out of love for him — is often presented in the biblical sapiential literature and related biblical books, e.g., the book of Proverbs, Job and Deuteronomy.

The idea of divine guidance and mercy continues to be actively developed in the Judeo-Hellenistic literature of the Second Temple period, for example, in the Wisdom of Solomon, in the Book of the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, in the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates, and in other works.

Thus, in The Wisdom of Solomon, the role of divine pedagogy becomes the cornerstone theme, and the entire historical biblical process is conceived within the framework of God's educational actions to identify the righteous and the wicked. We will return to this concept in section 2.3 on the analysis of the speech of the king of Nineveh.

In the Letter of Aristeas, scholars see an encounter between the traditional Greek concept *of paideia* and the Jewish concept of *paideia* in the form of the Torah of Moses, which both represent paths to salvation for Gentiles and for Jews, respectively[252].

The book of Jesus, son of Sirach, also uses the image of God admonishing people out of mercy with the same key words as the speech of the Nineveh fathers in the memra:

Man's mercy is upon his neighbor, and God's mercy is upon all creation. He makes wise (ܚܟܡ) and *instructs* (ܝܬܪ), and *teaches* (ܐܠܦ) them, and brings them back like a good shepherd who feeds his flock. Good is with those who acknowledge His mercy and accept His judgment[253].

It should be noted that both the Hebrew מוסר and the Syriac ܡܣܝܪܬܐ often associated with the punishment in physical form, so they are often accompanied by a reference to the instrument of punishment, the staff/rod (Heb. שבט, Sir. ܫܒܛ), for example,

Do not hinder *the punishment* (מוסר) of a young man, for if you strike him with the rod (בשבט), he will not die (MT Proverbs 23:13).[254]

The corporal punishment of children in general is one of the most important themes of biblical and non-biblical Near Eastern wisdom literature[255], so it is not surprising that the image

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[252] *Boccaccini G.* The Letter of Aristeas: A Dialogical Judaism Facing Greek *Paideia* // Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 b.c.e. to 200 c.e. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991. P. 161–85.

[253] Sir 18:13–14.

[254] In the Peshitta, the Hebrew word שבט "staff" is left untranslated: "for if you strike (ܐܢ ܡܟܝܬ ܒܫܒܛ), he will not die".

[255] Cf. Ahikar 3; Sir 22:6; 30:1 etc.

of instruction as punishment with a staff/rod (ܚܫܒܐ) of the fathers, the prophet Jonah, and God receives such a development in the memre. In this connection, it may be noted that the Greek equivalent for מוסר chosen by the translators of the Septuagint is *paideia*, is not as similar in semantics to the Hebrew word מוסר as the Syriac ܡܗܦܢܘܬܐ. Although the Greek word can also express the idea of reproach, it no longer refers to the process, but *to the content* of the educational process, and can, for example, denote various kinds of education: music, rhetoric, mathematics, and even the education of a person in general. And never, as Jason Zurawski emphasizes, in Greek texts before the Septuagint, *paideia* was not associated with rods[256]. Note that in the ancient translation of the Syriac Memra into Greek, following this long-established tradition, the Syriac ܡܗܦܢܘܬܐ is rendered as *paideia*.

In order to understand the content not only of the speech of the Ninevite fathers to their children, but also of the memra as a whole, it is necessary to mention another important function מוסר of in the Hebrew Bible. In prophetic literature, especially in the book of Jeremiah[257], as well as Isaiah[258], the idea of מוסר as a divine punishment of the Jewish people as a whole for their sinful behavior, and even the conquest of the lands of Israel and Judah by Assyria and Babylon, appears. Exile and captivity are interpreted in terms of this idea[259]. This understanding of Divine pedagogy found a great response in the authentic works of Ephraim the Syrian, especially in the historical part of the Nisibis hymns, where he explains the catastrophe that befell Nisibis — the three sieges of the city by the Persian troops of Shapur II — as a "punishment" and a "lesson" for the sins of its inhabitants, primarily for their conversion to paganism. For example, in the 3rd hymn of the cycle of the siege of Nisibis, the Syrian poet-theologian interpret as "precepts", "books" that the believer should ponder and learn from what has happened[260]. The theologian believes that God punishes/instructs us (ܝܕܪ) so that we learn (ܐܠܦ) from these punishments to understand Him: He punishes man for his benefit, just as a good master punishes his slaves[261]. We see the same keywords here as in the memre, but the metaphor of fathers and sons is missing. There is another key difference between the texts. In the Nisibis hymns, as well as in the biblical source, the idea of Divine pedagogy as a punishment/admonition of the whole people is used for inner criticism and presupposes the possibility of correction. Within the framework of the speech of the Ninevite Fathers to their children, this is also true, but within the framework of the Memra as a whole, the

[256] *Zurawski J.* From Musar to Paideia, From Torah to Nomos: How the Translation of the Septuagint Impacted the Paideutic Ideal in Hellenistic Judaism // XV Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies: Munich, 2013 /ed. by Kraus W., Meiser M., van der Meer M. N. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016. P. 531–554. (Septuagint and Cognate Studies; Vol. 64). Society of Biblical Literature. Here P. 529.
[257] Jer 7:28; 10, 24; 30, 14; 31, 18; 32, 33; 35, 13.
[258] Is 27:7-9.
[259] Is 27:7–9; Jer 46:28. Cf. *Zurawski J.* From Musar to Paideia… P. 541.
[260]Cf. Hymns "On Nisibis" 3:4, 11.
[261]Cf. Hymns "On Nisibis" 3:10.

idea of Divine Pedagogy acquires one peculiarity, which, as we have shown by various examples, is generally characteristic of the use of the Bible in the Memre. The fact is that the author of the memra takes on board the biblical concepts of Old Testament self-criticism and undergoes a certain transformation of them in order to "insert" anti-Jewish polemics in the text. For example, biblical self-criticism is transformed into anti-Jewish criticism in Syriac writing, when "negative" scenarios are realized in relation to the Jews, which the prophets or the author/s of Deuteronomy warn about. As we will see later, the Jewish concept מוסר of as the divine punishment of the Jewish people is used in the memr to explain the rejection of the Jews by the Ninevites and to describe their fate.

However, in addition to the Old Testament and post-biblical Jewish connotations, it is important to note that, as in the case of the examples analyzed above, the author again uses the "double" dimension of biblical realities, since the image of a loving God the Father, who punishes His sons from the Hebrew literature of Wisdom, is also widely developed in the New Testament, in the Epistle to the Hebrews (12:5-11), and here, as in the memre, the rhetorical argument a *minori ad maius* is used (Hebrews 12:9).

Returning to the speech of the Nineveh Fathers to the children in the memre, let us note that, in addition to the motif of the punishment of the children of the Wisdom literature, there is another motif in sapiential literature connected with fathers and sons, which may also be implied in the Syriac speech, namely, the transmission of knowledge, instruction from the "father", the wise teacher, to the "son":

Listen (ܥܓܕ), my son, and accept (ܩܒܠ) my words[262].

A similar reference to the son with wise instruction is found in one of the oldest examples of non-biblical wisdom literature, the Wisdom of Ahikar, which has been preserved, among other languages, in Aramaic and Syriac: "Hear, my son, and go to my instruction, and remember my words as divine speech"[263]. In the Letter of Mara Bar Serapion (1st-2nd centuries C.E.), perhaps one of the earliest non-Christian texts in Syriac[264], the sage addresses his son with the words, "And remember my covenants with diligence"[265].

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[262] Prov 4: 10. Cf. Sir 6: 23: "Listen, my son (ܥܓܕ ܒܪܝ), and accept (ܩܒܠ) my teaching (ܡܠܦܢܐ)".

[263] Ahikar 3:10–11.

[264] Some scholars give 4 century A.D. as a date for the text: *McVey K.* A Fresh Look at the Letter of Mara Bar Sarapion to his Son // V Symposium Syriacum, 1988 / ed. by Lavenant. R. Rome: Pontifical Institute of Oriental Studies, 1990. P. 257–272. (OCA; 236.).

[265] Letter of Mara Bar Serapion 43: 10–11. Cf. Aramaic texts: The Testament of Levi (3rd century B.C.) 88–90: "And now, *my sons*, teach your *children* the art of scribes, instruction, wisdom, and let wisdom be with you for eternal glory < . . . > Look, *my sons*, to Joseph my brother, [who] taught the art of scribes and the instruction of wisdom <... >"; A fragment of the Aramaic Book of Astronomy from Qumran 4Q209 26 6–7: "And now I will show you, *my son*, [...] calculation".

It is important to note that the speech of the Ninevite Fathers begins with the children's question:

Tell us (ܠܝ ܚܘܝ ܠܢ), // how many days are left // of the days that Jonah appointed for us, // that Jewish preacher? (vv. 261–264).

Such a question, in our opinion, is an imitation of the precepts concerning the transmission of knowledge from ancestors to descendants, as given, for example, in Ps 77(78):

Here I will open my mouth in parables and tell the secrets of antiquity // What *we have heard* (ܫܡܥܢ) and learned what our *fathers have told* us (ܠܢ ܐܡܪܘ ܐܒܗܬܢ), // we will not hide their < from their children... > (Ps 77(78): 2-4)

This idea of the psalm, having been used in the memr as a source for the plot, undergoes literary artistic treatment. Moreover, the same psalm, as we will show later, is one of the intertexts for the speech of the king of Nineveh to the soldiers, thus tying all speeches within the framework of sapiential literature.

In our article on the calendrical calculations in the 6th hymn of Ephraim the Syrian's hymn cycle "On the Crucifixion", we noted the fact that the Syrian poet-theologian in this work clearly imitates the framework of the literature of Wisdom, transforming it in accordance with his goals[266]. Thus, Ephraim the Syrian introduces the story of his calendrical and astronomical calculations as follows:

So, accept (ܩܒܠ), o listener (ܫܡܝܥ ܐܢܬ), my words (ܡܠܝ) with the calculation of three days[267].

In this verse, as we can see, Ephraim the Syrian exchanges "fathers" and "sons" for the relationship of "preacher-teacher" and "listener". The transformations of formulations and concepts from sapiential literature, only with a much greater literary scope, also take place in memra, where the speech of the Nineveh fathers to their children, and, as we shall see later, the speech of the king of Nineveh, are clearly built on the key terms and motifs of the literature of Wisdom.

In the previous analyse, we analyzed the speech of the Nineveh fathers to their children from the point of view of identifying some motifs from the literature of Wisdom. We will now continue to analyze this speech from the point of view of its intertextuality with other biblical texts. The speech of the Nineveh Fathers is an answer to the children's question about how many days are left before the destruction of the city:

"Tell us (ܠܝ ܚܘܝ ܠܢ), our fathers (cf. Ps 77 (78)), // how many days are left // of the days that Jonah appointed for us, // that Jewish preacher (cf. Jonah 3:4). And what is the appointed hour, at which we shall go down alive into Sheol? And what is the day on which the beautiful (ܫܦܝܪ) city will be destroyed

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[266] *Fomicheva S. V.* Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period as a Possible Source for the Concept of Ephraim the Syrian about the God-Inspired Teacher-Scribe (on the Example of the Sixth Hymn "On the Crucifixion") // Vestnik PSTGU. Ser. III: Philology. Vol. 73. 2022. P. 103–118. Here P. 106.

[267] Hymns "On the Crucifixion" 6:4.

(ܐܬܗܦܟ)? (cf. Lamentations 2:15) <... > (In) what day will the world (ܢܬܗܦܟ)[268] // The news of our doom will fly around, // And the watchers will pass by, see (ܚܙܝ ܕܐܢ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ) (Lamentations 2:15; Ezekiel 5:14) // the city that turned upside down (ܐܬܗܦܟ) (cf. Jonah 3:4) on its rulers?" (pp. 261–276)

This passage is a literary treatment of a whole mosaic of biblical intertexts. In the first place, the children's question, as well as the parents' answer, is inserted into a frame from sapiential literature, expressing the transmission of knowledge from fathers to children. The "knowledge" that children want to receive from their fathers — how many days are left of the forty days assigned by the Hebrew prophet — is taken from the book of Jonah (Jonah 3:4). In relation to Nineveh, the word used in the children's question is ܐܬܗܦܟ "overturned", which has the same root as ܢܬܗܦܟ ("will be destroyed") from the same Bible verse.

But, in addition to the book of the prophet Jonah and the literature of Wisdom, the author of the memra turns to other intertexts. Thus, in the questions of children, the idea of the fate of the city is refracted as an instruction and instruction for the whole world, and this idea finds its correspondence, for example, in the book of the prophet Ezekiel and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, where Jerusalem is mentioned, compare:

> And I will make you (i.e. Jerusalem – *S.F.*) a desolation and a shame to the nations that walk around you, before everyone who *passes* by (ܕܥܒܪ ܒܟ ܟܠ). And you will be a shame and an insult and an admonition (ܘܠܡܬܗܘܬܐ) and a wonder to the nations that walk around you <...> (Ez 5:14-15).
>
> All those who walk on the road (ܟܠ ܥܒܪܝ ,ܐܘܪܚܐ) wave their hands for you, whistling and shaking their heads for the daughter of Jerusalem, saying: "Is this the city that was called the perfection of beauty (ܗܕܐ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܐܡܪܝܢ ܟܠܝܠܬ ܝܦܝ) and the joy of the whole earth?" (Lam 2:15).

Between these passages and the memra, we can note both lexical similarities (ܥܒܪ "to pass") and the use of synonymous expressions (ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܫܦܝܬܐ"beautiful city", ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܟܠܝܠܬ ܝܦܝ "city perfect by beauty"). Consequently, the author transfers the imagery that describes the catastrophe that befell Jerusalem to Nineveh. As a result, the key contrast between Nineveh and Nineveh and Nineveh is implicitly introduced. Jerusalem: Nineveh was not destroyed because of the righteousness of its inhabitants, but Jerusalem was destroyed because of their wickedness.

The parents' response to the children's question begins as follows:

> God is good and pleasant, // and he will not destroy the *image* (ܨܠܡܐ), which he *created* (ܥܒܕ) (cf. Gen 1:26). // The artist (ܦܝܢܐ) who paints (ܟܬܒ) the image, // preserves it with care. // How, then, should the Good One preserve // his living and speaking image? // There will be no destruction, children, the city is destroyed (ܐܬܗܦܟ), // and neither will our state be overthrown (cf. Jonah 3:4). Through the threat of death // He calls us to repentance, // and through [His] mighty wrath // brings us back to purity (ܢܬܚܢܐ) (vv. 349–360).

The author draws an analogy between the actions of God the Creator, who created ܨܠܡܐ (Sir. "image", "statue") and an artist who paints ܨܠܡܐ. As in the case of God the Educator discussed

[268] ܐܬܗܦܟ] ܐܬܗܦܟ "will be transfered" **T**.

in the previous paragraph, fathers reassure their children with *an argument a minori ad maius*: if even an artist preserves the image he has painted, how much should the good God try to preserve his creation? Of course, Nineveh will not be destroyed, overturned (ܗܦܟ) — it is a consolation that is the exact opposite of the statement of the book of Jonah: "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed" (ܢܬܚܪܒ) (Jonah 3:4). From the next verse onwards, the main idea of the discourse, "Divine Pedagogy" is introduced: through catastrophe, God makes it possible to repent, to return to *purity* (ܙܟܘܬܐ). Note that the latter statement is the connecting link in the memre, for at the very beginning of the work it was said that "the Ninevites fled from purity (ܙܟܘܬܐ)" (vv. 21–22).

However, the positive reassurance of the Nineveh fathers is fraught with pitfalls. This speech can only be fully understood if we take into account the strategy of intersecting the "depicted" world with the real one. On a "fictive" level, this talk is a comfort to the Ninevite children, but in reality, any listener/reader of the memra who is familiar with the Bible would have to wonder: Did God always preserve his creations? The speech of the Fathers, as is evident from the use of the key words ܒܪܐ and ܕܡܘܬܐ, begins with an allusion to Gen 1:26: "<... > will make man in Our image (ܒܨܠܡܢ), as in Our likeness". And any listener familiar with the Bible must have remembered another story from the same book, when God had just destroyed his creations, the story of the Flood:

> For after seven days I will pour rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will destroy all that exists that I have created (ܒܪܝܬ) on the surface of the earth (Gen 7:4).

Note that the two biblical narratives, the story of the Flood and the story of Jonah, and the Ninevites are connected by numerical symbolism, the number forty. Hence, at the beginning of the speech of the Nineveh Fathers, there is implicit a reference to the intertext about the flood. Later, the king of Nineveh, in his speech to the soldiers, would clearly draw an analogy between these events. In our analysis in the next paragraph, we will show that the contrast between the righteous and the wicked, and the fate prepared for him becomes, as it were, the "axes of coordinates" of the memra, in which the author's anti-Jewish intention is placed. But even now we can see that the opposition between the righteous and the wicked against the background of catastrophic events is outlined in the speech of the Nineveh Fathers: Nineveh will not be destroyed, because its inhabitants will repent and return to purity. And to the implicit objection that arises, what about the flood and other similar stories, when God did destroy his creations, the implicit answer is that only those who were wicked are punished. And the place of these wicked ones, as we shall see later, will be taken in memr by the Jews, who were almost destroyed by the Assyrian conquest. We now turn to the analysis of the speech of the king of Nineveh.

The longest of the monologues in the memra is that of the king of Nineveh (vv. 513–822). This speech is the core of the entire work. The author of the Syriac memra transforms the king's laconic address in the biblical text[269] into a lengthy speech of more than 300 verses, changing its addressee: it is addressed not just to the inhabitants of Nineveh, as in the Bible, but to the soldiers. The king delivers his speech as a "good advice" to the warriors, whom he calls "my brothers" (ܐܚܝ) or "my beloved" (ܚܒܝܒ):

The king gave good advice // to his powerful troops:
"I advise you, my beloved, // not to weaken even now.
Let us fight like heroes, // so as not to perish like the weak.
For whoever is in trial // is strong and courageous,
if he dies, then as a hero, // and if he lives, then as a conqueror <... >.
We have heard from the *ancient* // *legends of our fathers*,
that God has Justice, // and He also has Goodness.
With His Justice He threatens, // and with His Goodness He has mercy.
And so, let us reconcile His Justice, // in order to honor His Goodness even more! //
For if His Justice is reconciled, then His Goodness will help us <... >.
Between Justice and Goodness // repentance is not discarded.
Let's forge new weapons // for a new struggle that calls us! <… >

[**The king speaks of the tradition of the ancestors about the righteous and the sinners**]

We have heard [stories] from the ancestors (ܐܒܗܬܢ ܕܟ ܠܟ ܐܡܪ ܕܥܒܕ)[270],// who proclaimed the truth in creation.
Their words, // and news of their victories were transmitted.
Humanity has not been devoid of the distinction of knowledge.
The news of the righteous wandered in creation // about the righteous who thus conquered.
They have become the salt of all creation, // so that he who has lost his power[271] will be blamed[272].
We have also heard of the wicked, // how they dared and how they were destroyed.
A mirror is also placed, // so that the one who is ugly will be reproached.
A sign is placed in the creation, // so that it is imitated by the viewers.
Goodness was proclaimed, // so that the watchers would hear it.
Repentance was inscribed on the earth, // so that sinners would look upon it.

[**The king cites the story of Noah**]

Who is not aware // of that mighty flood?
History is close to us // the flood in the days of Noah.
In the neighborhood of Justice // lived all mankind.
There was no one devoid of discrimination, // and there was no one who was dark without knowledge.
The wicked committed wickedness[273] and were condemned – // that generation in the days of Noah <... >.

[**The king urges not to neglect the preaching of Jonah (as the generation of Noah did) and puts the prophet Jonah to trials]**

So let us not despise, my brethren, // the voice of the Jew Jonah!
We should not look lightly at his *preaching*.
In understanding (ܒܚܟܡܬܐ) let's examine it, // and consider it from all sides.
I fell into great uncertainty // because of the voice of his sermon.
Impudence is assumed; Is it necessary now (still) to think about madness?
If anyone calls him mad, // he is a great treasury of wisdom.
In him is insight and reason, // from him flows understanding.

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[269] Jonah 3:7–9.
[270] Cf. Psalm 77:2-4.
[271] Cf. Matthew 5:13.
[272] ܢܬܒܗܬ] ܒܗܬT "would be humiliated".
[273] Cf. Gen. 6:5; 6:11.

His appearance is contemptible[274] and simple, // his word is great and valuable.
In your presence, I asked // him questions that we liked.
So that, as in a furnace, the [275] words that were pronounced by him would be checked.
He was not horrified or frightened, // he was not constrained or troubled.
He did not change the word of his mouth, // for he was attached to the truth.
He did not fall away from his theme, // for his memory was very great.
I embarrassed him, but he did not give in. I frightened him, but he was not terrified <... > (Articles 533-658).

[**Jonah's speech and behavior are different from those of the Chaldeans and physicians**]

His word became a mirror for us, // in which we saw our shortcomings.
In him (i.e., in Jonah) we saw God, // who threatens us because of our ugly [deeds].
In it we saw Justice, // which is angry because of our sins. In it we saw our city, // to which the sentence is approaching.
In it we saw his preaching, // which came out of righteous lips.
It was not a skillful invention (ܟܐܘܕܝܐ), // or a cunning creation (ܟܐܬ ܕܒܪܝܬܐ).
If he were to preach peace to us, // then we would have to assume that he is a craftsman (ܟܘܕܝܐ),
Who, with the help of his good news (ܟܐܠ ܟܐܠ) that he preached (ܒܫܪ) would receive a good reward.
For in him who loves profit, // his revelation also contains [only] good.
And the soothsayer (ܟܘ ܡܝ), because he is greedy, // also his promise is flattering.
Khaldei (ܟܠܕ), because he is hungry, // recites[276] a good birthday.
In order to get more from the fool, // he reads him the lot of wealth <... >.

[**Jonah fasts like Moses and Elijah; a call to follow his example**]

We heard from the Jews (ܟܬ ܚܕ ܠ ܟܘܡ ܥܒܕ)[277] // about Moses and Elijah,
Who abstained from bread // each for forty days[278].
Isn't that really how this Jewish prophet fasts? <… >

[**Job's example]**

Between Us [tells] a story (ܡܐܡܪܐ ,ܡ ܫܠ) // of the ancient (ܩܕܝܫ) righteous Job.
Even mute animals, // may have heard of his victories.
His trial is like a trumpet // announcing his victory on earth.
Satan slandered him, // according to the story of our fathers (ܟܡܬܐ ܕܐܡܪܐ ܐܒܗ)[279].
If the Evil One slandered // the ancient righteous,
How then will he open his mouth // to accuse sinners[280]?
His malice is equally divided // into the righteous and the sinners <... >.
It is he who came out (and) destroyed (ܡܚܡ) // that house of the sons of Job[281].
He mingled their blood with wine[282], // and their cups with their bodies <... >.
Perhaps he was sent // to destroy our city and our state?

[A New Call to the Struggle of Repentance]

In battles, you defeated kings. Defeat Satan with prayer!
Let your ranks come out now, // to fight him!
Take off and discard your shells! Arm yourselves with sackcloth against him! <… >

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[274] Cf. Ephraim the Syrian, Nisibin Hymns 2:10, which says that the Ninevites "heard (only) *the contemptible* voice (ܩܠ ܟܐܒܝܐ) [of the prophet Jonah]."
[275] Cf. Prom 3:6, Sir 2:5.
[276] I. e. from their books. About the books of the Chaldeans cf. Ephrem the Syrian, memre "On the Faith" 6: 57.
[277] Cf. Psalm 77(78), 3.
[278] Cf. Exodus 24:18; 1 Sam 19:8.
[279] Cf. Psalm 77(78):3.
[280] Cf. Proverbs 11:31.
[281] Cf. Job 1:19.
[282] Cf. Job 1:18.

As part of this speech, the king advises the soldiers to listen to the words of the prophet Jonah and engage in a spiritual struggle with Satan, the weapons of which should be fasting, prayer, and sackcloth. He backs up his call with three lengthy examples of the righteous men of the Old Testament — Noah (vv. 595-630), Moses and Elijah (vv. 749-774), Job (vv. 775-798), and the analogy of the soothsayer, the Chaldean, and the physicians (vv. 697-714). Let's take a closer look at the structure of this speech, which has a rather complex structure. It consists of several "units", each of which can be divided into the following elements:

1. **The Source of Knowledge**: the King of Nineveh, describes the source from which he draws his examples.
2. **Analogy**: An example is given that is in some way similar to the actual situation of the Ninevites.
3. **Conclusion**: a conclusion is made about the role of this analogy for the situation in which the inhabitants of Nineveh found themselves.

In total, there are five such "units" in the speech of the king of Nineveh. Thus, in the first "unit" *the source of knowledge* is declared to be "the ancient tradition of our fathers" (ܗܝ ܟܠܗܐ ܕܐܒܗܬܢ ܡܕܟܪܐ ܘܚܣܝܐ) (vv. 555-556), from which the king derives a pair of personified Divine attributes, Justice and Goodness, between which is Repentance. These attributes are a marker of a catastrophe situation when, as a result of the wickedness of the people, the angry Divine Justice, and on the other, His Goodness. In order to bring the situation into balance, it is necessary to reconcile Justice through righteous repentance. The king comes to the appropriate *conclusion*, which is the need for a new weapon of repentance for the soldiers engaged in the invisible war.

In the second "block" *the source of knowledge* is declared to be the tradition of the ancestors: "we have heard from our ancient ancestors" (ܡܕܟܪܐ ܕܝ ܠܢ ܡܢ ܩܕܡܝܗܝܢ ܫܡܥܢ) (vv. 575). The biblical *analogy* of Noah and the Flood is introduced (vv. 595-630), in which the key opposition to the Nineveh and Jonah memra appears for the first time: the righteous vs. sinners. The basis for the analogy is the comparison of the catastrophic situation in Nineveh, which is proclaimed by the prophet Jonah, with the situation in Noah's time: "there *also proclaimed* (ܩܪܝ) a voice // of the coming flood" (vv. 605–606). The link between the present and past events is the verb "to proclaim" (ܩܪܝ): just as in Noah's time the voice announced[283] the approaching catastrophe, so now the voice of the prophet Jonah, the messenger (ܫܠܝܚܐ), prophesies of the coming destruction Ниневии. *The implication* of this analogy is the exhortation to the soldiers to obey Jonah's sermon

[283] The book of Genesis does not explicitly say that Noah prophesied. This motif appears in Christian exegesis beginning with the New Testament, cf. 2 Peter 2:5, where Noah is referred to as "*a preacher of righteousness*" (ܫܠܝܚܐ ܕܙܕܘܬܐ).

lest they perish in the catastrophe, like the wicked contemporaries of Noah: "Let us not, therefore, my brethren, despise the voice of the prophet Jonah!" (pp. 631–632).

In the third "unit" there are two *analogies* at once: a negative one and a positive one. In a negative analogy, the king gives the example of false prophets, a soothsayer, and a Chaldean. In a positive analogy, he gives the example of doctors. The link for all these analogies is again the verb "to proclaim": Jonah, the soothsayer, the Chaldean, and the physician, when he makes a diagnosis, all of them prophesy, proclaim (ܟܪܙ), but for different purposes. False prophets, soothsayers, and Chaldeans foretell peace and wealth (vv. 697–714). The physician, on the other hand, proclaims a negative "prophecy" — he is not afraid to speak of serious illness and painful treatment even for the powerful of this world — kings, generals, and soldiers (vv. 716-730). From these analogies the king *concludes* that Jonah is not a false prophet, since he does not preach peace, but proclaims wrath (vv. 699-702); in this he is like a physician, but he is superior even to physicians, because unlike them, he does not demand a reward for his prophecy (vv. 737-740).

In the fourth unit, *the source of knowledge* is declared to be the tradition of the Jews – "we have heard from the Jews" (ܟܬܝ ܚܝ ܠܝ ܡܢ ܝܗܘܕ ܫܡܥ) (v. 749). An *analogy* is the biblical account of the forty-day fasts of Moses[284] and Elijah[285]. The basis for the comparison is the forty-day fast that the prophet Jonah announced in Nineveh[286]. The king's conclusion from this example is a call to fast in the manner of Moses, Elijah, and Jonah. Again, it speaks of the invisible enemy that the warriors will have to fight – Satan.

In the fifth and final block, the *source of knowledge* is declared to be the "story of our fathers" (ܣܦܪܐ ܕܐܒܗܬܢ), which speaks of the righteous Job. The king asks rhetorically *a minori ad maius*, paraphrasing a quote from the book of Proverbs: If Satan tests the righteous Job in this way, how will he test the sinner (vv. 783-786)?[287] The sinners, in the "fictive" narrative, are the inhabitants of Nineveh. On the basis of the similarities in the situation of destruction, the king has the idea of the same adversary: if Satan then brought down (ܗܦܟ) the house of Job[288], then perhaps he is still sent to "destroy *our* city and *our* country (ܕܢܚܪܒ ܠܢ ܐܬܪܢ ܘܠܐܪܥܢ)"?[289] Again, the king

[284] Cf. Ex 34:28.
[285] Cf. 1 Kgs 10:5–8.
[286] This is an unscriptural addition, in the book of Jonah Jonah's fasting is not mentioned.
[287] Cf. Proverbs 11:31: "Thus is the righteous recompensed on earth, how much more is the wicked and the sinner". Here you should pay attention to the method of the author of the memra, which can be defined as the "nesting" of citation. As part of the rewriting of the book of Jonah, the "king" cites examples from another biblical book, the book of Job. In these examples, he uses an allusion to another biblical book, the book of Proverbs. Thus, in memre, the various biblical books are combined into a single narrative, following certain "signals", in this case, motifs associated with the literature of the Wisdom.
[288] Vv. 797–798. Cf. Job 1:19.
[289] Vv. 799–800. Cf. Jonah 3:4.

uses military imagery, calling on the soldiers to arm themselves with the weapons of a new war against Satan. For clarity, here is all of the above in the form of a table:

Table 6. The Structure of the King of Nineveh's Speech in the Memr "On Nineveh and Jonah"

	Unit No. 1	Unit No. 2	Unit No. 3	Unit No. 4	Unit No. 5
Source of Knowledge	"An ancient tradition of our Fathers" (ܣܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܐܒܗܬܢ)	Tradition ancestors – "we heard from the ancient ancestors" (ܟܕ ܫܡܥܢ ܡܢ ܐܒܗܬ ܩܕܡ)		Tradition Jews – "We have heard from the Jews" (ܟܕ ܫܡܥܢ ܡܢ ܝܗܘܕ)	"The Story of our fathers" (ܣܒܪܐ ܕܐܒܗܬܢ)
Analogy	Divine Justice and Goodness	Noah and the Flood	A negative one: false prophets, soothsayers, Chaldeans; A positive one: a physician	The Fast of Moses and Elijah	Job and Satan
Inference	A call to arm themselves with a new weapon of repentance in the invisible war	An appeal to the soldiers to obey Jonah's preaching	Jonah is not a false prophet or a soothsayer; he is similar to a physician, but even higher than he.	A war against an invisible enemy, Satan.	A call for soldiers to arm themselves with new weapons against Satan, e.g., fasting, prayer, and sackcloth

Thus, from the point of view of form, the speech of the fictive personage, the king of Nineveh, designated as "piece of advice" is constructed in the form of a repeated search for information in the form of an analogy that would contain certain similarities with the situation of the Ninevites. The information for comparison is taken from the past, from ancient (ܩܕܡ) times, in the form of "tradition" (ܣܠܝܬܐ), "story" (ܣܒܪܐ) of the ancestors (ܐܒܗܬ), fathers (ܐܒܐ), Jews (ܝܗܘܕ). The oral nature of the tradition is emphasized, e.g., "we have heard" (ܟܕ ܫܡܥܢ). Such a structure of speech, based on the transmission of an ancient tradition for didactic purposes, is very similar, in our opinion, to the literature of Wisdom and the motifs associated with it. For example, in the book of Jesus, the son of Sirach, the sage gives the following instruction to his addressee:

> Do not forsake (ܠܐ ܬܫܒܘܩ) *the stories* (ܒܢܬ̈ܐ) of the wise and their parables (ܒܡܫܠ̈ܐ) interpret (ܦܫܪ ܒܗܘܢ), for from them you will receive the teaching (ܬܘܕܥܝܬܐ) <... >[290]. Do not be disgusted (ܠܐ ܬܬܪܚܩ) for the *stories* (ܒܢܬ̈ܐ) of the elders that they *heard* (ܫܡܥܘ) from their *fathers* (ܐܒܗ̈ܝܗܘܢ), for from them you will receive the teaching of <... >[291].

[290] Sir 8:8 (9–10).
[291] Sir 8:9 (11–12). Cf. See also the "hymn of the fathers" in Sir 44-50.

The same idea is expressed, for example, in the prologue of Psalm 77 (78), which formulates the concept of history as similitudes, analogies, parables (ܡܬܠܐ,ܐܝܩܠܐ), which are orally transmitted "from fathers" "to children" and have an edifying and exhortatory function for the present moment[292]:

> Here I will open my mouth in *parables* (ܡܬܠܐ) and tell the secrets (ܐܝܩܠܐ) *of antiquity* (ܕܡܢ ܩܕܡ) // What *we have heard* (ܕܫܡܥܢ) and *learned* (ܕܝܕܥ), what our *fathers have told* us (ܕܣܦܪܘ ܠܢ ܐܒܗܬܢ), // we will not hide their < from their children... >[293].

The author of the memra explicitly uses such a structure as a "matrix" to create the speech of the king of Nineveh, filling the "*stories*" and "*parables*" with concrete, detailed analogies. In doing so, the very character into whose mouth the Syrian theologian puts this wise speech, the king of Nineveh, is transformed into a sage king, an image deeply rooted in the literature of Wisdom, such as the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Wisdom of Solomon.

Thus, throughout the king's speech, we encounter concepts related to the literature of Wisdom as positive: "advice" (ܡܠܟܐ), "truth" (ܐܡܬܐ), "test" (ܒܚܝܢܐ), "knowledge" (ܐܝܕܥܐ), "understanding" (ܣܟܠܐ), "reason" (ܐܝܢܬܘܢܐ), "wisdom" (ܐܝܩܪܐ), "insight" (ܗܟܡܬܐ), "education, instruction" (ܐܝܣܘܪܐ), "memory" (ܕܟܪܢܐ), "trick" (ܡܟܝܠ), and negative ones: "audacity" (ܐܝܩܘܪܐ), "madness" (ܐܝܣܘܠ), "fool" (ܣܟܠ)etc , i.e. a way of knowing the world. The King of Nineveh, who, after his story of the righteous Job, calls upon his soldiers-listeners to "examine with understanding" (ܣܟܠ ܒܗ ܡܣܬܟܠ) the sermon of the prophet Jonah, is a certain *model* of human behavior when analyzing the world around him and the text. His contemplation and discernment of the properties of visible phenomena is akin to that presented in the book of Proverbs:

> Be like an ant and *look* (ܚܙܐ) in its path, and *learn* (ܣܟܠ) <... >[294]

In addition to the use of key terminology and the method of parable stories, there is another important structural element in the speech of the King of Nineveh, which also goes back to the literature of Wisdom: the contrast between the "righteous", i.e., those who obey the voice of reason and follow the path of God, and the "wicked", i.e., the "fools" who recklessly disobey the Creator.

In the speech of the king of Nineveh, there is a division into the righteous and the wicked, for example:

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[292] *Witte M.* From Eternity to Eternity: Wisdom and History in the *Psalms*. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2014. P. 123.

[293] Ps 77(78):2–4.

[294] Prov 6:6-8. On the correct interpretation of phenomena by the sage, cf. Prov 22:3; 27: 12.

We have heard from our ancestors, // who proclaimed the truth in creation. // Their words were transmitted, // and the news of their victories <... >. There were tidings in creation about the *righteous* (ܙܕܝܩܐ) who had become so famous (ܫܡܝܥ). They became the salt (ܡܠܚܐ) of all creation, so that whoever lost his power (Mt 5:13) would be *blamed.* // We have also heard (ܫܡܥ) of the *wicked* (ܪܫܝܥ), // how they *dared* (ܐܬܪܗܒ) and how they were *destroyed* (ܐܬܡܠܚ) (vv. 575-586).

In this passage we see a method already familiar from the previous paragraph: the king of Nineveh gives the example of an oral tradition from which he draws a certain conclusion for the situation of his time, this time concerning the existence of the righteous who were glorified and the wicked who dared. The criterion by which the "righteous" differ from the "wicked" is reason, or the lack thereof, "foolishness". Humanity is "not devoid of (ܠܐ ܡܫܬܠܝ) // *distinction* (vv. 579-580)" says the king of Nineveh, i.e., the knowledge of the distinction between good and evil, but it is up to man to choose which path to follow. This idea is repeated in the king's speech once again, in the example of Noah and the flood: "There was no one there (i.e., at the time of the flood) *devoid of distinction* (ܠܐ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܡܫܠܝ ܦܪܘܫ), // and there was no one who was dark without knowledge (ܠܐ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܡܫܠܝ ܚܫܘܟ ܠܐ)». "Discernment" (ܦܪܘܫ) clearly refers to the distinction between the righteous and the sinners, good and evil, which brings us back to the story of the Fall in Genesis, when God tells Adam that he "became like one of Us, *knowing good and evil* (ܕܝܕܥ ܛܒ ܘܒܝܫ)" [295]. Moreover, the expression used in the memr is not more like the Peshitta, but rather the Targums, the Aramaic translations of the Bible: **למפרשא** בין טב לביש, "*distinguishing between* good and evil[296]". Meanwhile, in the literature of Wisdom, the story of creation and the Fall is also treated in terms of the doctrine of two ways, the righteous and the wicked[297], which can be followed by human creatures, as in the following verses from the book of Jesus, the son of Sirach:

And He made[298] for them mouths, and tongues, and eyes, and ears, and gave them hearts so that they might understand, and filled their hearts with wisdom and knowledge, and taught them good and evil[299].

The fate of the wicked is one of accusation and even destruction. The king's speech gives examples of wicked sinners, such as the generation of Noah, who perished because of his wickedness, and the trial, and the subsequent salvation of the righteous, such as Job. These analogies serve as a "mirror" (ܐܣܛܘܪܐ)[300] , a moral exhortation for the fictive audience of the king

[295] Gen 3:5; 22.
[296] The Targums of Jonathan, Neophyti, Fragmentary on Gen 3:22. Let us also note another similarity with the use of the word Targums. One of the key words of the memra are words with the root ܓܙܪ: ܓܙܪܐ (cut, incision, surgery; saying; decree), ܓܙܪܬܐ (sentence), ܓܝܙܪܐ (circumcision), ܓܙܝܪ (circumcised), ܓܙܪ (to appoint; to cut off), etc. But in Jonathan's targum on the book of the prophet Jonah, words with the root ܓܙܪ are used three times (on Jonah 3.5, 7, 10).
[297] Cf., e.g., Prov 2.
[298] In the Greek text of Sirach, there is "meditation" (διαβούλον), which may be the result of a misreading of the Hebrew verb יצר .
[299] Sir 17: 6 –7.
[300] Cf. vv. 587–588; 687–688, etc.

of Nineveh, the biblical Ninevites. Through these examples, the king confronts them with a moral choice as to whether to persist in wickedness and perish like Noah's people, or to be saved as the righteous who were victorious and glorified. Meanwhile, this moral alternative, the juxtaposition of the two paths that a human being can take, is a key motif in the literature of Wisdom[301]. Perhaps it was the mention of the "evil way" (ܐܘܪܚܐ ܒܝܫܬܐ) in the speech of the king of Nineveh in the book of the prophet Jonah[302] that prompted the author of the memra to use such a motif in his work.

To sum up, let us note that the entire "matrix" of Wisdom literature is represented in the king's speech: the king-sage tells parables that speak of the righteous and the wicked. The most interesting thing, however, is that this opposition is filled with new content in the course of the rest of the story: the "righteous" become the Ninevites and the "wicked" the Jews, and thus a sharp anti-Jewish critique is introduced into the memra.

As we have already shown in the first chapter, the memra of Nineveh and Jonah is rich in anti-Jewish criticism. In this paragraph, we will show that the anti-Jewish criticism in the memra is "attached" to the speech of the king of Nineveh, namely to the binary opposition of the "righteous" and the "wicked" that is embedded in this speech.

After King Nineveh's speech, as the story progresses, the Ninevites draw the right conclusion from the king's examples, choosing the path of repentance and righteousness, whereby God saves them. But we remember that the king's speech involved not only the righteous, but also the wicked. If the Ninevites take the place of the "righteous", then the place of the "wicked" is taken by the Jews, described in the same language as the wicked sinners in the king's speech: "impudent" (ܚܨܝܦܐ), "foolish" (ܣܟܠܐ), "wicked" (ܚܛܝܐ).

It can be concluded that by copying the book of the prophet Jonah through the prism of the literature of Wisdom, the author of the memra receives an important biblical justification for his sharp anti-Jewish criticism. However, he did not invent this method of using the literature of Wisdom in polemics. He had forerunners, the prophets of the Bible. For example, researcher Sonia Ammann has shown how in the prophetic texts of Isaiah and Jeremiah, the opposition between the "wicked" and the "righteous" from the literature of Wisdom is used in the polemical purposes[303]. For example, the idolaters against whom the prophet polemicizes in Isaiah 44. Verses 18–20 are described as "foolish", "foolish", i.e., devoid of true knowledge of God, which corresponds to the designation of the negative type of people in the book of Proverbs or the Wisdom of Solomon. The

[301] Cf., for example, Proverbs 2 and the so-called "Psalms of Wisdom": Ps 1, Ps 36 (37), Ps 118 (119).
[302] Jonah 3: 8, 10.
[303] *Ammann S.* Gods for the foolish. The connection between the polemics of the gods and wisdom in the Old Testament. (BZAW, 466). Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2015.

researcher concludes that “polemics against idolaters presupposes an antithetical model of thinking, similar to the one hidden behind the antithetical statements in the book of Proverbs”[304]. Taking into account the fact that, as we have repeatedly emphasized in our articles, the author of the memra focuses on the pagan sins of the Jews as idolaters, including repeatedly designating them as “foolish” (ܗܣܟܠܐ)[305], we can conclude that he deliberately follows this model of constructing polemics in prophetic discourse, especially since the book of the prophet Jonah is also a prophetic text. It is no coincidence that the antithesis of “Ninevites” vs. “Jews” with the help of which the anti-Jewish criticism is expressed in the memra, are presented on behalf of the prophet Jonah, as if he were a direct witness of the scenes – “he saw” [306]. At the same time, the rhetorical form itself, the antitheses of the righteous and the unrighteous, is also deeply rooted in the literature of Wisdom.

Thus, we have demonstrated the deep connection between the speech of the king of Nineveh and sapiential literature. The very image of the king-sage seems to have “descended” from the pages of the literature of Wisdom. However, the wise king in memra is a Gentile who hosts a Hebrew prophet. As we shall show in the next paragraph, the author of the memra, in creating his image of the king of Nineveh, seems to have consciously imitated the motif of some biblical and non-biblical texts, namely the so-called a “success story of the wise courtier”.

In 1977 the researchers S. Nidić and R. Doron, using a formal approach, analyzed the biblical narratives of Joseph (Gen 41:1-45), the prophet Daniel (Dan 2:1-49), and the non-biblical Wisdom of Ahikar in the Syriac version (chs. 5–7, 23). They found that Type 922 from Aarne-Thompson's catalogue of folklore motifs fit all of these narratives, "*the success story of the wise courtier*[307]". This motif is as follows (abbreviated):

1. A person of lower status (possible variants: prisoner, foreigner, debtor, servant, younger son) is summoned by a person of higher status (often a king, bishop, or some other leader) to answer questions or solve a problem that requires wisdom.
2. A person of high status poses a problem that seems unsolvable.
3. A low-status persona solves the problem.
4. A person of low status is rewarded for a decision (she is given half a kingdom, a king's daughter, special clothes, a signet ring, or some other sign of transition to a higher status)[308].

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[304] *Ibid.* S. 193–194; 288–291.
[305] Cf., e.g., “*stupid* (ܗܣܟܠܐ) people” (v. 1936), “fools” (ܗܣܟܠܐ) (v. 1878) etc.
[306] Cf., e.g. vv. 901—916; 1089—1164.
[307] *Niditch S., Doron R.* The Success Story of the Wise Courtier: A Formal Approach // JBL. 1977. № 96. 179–193.
[308] *Ibid.* P. 180.

It is easy to see that this diagram does indeed describe well the stories of Joseph, Daniel, and Ahikar, wise foreigners in the court of pagan kings. But this method can be successfully extended to other texts. For example, the Letter of Aristeas also partly corresponds to the scheme of the "success story of a wise courtier". The Gentile king offers the Jewish foreigners a test: to answer questions about the administration of the state, they succeed in the task, and the king rewards them with three talents of silver (294). And it's not too far from the memra, where the pagan king of Nineveh asks the wise Hebrew prophet Jonah questions in the presence of his soldiers:

We should not light-mindedly // look upon his (i.e., the prophet Jonah's) preaching. // In understanding, let us examine (ܢܬܚܟܡ), // and examine him from all sides <... > he is a great treasury of wisdom. In it is insight and intelligence (ܡܬܚܟܡ), // from it comes the understanding of <... >In your presence, I *asked* him questions (ܫܐܠܬ ܗܘܝܢ) that we liked. // That the words which he uttered might be tested, as in an oven (v. 633-650).

It seems to us that the author of the memra deliberately imitates a certain style in his work, trying to introduce the biblical story of the prophet Jonah and the Ninevites into the circle of Jewish texts, the plot of which falls under the scheme of the "success story of the wise courtier".

Of course, first of all, it should be said that the book of the prophet Jonah itself gives a considerable reason for this. This book is the most paradoxical prophetic book of the Bible, because in it a Hebrew prophet preaches to a pagan king. This is not at all typical when comparing the prophet Jonah with Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets, but it is consistent with biblical figures such as Joseph and Daniel. The author of the memra, as we have already demonstrated more than once in our study, was very well versed in the intertextual connections between the various biblical books and apparently appreciated the potential that he gave to consider the story of the prophet Jonah and the Ninevites through the prism of the literature of Wisdom in conjunction with the "story of the wise courtier". Completing the laconic biblical picture to a complete image, he creates a detailed portrait of a wise and pious pagan king, who makes lengthy speeches, is familiar with biblical history, and asks tricky questions to the prophet Jonah (although the questions themselves are not given). The wise prophet withstands this test with flying colors, and for it and for the salvation of the Ninevites, he receives his due reward:

The Ninevites lovingly seized // the messenger, the Jew, // In their arms they solemnly carried him, // and, like a king, he entered in glory. // In the city he sat down, and a multitude of penitents served him. // They brought him gifts, // and sacrificed tithes to him: // They began to bring him consecrated gifts, // which they made a vow in their straitened circumstances. // The children brought their necklaces, // and the young men their neck chains (ܐܘܢܩܠܝܐ). //The rulers gave their diadems, // their belts and chains. The king opened a great treasury, // and brought him a great gift. From every mouth was praised // God as merciful, // And from every mouth he was blessed // also Jonah as a messenger. A chariot (ܪܟܒܐ) drove up [and] took // the gifts and promised things they had brought. That he might go with honour // to the land from whence he came, // Jonah was lifted up solemnly and rode like a king in a chariot. As a king and as a king's son, the son of Amitai was raised in triumph (vv. 1491-1518).

Needless to say, this description of the honoring of the prophet Jonah, which is actually equated with a king and a high priest (the sacrifice of tithes), does not correspond to the biblical text of the book of Jonah! And, at the same time, as far as it shows, to what extent, the Syrian author seeks to complete part of his work:

> And Pharaoh took the ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in fine linen, and put a golden chain (ܟܬܝܢ ܕܕܗܒܐ) about his neck, and commanded him to be carried in his other chariot (ܒܪܟܒܬܐ), and to proclaim before him, "Father and Lord!" And he appointed him to rule over all the land of Egypt (Gen 41:42-43).

Like Joseph, "the prudent and wise" (ܓܒܪܐ ܣܟܠܬܢܐ ܘܚܟܝܡ) (Gen 41:39), Joseph teaching the Egyptians in the Testament of Levi, Abraham teaching the Egyptians in the Apocrypha on the Book of Genesis, the pious Tobit in Assyria, the wise Jewish interpreters in the Letter of Aristeas, instructing the Egyptian king, the prophet Jonah, "the great treasury of wisdom" (ܟܢܫ ܓܢܙ ܚܟܡܬܐ) teaches the king of Nineveh, a pious pagan. It should be noted, however, that the author of the memra immediately outlines a "schism" with Jewish wisdom that will culminate in the "anti-Exodus" of the Ninevites. After all, the contradictory figure of the prophet Jonah cannot be completely "fitted" into the chosen frame, and inevitable paradoxes arise. Thus, although the pagan king calls the prophet Jonah "the treasury of wisdom" and the source of "insight and understanding", in the end the king and the Ninevites turn out to be wiser and more flexible than the "straightforward" Hebrew prophet:

> Believing Jonah's voice, // they reversed Jonah's sentence. // Because, as *wise (*ܚܟܝܡ[309]) they understood // God and man <... > (pp. 949–956).

Having analyzed the speech of the king of Nineveh above, we have left aside the question of why its addressee is changed in the memr in comparison with the biblical text, since in the Syriac work the king addresses the soldiers, who are absent in the book of the prophet Jonah. In this paragraph, we will try to answer this question.

It is likely that several factors influenced the appearance of warriors in the memre. First of all, there is the desire for realism traced in the text. If in the madrash of Ephraim the Syrian the biblical Ninevites are a theological construct devoid of gender, age and social status, then in memr they are living people. In this sense, it is not surprising that among the other professions mentioned in the memre[310], warriors appear. Second, warriors emerge from a desire to "fit" the story of Jonah and the Ninevites into the general biblical context. Nineveh in the biblical book is devoid of specific historical features, but the author of the memra, perceiving it as the synecdoche of Assyria, introduces the Assyrian context into his interpretation. More than once he refers to Nineveh as

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[309] Lit. "discerning".

[310] Cf. rulers, noble women, creditors, merchants, judges, artisans, householders, peasants, husbandmen, servants, maidservants etc. (vv. 49–96; 2001–2096).

Assyria (ܐܬܘܪ) (vv. 518, 529, 1103, 1946, 2138), and the inhabitants of Nineveh as Assyrians (ܣܘܪܝܐ) (vv. 827). Assyria, on the other hand, is a powerful power associated in the Bible primarily with military might.

At the same time, in order to place the Ninevites in a certain "coordinate system", the author of the memra activates the ancient traditions laid down in the Peshitta and combines them with post-biblical interpretations. For example, he calls the warriors of Nineveh "ܓܒܪܐ", which means "giants (Gen 6:4), heroes, warriors". In addition, he introduces periphrases using Nimrod's name: the king of Nineveh is referred to as "a descendant of the hero Nimrod, the mighty hunter" (ܡܢ ܙܪܥܗ ܕܓܒܪܐ ܢܡܪܘܕ) (vv. 879–880), and the Ninevites as "the seed of the hero Nimrod" (ܙܪܥ ܓܒܪܐ ܢܡܪܘܕ) (v. 532). The connection between the Ninevites-Assyrians and Nimrod comes from Gen. 10:11, where it is said that Assyria came out of the kingdom of Nimrod (Sir. ܣܘܪܝܐ, Heb. אַשּׁוּר) and founded Nineveh[311]. Nimrod, in turn, is designated in the Peshitta as ܓܒܪܐ and ܓܒܪܐ ܦܥܝܠ "strong warrior", "mighty hunter", which is lexically accurately reflected in the memra (vv. 879-880; vv. 817-818).

Moreover, if in MT and Peshitta we are talking about a "strong hunter", then in the subsequent Syrian interpretation the image of Nimrod is "militarized". This is clearly seen in Ephraim's commentary on the book of Genesis, where the theologian speaks of the war waged by Nimrod and transforms the proverb from Gen 10:9 ("<... > because of this, it is said: like Nimrod, a strong hunter (ܓܒܪܐ ܦܥܝܠ ܩܕܡ) before the Lord") in a "militarized" way:

> Therefore, when someone wants to bless a king or a ruler, he says, "May you become like Nimrod, a mighty hero (ܓܒܪܐ ܦܥܝܠ ܩܕܡ) before the Lord, victorious in the wars (ܘܡܚܝܐ) of the Lord"[312].

Consequently, the author of the memra combines the image of Assyria as a military power with biblical "roots" going back to the hero Nimrod and Assyria, the founder of Nineveh. Secondly, in the speech of the king of Nineveh, in addition to the Old Testament context, there is also a Christian *topos*. The speech of the king of Nineveh, addressed to the soldiers, contains a military metaphor, an image of spiritual warfare with Satan, in which the weapons are fasting, prayer and sackcloth. Of course, the use of military imagery, the idea of Christians as soldiers of Christ, *militia Christi*, and of God as a military leader, is widespread in early Christianity[313]. Suffice it to recall the spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:10-17, which was clearly one of the sources of military imagery in memre. Subsequently, the "spiritual war" with Satan became the main topos

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[311] Cf. Micah 5:6, where "the land of Assur" (ܐܬܘܪ ܐܪܥ) and "the land of Nimrod" (ܢܡܪܘܕ ܐܪܥ) are used in parallelism.

[312] Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum commentarii… P. 65.

[313] *Harnack A.* Militia Christi: The Christian Religion and the Military in the First Three Centuries. Fortress Press, 1981.

of Christian ascetic literature. Military metaphors for fasting are also very common in the Christian tradition. For example, fasting is often likened to the weapons with which God equips believers in the fight against the invisible enemy, Satan, including Ephraim the Syrian in his hymns "On the Fasting"[314]. And the king of Nineveh, according to the biblical book, declares fasting, which could have been one of the reasons for the author of the memra to create such an extensive military metaphor. It should be noted that in the Syrian tradition, military imagery in general plays a special role, suffice it to recall Aphraat's taḥvita "On the Penitents", where the Syrian writer creates an epic picture of asceticism and Baptism as a spiritual war, on the basis of a skillful reworking of biblical passages from Deuteronomy (20:1-9) and the Book of Judges (7:1-6).

But, as we have already said, the speech of the king of Nineveh is fundamentally different from all these examples in that the military metaphor in it is not just a symbol, it seems to intersect with reality, it is not about spiritual warfare for Christians or proto-Christians, but for *real* warriors. Thus, our first conclusion is that the speech of the king of Nineveh is a synthesis of the "realistic" Old Testament interpretation with the Christian topos of spiritual warfare with Satan.

It should be noted that the military metaphors in the king's speech and the real military context in the Syrian memra have parallels in Christian sermons. For example, in the 81st sermon "On the Fast of the Ninevites", which we have already mentioned, Maximus, bishop of Turin, also speaks of both the real warriors of the king of Nineveh and the metaphorical spiritual warfare:

Clearly, he was a wise king who understood what weapons (armis) to use at such a time. For when men lie in wait for him, he takes up the *weapons of war* (arma bellica), but when God is angry with him, he seizes *the weapons of righteousness* (arma iustitiae) (81:1) <. > Formerly he had been a *member of military discipline* (militaris disciplinae), but now he had received the rule of celestial teachings (81:2).[315]

This similarity indicates that either Maximus of Turin was familiar with the Latin translation of the memra, which in this case was made quite early (Maximus of Turin died in 421), or that there was some topos of the depiction of the king of Nineveh and his soldiers in the sermons dedicated to the book of the prophet Jonah. At the same time, the Syrian memr presents a particularly rich arsenal of Old and New Testament imagery.

It is possible that there is another reason for the appearance of warriors in the king's speech. We have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that not only the exegetical and theological aspect is important in the Syriac work, but also, so to speak, the psychological aspect. In the next paragraph, we will show that the speech of the king of Nineveh is closely related to the speech of the Nineveh fathers analyzed earlier. But these speeches have very different addressees: children in the first case and warriors in the second. It is difficult to imagine more dissimilar addressees.

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[314] The Hymns „On Fasting" 1: 4, 8–12; 1: 5,13—14; 5: 2, 17–18. The Syriac text in: Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Ieiunio / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1964. (CSCO; 246. Syr; 106.).

[315] Maximus episcopus Taurinensis... S. 332. Cf. Mention of the soldiers of the king of Nineveh: *Ibid*., P. 333.

Perhaps this is done deliberately, among other things, in order to show different emotional states and different approaches to interpreting the situation depicted in the memre.

The king's speech has clear overlaps with the speech of the Ninevite fathers to their children. First of all, both speeches are "formed" under the influence of sapiential literature, numerous key words with cognitive semantics are used in both speeches, and both texts present the image of a "mirror" signaling about the didactic nature of the message. However, there are also important differences. First of all, the addressees of the speeches are strikingly different: in the first speech, they are frightened children, terrified of the impending catastrophe, the second is the direct opposite of the mighty warriors. As a consequence, naturally, the two speeches differ in their emotional content: the speech of the Ninevite Fathers is a comforting speech, intended to enlighten and reassure, optimistic in content, promising that the city will be saved. The second speech is a threatening and warning speech, and it is in this speech that the fate of the wicked is described, for the first time in the memre, of destruction. At the same time, the second speech lacks the most important concept of the first one — the admonition/punishment (ܡܟܝܚܬܐ), but it is used its close analogue, the trial (ܕܝܢܐ). At the same time, both speeches are similar in the didactic method with which they approach the interpretation of biblical events, and the difference in the presentation of this method is caused by the difference between the subjects who deliver these speeches and their addressees.

In the first speech, the biblical catastrophic and tragic events – the story of Abraham and Isaac, the situation of the Ninevites themselves – are considered within the framework of the idea of Divine pedagogy – as a punishment and instruction of a loving God the Father. At the same time, implicitly, with the help of subtle signals of intertexutality, frames associated with negative examples of biblical catastrophes, such as the Flood, are activated. In the king's speech, however, these hidden frames are revealed — the king gives the example of the flood, the trial of Job.

In the first, optimistic speech, there is no distinction between the wicked and the righteous, who are destined for a very different fate during the catastrophe. However, we have already said that it was not the "fictive" addressees of this speech, the children, but its "fictive" authors, the adult Ninevites, and the real audience who would inevitably have to ask: how would everyone be saved, if, for example, so many people were destroyed during the flood? And these questions are answered in the king's speech: soldiers are not children to hide the truth from them: only the righteous will be saved.

The king's speech lacks the key word of the previous speech, ܡܟܝܚܬܐ, but there are related concepts, for example, ܕܝܢܐ, "trial" (vv. 539, 779). In essence, trial and divine punishment are one and the same, both processes leading to admonition and repentance. The king characterizes what is happening to the righteous Job as a "trial" but it is in this biblical book that the idea of

Divine pedagogy is used, expressed in terms of ܡܗܝܪܬܐ (e.g., Job 5:17). The king of Nineveh "creates" in his speech a certain didactic model for the correct perception of the world around him and the text. According to this model, the world and the text are sources of analogies that must be properly interpreted by the wise and the righteous. This correct interpretation includes, for example, the discovery in the biblical narratives of a pair of divine attributes, Goodness and Justice:

> We have heard from the ancient // tradition of our fathers, // that there is Justice with God, // and He also has Goodness. By His Justice He threatens, // and by His Goodness He has mercy (vv. 555-560).

Note that the opposition Divine Justice vs. Goodness is one of the key theological oppositions in the writings of Ephraim the Syrian, and it is with this opposition that he interprets biblical and non-biblical catastrophic situations, such as the earthquake in Nicomedia in 358[316]. The second dichotomy that the king highlights depends on the first, which is the opposition of the righteous *vs.* the wicked. The task that the king of Nineveh sets for himself and his audience is to perceive the biblical stories of the righteous and the wicked as "mirrors", i.e., didactic stories from which one must draw the right conclusions on how to reconciliate the Goodness of God and thereby be saved. In fact, such a scheme is not very different from the idea of Divine pedagogy. In what follows, we will show that the two speeches in the memra can be related, through possible intertextuality, to the Judeo-Hellenistic text "Wisdom Solomon".

In the Wisdom of Solomon, a work preserved in Greek, divine pedagogy (*paideia)* is transformed into a complex and all-encompassing concept. In the final part of the text, the so-called "book of history" the author turns to the events of the sacred history of the Israelites, especially the events of the Exodus, and, in the words of Jason Zurawski, transforms them "into a didactic narrative" that aims to emphasize the differences between the righteous and the unrighteous[317]. This dichotomy passes through a series of divine trials by which God (or Wisdom) tries to teach humanity and give it the opportunity to repent. At the same time, Zurawski, unlike, for example, David Winston[318], insists that the main emphasis is not on the ethnic opposition between the righteousness of the Israelites and the wickedness of their pagan opponents, but on the global task of teaching humanity, carried out through the passage or, conversely, failure in the Divine trials[319]. Of course, righteous Israelites occupy a special place, and the opposition of Israelites vs. Gentile Egyptians and Israelites vs. Gentile Canaanites is nowhere near disappear, but it is noteworthy that the Wisdom emphasizes God's provision of a chance for correction even to wicked nations. However, they do not take advantage of this opportunity and receive the divine

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316 *Martikainen J.* Justice and goodness of God... P. 127–142.
317 *Zurawski J.* From Musar to Paideia… P. 547.
318 *Winston D.* The Wisdom of Solomon. AB 43. Garden City, New-York, 1979. P. 227.
319 *Zurawski J.* From Musar to Paideia… P. 547, footnote 47.

punishment they deserve[320]. For example, the interpretation of the events of Exodus is very revealing, when Moses breaks the rock in Horeb and water flows from it (Ex 17:6; Deut 8:15):

> Thou hast shown through thirst how thou hast punished their adversaries. For when the righteous were *tested* (ἐπειράσθησαν), though they were *brought up* (*παιδευόμενοι*) by *mercy*, they learned (ἔγνωσαν) how the wicked were tormented, judged by *wrath*. These, however, Thou hast tried as a father admonishing, and as a stern king, having condemned them to death, Thou hast punished (Wis 11:8-10).

From the point of view of the author of the Wisdom, the thirst of the people walking in the wilderness is seen as a test of the righteous, symmetrical with the punishment of the wicked Egyptians in the form of turning water into blood (Exodus 7:20-21). But the righteous were punished/nurtured by God with His mercy, like a father (here *paideia* is clearly influenced by the Hebrew concept musar), and the wicked were punished like a terrible king.

We can note that there are a lot of similarities with the memra in this passage. First, the very idea of interpreting the events of Sacred History in terms of the opposition between the righteous and the wicked is exactly what the king of Nineveh does. Secondly, the understanding of catastrophic events as a test of the righteous also permeates the entire speech of the king. Third, we see the same metaphor of God the Father nurturing/punishing (παιδεύω) as his children that we saw in the speech of the Ninevite fathers to their children. Fourth, we see how the biblical situation is interpreted in terms of the pair of Divine Mercy and Wrath, that is, in fact, the same opposition as the Syrian dichotomy of Divine Justice vs. Divine Mercy[321]. Fifth, it may be a coincidence, but one cannot help but notice that the dichotomy of the righteous being punished/admonished/tested by God as a loving father and the wicked as a terrible king is in fact a "model" for the two speeches in the memre. Thus, the righteous Ninevites, in the speech of the Nineveh fathers to their children, should perceive God's punishments and catastrophes as manifestations of God's mercy to his children. And in the speech of the king of Nineveh, he, like a terrible judge, condemns the wicked to death. Thus, in the two fictive speeches, the author of the memra shows almost all aspects of Divine pedagogy, admonition, and testing, with the two speeches complementing each other to a complete picture, as we can demonstrate with the help of the following table:

Table 7. Speeches in the memra and the Wisdom of Solomon

	Speech of the Ninevite Fathers to the Children	**The King of Nineveh**	**"The Wisdom of Solomon"**
A Subject Giving a Speech	The fathers	The king	The king
Addressee	children	warriors	

[320] For example, Wisdom of Solomon 12:8-28.

[321] Scholars trace the opposition of the Divine attributes of Justice vs. Goodness in Syriac literature to the rabbinic idea of two "measures": the "measure of Mercy" (מדת הרחמים) and the "measure of Judgment" (מדת הדין) (*Martikainen J.* Gerechtigkeit und Güte Gottes... S. 34–38). Based on our research, it can be assumed that such dichotomies existed even before rabbinic literature, and it is they that may have influenced Syrian literature.

A key word related to the idea of Divine pedagogy	ܡܗܝܕܢܘܬܐ “admonition, punishment, education”	ܢܣܝܘܢ “test”	“edication” and “testing”
Opposition Righteous vs. Wicked	_	+	+

Thus, as our analysis has shown, the speeches of the Gentiles in the memra — the Ninevite fathers and the king of Nineveh—are constructed according to the best examples of the literature of Wisdom. It was *the wise* pagans who replaced the false “wise” chosen people, i.e., in memra the Christian doctrine of theology of supersessionism is transformed into the replacement of the concept of Hebrew literature of Wisdom with (proto) “Christian” Wisdom. In doing so, as we saw above, it is not just the Gentiles who become wise, but the “descendants of Canaan”, i.e., the very nations that were destroyed by God for their pagan sins. The fate of the Jews in the memra mirrors the fate of the wicked, in accordance with Divine pedagogy, i.e., eradication. The Jews, the formerly wise, chosen people, are to be destroyed in place of the Gentiles. In the light of Jewish sapiential literature, this conception of memra must look like a big “kick” for the Jews.

In addition to the large forms of the speech of the king of Nineveh and the speech of the Nineveh fathers to the children, there are other similarities with the literature of the Wisdom in the memre. For example, the Syriac work uses sayings that clearly imitate the typical sayings of the literature of Wisdom (“better ... than”):

> For *a yoke* is more pleasant *than* (ܡܢ ܥܠܬ ܕ ܡܘܬܐ) death, // and slavery (more pleasant) than death (vv. 2085-2086).
> For slavery in the house *is better* (ܛܒ ܗܘ), *than* freedom inthe grave (vv. 2087-2088).

Compare, for example, these verses with Bible patterns:

> *Better* (ܛܒ ܕ) is one who is humble in spirit and humble in eyes *than* (ܡܢ) he who divides the spoils with the proud (Proverbs 16:19).[322]

It should be noted that the biblical book of the prophet Jonah itself provides some grounds for its interpretation in a series of sapiential literature[323]. The moral and philosophical issues it raises, such as the fate of the righteous and the wicked in the face of catastrophe, make the book of the prophet Jonah akin to the book of Job and other biblical stories about the righteous and the wicked and Divine punishment. It is no coincidence that the author of the memra puts into the mouth of the king of Nineveh the biblical examples of Job, Noah, and the flood, thus embedding the narrative of the Ninevites in a certain intra-biblical context. But, of course, the Syrian poet-theologian's use of sapiential literature is incomparable with its “weak” signals in the book of the

[322] Cf. Prov 16: 16; 32 et al.
[323] *Levine E.* The Case of Jonah Versus God // Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research. N. Y., 1996. Vol. 62. P. 165–198, here P. 166; *Guillaume P.* The End of Jonah is The Beginning of Wisdom // Biblica. 2006. Vol. 87. Fasc. 2. P. 243–225.

prophet Jonah: he turns the literature of Wisdom in memra into a source of a veritable "epic" narrative.

But the memra is not a collection of maxims and teachings, like the book of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, or the book of Sirach, but a coherent narrative with the speeches of the characters. Therefore, the very nature of the use of material from the literature of Wisdom in memra should, in our opinion, be characterized as the construction of a narrative on the basis of motifs taken from the literature of Wisdom, i.e. their "laterization", "narrativization". From the motifs and methods of sapiential literature, the confrontation between sinners and the righteous, the didactic nature of the story, the punishment of children, the transmission of instruction from the "father" to the "son", the author of the memra creates specific *plots* for his memra.

In a way, the memra can be seen within the framework of works that use the key words, motifs, and concepts of Wisdom literature to create a coherent, literary branching, *narrative*. Such texts include, for example, the Apocrypha of Genesis, the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates, and the didactic novel Tobit (2nd century B.C.)[324] and others. In all these texts, moral and ethical knowledge, which has its source in the literature of Wisdom, is often conveyed within the framework of such a literary instrument as the speeches of the characters.

In the previous chapter, we showed how the biblical book of Deuteronomy serves as a key intertext for the creation of the "anti-Exodus" motif in the memra. In this chapter we have shown the role of sapiential literature in creating the speeches of the characters in the memra to which the anti-Jewish polemics are attached. In this section we will try to show that the choice of Deuteronomy and the literature of Wisdom in memra as the main intertexts is not accidental, but is due to their internal similarity.

The scholars have long noticed that there are deep lexical and conceptual correspondences between the book of Deuteronomy and sapiential literature[325]. In the following, we will note only those that are relevant to the present study. For example, many of the terms found in the book of Deuteronomy are found only in the literature of Wisdom, such as "the abomination (before) Yahweh" (תּוֹעֲבַת) (Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Proverbs 17:15). In the Peshitta, the word is translated as "vile, wicked" (ܪܫܝܥܐ), and it is this word in the memr (and its cognates) that becomes one of the key negative terms for describing the Jews and their actions. For example:

Among the plantations is paganism, // and among the trees is an abomination (ܪܓܫܐ ܪܫܝܥܐ) (v. 1741–1742).

[324] Cf. e.g., chapter 4 of Tobit, where typical formulations of sapiential literature are used to create Tobit's speech to his son.
[325] *Weinfeld M.* Deuteronomy 1–11. The Anchor Bible. Vol 5. New York: Doubleday, 1991. P. 62–65.

The most important thing for our study is that in Deuteronomy a large role is given to the wisdom of the people of Israel. Here, for the first time, the Torah, God's laws and ordinances are referred to as "wisdom" (ܚܟܡܬܐ) and "reason" (ܡܠܐ), and the people of Israel who observe them is seen as "wise and reasonable" (ܥܡܐ ܚܟܝܡ ܘܡܠܝܐ) people (Deut. 4:6). Moses appoints "men of wisdom and understanding and knowledge" (ܓܒܪܐ ܚܟܝܡܐ ܘܡܠܝܐ ܘܝܕܥܝܢ ܒܫܒܛܟܘܢ) to judge the people (Deut. 1:13, 15) etc. The role of wisdom in Deuteronomy is especially evident in comparison with similar passages in the book of Exodus, where such characteristics associated with wisdom are absent[326]. The researchers explain this transformation of law into wisdom in the 7th century BC by the strengthening of the role of scribes and scribes, who began to play an active role in the compilation of legislative literature[327]. For our study, of course, it is not the historical context of the compilation of the book of Deuteronomy that is important, but the intertextual connections between the book of Deuteronomy, sapiential literature, on the one hand, and prophetic literature, on the other, which the author of the memra successfully notes and turns against the Jews in his "inversion". In the Christian doctrine of theology of supersessionism, the author of the memra adds the concept of premute: the place of the "wise" people is taken by the wise nations of the Gentiles.

An important similarity with the literature of Wisdom is, of course, the idea of two paths discussed above, which occurs in the Hebrew Bible only in two contexts, in the context of the covenant in Deuteronomy and in the sapiential literature. In the context of the covenant, those who keep the covenant, i.e., follow the way of God, will be blessed, and those who do not, i.e., turn to foreign gods, will be cursed. And the typical statement of Wisdom literature is that there are two ways, the righteous and the wicked, who are opposed to each other[328].

Also important for our study is the fact that it is in Deuteronomy that the idea of inheritance of the Promised Land (*yrš h'rṣ*) is most fully expressed, [329] and for the first time the verb "to choose" (bḥr) is used in relation to the Jewish people [330]as a means of distinguishing from the Gentile nations. It is not surprising, therefore, that the author of the memra chooses Deuteronomy as one of the main targets for his "rewriting of the Bible".

We have shown earlier that the author of the memra does not merely use imagery and expressions from prophetic literature, but, aware of the lines of contact between prophetic discourse and wisdom literature, transforms them for his anti-Jewish polemics. Thus, he understands that in prophetic literature the confrontation between the "wicked" and the "righteous" from the literature of Wisdom is used for polemical purposes, and he substitutes the "idolaters" of

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[326] Cf., for example, Deuteronomy 16:19 and Exodus 23:8. *Ibid.*, P. 64.
[327] *Weinfeld M.* Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972. P. 150–151.
[328] For example, Prov 4. 10–27.
[329] *Weinfeld M.* Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School… P. 341–342.
[330] *Idem.* Deuteronomy 1–11... P. 60.

the Jews in their place. Another important "anchor" of the anti-Jewish polemic in the memra is its justification through the idea of Divine pedagogy, which also penetrated into the prophetic literature from the literature of Wisdom.

As mentioned above, in the biblical prophetic literature, especially in the book of Jeremiah and Isaiah, the idea of מוסר (Heb. "chastisement, admonition") as the divine punishment of the people of Israel and Judah for their sinful behavior, and even the conquest of the lands of Israel and Judah by Assyria and Babylon, exile and captivity are interpreted in this context. We have briefly noted that this idea of Divine pedagogy is refracted in the memra in such a way that it becomes one of the "hooks" on which the author of the memra "hooks" the anti-Jewish polemics. Let us now explain in more detail what we meant. In the book of Jeremiah there is the following passage:

> And say unto them, behold *a people* (MT זֶה הַגּוֹי; targum of Jonathan דֵּין עַמָּא) who have not listened to the voice of the LORD His God and have not received *instruction* (MT מוּסָר; Targum of Jonathan אִלְּפָן)! Cut [331]off thy hair, and cast it away, and cry out of the way: for the LORD is angry, and forsakes the generation that has sinned. For the children of Judah have done evil before me, saith the Lord. They have set up their abominations (ܪܓܫܬܗ) in the house over which my name is called, and they profane it (Jeremiah 7:27-30) <... > I will also put an end in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem to the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, because the whole land will become a desolation (Jeremiah 7:34).

The people of Israel and Judah did not heed the Divine instruction (מוּסָר), which is rendered in the Targum of Jonathan as "teaching" (אִלְּפָן), i.e., terms from the literature of Wisdom are used. The disobedience of Israel and Judah is expressed in the commission of pagan sins. For this, God will stop merriment and destroy social life in Israel and Judah and turn them into a desert. In fact, we have before us one of the possible biblical "germs" for the anti-Jewish polemics in the memra. From the point of view of the Ninevites, the Jews had wisdom and instruction that they wanted to learn from them (vv. 1615ff.). But when the Gentiles of Nineveh see the Jews committing pagan sins, they accuse them, using expressions from the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah, almost symmetrically echoing God's accusation, "*Behold the people*, who did not listen to the voice of God..." (Jeremiah 7:28)

> *This is a people* (ܥܡܐ ܗܝ) (cf. Jer. 7:28) who are in truth a *people* [who deserve to be] *stripped and uprooted* (ܡܬܢܨܚ ܘܡܬܬܠܫ ܗܘ) (cf. Isa. 18, 2; 18, 7) (articles 1935–1936).

Further, the Ninevites, using the same key word (ܫܠܡ) "to cease" to describe the fate of the Jewish people, as in Jeremiah, conclude that even "the memory of the people *will perish* (ܫܠܝ)" (v. 1942), in a mirror retribution for having "*deprived* (ܫܠܡ) of the whole earth of the fruits of repentance" (vv. 965-1966). Moreover, mourning actions that Jews should do, i.e. to cut their hair,

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[331] In the Peshitta, only a portion of the verse has been preserved, "the faith has vanished and is removed from their mouths".

to weep, is what the Ninevites do instead of the Jews. Just like the Jews, the people of Nineveh cease to have fun and all social life, but for them this is not the result of God's wrath, but an expression of repentance and sorrow, by which God has mercy on them. Thus, in relation to the Ninevites, a "positive" scenario of divine pedagogy is realized, and in relation to the Jews, a negative one. The fact that מוסָר - ܡܘܼܣܪܵܐ in the memra is directed not at the Jews but at the pagan Ninevites is another notable example of a substitution strategy in this Syriac work. Divine instruction, which in biblical and post-biblical literature is always addressed to the Jews, is passed on to theirs in memra heathen adversaries.

In the preceding sections, we have considered the fictive monologues of the characters, the main dramatic elements of the work. As we have shown, one of the main features of these speeches is the use of detailed biblical examples and analogies, such as the Flood, Job, Moses, and Elijah, etc. In the previous chapter we showed that their appearance is connected with the author's intention to make a detailed didactic illustration of the principle of analogy laid down in sapiential literature. We will now continue to analyze these inserted examples using methods of literary analysis.

Until now, the scholars have not paid much attention to the fact that these biblical examples are not given from the narrator's point of view, which would be quite common,[332] but from the point of view of a character. Thus, it is quite possible to speak of such a special literary device as a "story *within a story*"; "*embedded narrative*". With this literary device, the character of the narrative, in turn, becomes the narrator himself[333]. This technique is used in many ancient literatures, for example, ancient Egyptian, Indian, Arabic, Persian, Greek, Latin, etc[334]. However, as for the original works of Ephraim the Syrian, madrash and memr, we find in them numerous examples of the *prosōpopoia* of the city of Nisibis, Death, Sheol, Satan, Reason, Love, etc.[335], which "give" biblical analogies and "quote" Scripture[336], but still this is different from these longue embedded stories in the speeches of biblical characters in the memra.

One of the functions of these embedded stories, as we established in the previous chapter, when we identified intertextual connections with sapiential literature, is an edifying, exhortatory, didactic function. However, the functions of insert stories are not limited to this. In our opinion,

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[332]Cf. the analogy of Abraham and Isaac, which we analyzed in 5.1.

[333] Primary and secondary narrators, respectively (*Schmid V.* Narratology... p. 79). Gérard Genette speaks here of the difference in narrative status "between the story directly told by the narrator (the 'author') and the story told within that story through the medium of one of its participants (a character or something else); In the latter case, we have a second-order history". Genette calls the first level of this opposition *diegetic and* the second *metadiegetic (Genette, J.* Shape... S. 243).

[334] A classic example is, of course, the Arabic and Persian Book of the Thousand and One Nights, in which is often presented "multi-leveled" embedded stories: one embedded story may in turn contain others.

[335]Cf. Nisibis Hymns 52–57; 67; hymns "On the Church" 9, etc.

[336] Cf., for example, how Death "quotes" numerous biblical allusions (Nisibis Hymns 67).

they also perform a “literary” function: they are used to link together various episodes from the biblical books, which, in the opinion of the exegete, are thematically related to each other. For example, the author of the memra, with the help of interpolated stories in the king's speech, draws analogies between the events of the book of the prophet Jonah, the events at the time of the flood and the trials of Job, uniting them all with the situation of a catastrophe that brings trials for the righteous and punishment for sinners. It is important to understand that, despite the seeming simplicity, such a literary-theological device, as we have already noted above, is not presented in such an explicit form in other works of Ephraim the Syrian.

Here it is necessary to make an explanation of the method of analogies in the works of Ephraim the Syrian. Analogies, comparisons, and similarities are one of the main methods traced in his literary and theological works[337]. Here is how the Syrian poet-theologian himself describes his method:

> <... > He who knows speaks with knowledge: *he compares* (ܡܫܠ) *with comparisons* (ܡܫܠܬܐ), which are full of salvation. He discerns wisely, and is silent in order to honor. He *compares* (ܡܫܠ) and *teaches* (ܝܠܦ) in order to benefit[338].

But it is usually either a question of analogies between Old Testament and New Testament events, i.e. of pro-typological exegesis, or between biblical and contemporary events of Ephraim the Syrian. Thus, for example, in the Nisibis hymns, in a speech on behalf of the city of Nisibis, it is said:

> *Compare* (ܡܫܠ) the souls in me // with the animals in the ark. // And instead of the sorrowful Noah who was in him, behold Thy altar, sorrowful and humiliated <... >Hear and weigh *my comparison* (ܡܫܠܝ) with Noah! // And if [even] my suffering is lighter than his, may Thy mercy make our salvation equal!" (Nisibis Hymns 1. 9, 11).

In this hymn, the city of Nisibis invites God to compare the events taking place in it during the third siege of the city by the Persian army of Shapur II (350), when the course of the Migdonius River was diverted to flood the city, with the events of Noah's flood. Of course, there are certain similarities with the memra: there is speech, in this case on behalf of the city, i.e., in the name of the city. *prosōpopoia*, in which the city gives a biblical example. However, there are also significant differences. First, in the memr we see “internal” analogies between Old Testament events, and not between the contemporary events of Ephraim the Syrian and the Old Testament, as in the hymns. Secondly, there is no framework from the literature of Wisdom that we have identified in our analysis of the king’s speech. Finally, perhaps the most significant difference is

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[337] *Biesen den K.* Simple and Bold: Ephrem’s Art of Symbolic Thought. Gorgias Press, 2006. (Gorgias Dissertations; 26). P. 175–186.

[338] On the Church 26, 9 (Syriac text Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Ecclesia / Beck E., Hrsg. Louvain, 1960. (CSCO; 198. Syr; 84.)). Note the intertextuality of this passage with the literature of Wisdom on silence at the proper moment (cf. Sir 20:6-7 and other verses).

the *length* of the speeches. One of the peculiarities of the memra that Sebastian Brock drew attention to when comparing the memra of Nineveh and Jonah with other surviving early memre on Old Testament subjects is the great length of this work[339]. The speeches of the characters in the memr are so lengthy that, as we noted above, the listener could simply forget whom the speech belongs to. The Syriac memra, as we will demonstrate in Chapter 3, is replete with synonymous parallelism and parallelism of repetition, with many key ideas repeated three times or more, keywords in a small piece of text repeating more than 10 times. The main characteristic of the poetic language of Ephraim the Syrian in the madrash is their capacity and conciseness, when the poet-theologian does not provide his listeners with extensive, exhaustive information, but only outlines the necessary points, creates a certain contour, or, in the language of modern cognitive linguistics, a frame, leaving the listener's mind to fill in the missing details on its own.

From the point of view of the history of the genre, it should be noted that such intra-biblical analogies in the form of interpolated stories in the speech of a biblical character are not presented in anonymous works of the genre of the "narrative memra" written around the 5th century, for example, the memre "On Abraham and Isaac", "On Abraham and Sarah in Egypt", "On Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath", "On the Signs That Moses Performed in Egypt", etc. in the early Syrian tradition. A technique similar to the "embedded stories" is used in the sogitha "On the Daughter of Jephthah" and other works.

This work, designated in the manuscript as "sogita", i.e., a dialogical poem, a subgenre of the genre "madrash" is attributed to Isaac[340]. At the moment, however, it is difficult to say which of at least three Syrian poets of the fifth and sixth centuries bearing this name was its author. As in the narrative memrs, this sogit dramatically interprets the Old Testament story, the episode of Jephthah and his daughter in the book of Judges (Judg. 11:29-40). As part of this interpretation, biblical protagonists make speeches that contain non-biblical material. Such speeches, based on the concise biblical lines of Jud. 11:36-37 are also put into the mouth of Jephthah's daughter (vv. 17-18; vv. 24-30). In one of these speeches, Jephthah, learning that her father must sacrifice her in fulfillment of a vow he made to God, comforts him by citing Abraham and Isaac as examples:

My father, do not grieve that you have made a vow to the Lord <... >*Haven't you heard what they say* (ܐ ܥܒܕ ܠܗ ܕܐܒܪܗܡ ܗܘ) *what Abraham did* when he took his only son without even revealing it to his mother? And how did the Lord bring him back home in one piece when the lamb arose on the mountain and was offered as a sacrifice? (cf. Gen. 22) (vv. 26–27).

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[339] *Brock S.* Dramatic Dialogue Poems // IV Symposium Syriacum 1984. Literary Genres in Syriac Literature (Groningen - Oosterhesselen 10-12 September) /ed. by Drijvers H., Lavenant R., Molenberg C., Reinink G. Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987. P. 134–147. (OCA; 229.). Here P. 141.

[340] Text and English translation in *Brock S.* A Soghitha on the Daughter of Jephtha, by Isaac // Hugoye. 2011. Vol. 14.1. P. 3–25.

Thus, Jephthah's daughter cites biblical events similar to her own situation. In the biblical narrative of Jephthah and his daughter, there is no mention of Abraham and Isaac. Again, then, we have an example of an "embedded story", as in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", where a biblical character gives another biblical character as an example. Note that, as in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", in the sogitha, the biblical example is introduced as a kind of oral story wandering among the Jews ("*Thou hast not heard what < say... >*"). Again, there is no implicit pro-educational typology, although the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, as well as Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, are very common motifs in Christian typological exegesis[341].

In another Syriac work, the 4th memra "On Joseph" from a cycle of four memre devoted to the life of Joseph[342], Reuven, urging his brothers not to kill Joseph, gives a speech in which he recalls the story of Cain and Abel (v. 65)[343].

Of particular importance is the fact that a similar tradition appears already in Pseudo-Philo's work Biblical Antiquities (50th–150th centuries A.D.), which has been preserved in Latin. For example, Jephthah's daughter says to her father, "< . . . >Or have you forgotten what happened in the days of our fathers, when the Father placed the Son as a burnt offering <... >?"[344]. It is necessary to emphasize not only the complete similarity in the mention of the history of Abraham and Isaac, but also the very fact of the appearance here of the extended speech of the daughter of Jephthah, who, in contrast to the biblical history, receives the name (Seylah) and becomes an active participant in the events, equal to the patriarchs.[345] In one of our articles, we drew attention to the fact that the Judeo-Hellenistic writings of Pseudo-Philo can be of great importance for understanding the context of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" [346]. One of the three synagogue Judeo-Hellenistic sermons of Pseudo-Philo that have survived to this day in Armenian, "On Jonah" [347], has a certain formal resemblance to the Syriac memra: it also contains a large number of

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[341] *Brock S.* A Soghitha on the Daughter of Jephtha... P. 7–9; *Brock S.* Genesis 22 in Syriac Tradition // Mélanges Dominique Barthélemy: Études Bibliques offert à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire / ed. by Casetti P., Keele O., Schenker A. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981.

[342] *Rodrigues Pereira A.* Two Syriac Verse Homilies on Joseph // Jahrbericht Ex Oriente Lux. 1989–1990. № 31. P. 95–120.

[343] *Ibid.* P. 108.

[344] Biblical Antiquities 40. 2: Pseudo-Philo's Liber antiquitatum Biblicarum /ed. by Kisch G. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1949. (Publications in Mediaeval Studies; 10.). P. 220. We would like to thank Elizaveta Dmitrievna Dmitrieva (St. Tikhon's Orthodox University) for pointing out this example.

[345] Cf. *Van der Horst P*. Portraits of Biblical Women in Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum // Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha. 1989. № 5. P. 29 — 46. A close attention to female images is also characteristic of Syriac memre. Cf. *Rigolio A.* Towards a History of Syriac Rhetoric in Late Antiquity // Millennium. 2022. 19 (1). P. 197–218. Here P. 200; *Brock S.* Reading Between the Lines: Sarah and the Sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis, Chapter 22) // Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night / ed. by Archer L., Fischler S. London: the Macmillan Press, 1994. P. 169–180.

[346] *Fomicheva S. V*. On the Question of the Influence of Greco-Roman Rhetoric on the Work of Ephraim the Syrian (on the Example of the Mimra "On Nineveh and Jonah") // Source Studies of Cultural Traditions of the East: Hebrew Studies – Hellenistic Studies – Syrology – Slavic Studies. Collection of Scientific Articles / Ed. by K. A. Bitner, N. S. Smelova. St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg Institute of Jewish Studies, 2016. P. 201–212.

[347] *Siegert F.* Three Hellenistic-Jewish Sermons // WUNT 20th vol. I. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1992.

monological speeches of the characters, e.g., the speeches of the sailors, Jonah, the assembly of the people, God. Unfortunately, the text remains poorly studied, with difficult to determine the date, place and time of its creation. The *terminus a quo* is taken to be the second century B.C., and the *terminus ad quem* to the fourth century A.D. The place of origin of the original may be Alexandria. The time of the appearance of the Armenian translation dates back to the heyday of the Grecophile school (the first half or, at the latest, the middle of the sixth century A.D.)[348] It is important for our study that the authors of Judeo-Hellenistic writings on biblical themes often turned to the speeches of characters as an effective rhetorical tool. Such a tradition, of course, has deep roots in ancient rhetoric.

For example, fictive speeches of historical figures appear in ancient rhetoric in the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, and other historians. These speeches use numerous examples from the mythical past and historical examples as a means of interpreting the present and predicting the future[349]. With their help, the persuasive or, conversely, persuasive function is expressed. It is possible that such speeches could have been perceived by both the Judeo-Hellenistic narrative tradition and the Syriac tradition. For example, the speech of the king of Nineveh in the memre, framed as a speech of a commander to the army, reminds us of ancient historical works[350], where direct and indirect speeches, in particular, the speeches of commanders to the army, constitute an important element of the narrative. In the speech of the king in the memra there are such typical markers of the speeches of generals belonging to the deliberative clan (*συμβουλευτικὸν γένος*). At the same time, the "embedded stories" are one of the main features of such speeches in antiquity.[351]

On the other hand, a rich narrative tradition is characteristic of Aramaic-language literature, where it developed in the form of the Targum tradition, Aramaic "translations" of the Bible with very large narrative insertions[352]. In the Targums, one can find examples that are somewhat similar to those analyzed above. Consider, for example, the Targum of pseudo-Jonathan and his interpretation of the story of Judah and Tamar (Gen 38:24-26). According to the biblical text, Tamar is to be burned for fornication. The Targumist puts into Tamar's mouth a speech not found in the biblical text, in which she prays to God to help her find three things of Judas: a seal, a sling, and a cane, which he left with her as a pledge to avoid execution:

She [i.e., Tamar] lifted up her eyes to the heights of heaven and said: "Please, Lord, by Thy mercy answer me in this hour of my affliction, and enlighten my eyes, that I may find three evidences. And I will

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[348] *Ibid.* S. 3.
[349] *Scardino C.* Design and function of speeches in Herodotus and Thucydides. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2007. (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde; 250.). Here P. 367–370.
[350] *Fomicheva S. V.* On the Question of the Influence of Greco-Roman Rhetoric... P. 206–210.
[351] *De Jong I.* Herodotus // Narrators, Narratees, and Narratives in Ancient Greek Literature. Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative // Hrsg. Von De Jong I., Nünlist R., Bowie A. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004. P. 101–114. Here P.108.
[352] Cf. *Fomicheva S. V., Bitner K. A.* Targums // Orthodox Encyclopedia. Moscow, 2022. T. 67. P. 456–470.

bring forth for you from my bosom three saints who will glorify your name and descend into the fiery furnace in the valley of Dura (cf. Dan 3)"[353].

It goes on to say that the Lord heard her plea and sent the angel Michael, who illuminated her eyes and she found three testimonies. We see that the targumist, through the speech of a biblical character, combines two episodes that are in no way connected in the Bible itself: the threat of execution by burning for Tamar and the story of the three youths in the fiery furnace from the book of Daniel. The targumist connects these episodes by analogy – in both cases, the protagonists are threatened with execution by burning, and only the miraculous intervention of God saves them.

At this stage of the study, it is difficult to say unequivocally which narrative tradition may have influenced the Syriac memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" in terms of the use of fictive speeches with "embedded stories" – Judeo-Hellenistic or Aramaic, especially since "interpolated stories" are a rather common literary tool. On the other hand, the obvious parallels between Pseudo-Philo and the Sogita of Jephthah, when the author of the Syriac Sogita probably really knew the Judeo-Hellenistic work, do not exclude the possibility that the author of the Memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" may have known certain Judeo-Hellenistic texts, such as historical works, the Letter of Aristeas, etc., and created their Christian substitute with elements of parody, so that in the end he obtained a kind of synthesis of Hellenistic and Aramaic-Syriac rhetoric with multiple functions. However, such a synthesis could have been achieved by him not intentionally, but as a result of the education he received, the reading of texts, where such a synthesis had already taken place before him.

Next, we will analyze how function in the memra the fictive speeches of characters with "embedded stories" within it.

Above we have analyzed in detail the didactic and exhortatory function of "embedded stories" in the memra, revealing their close intertextual connections with sapiential literature. We have demonstrated that the king of Nineveh is in fact a certain *pattern* of human behavior, analyzing the world around him and the text in search of patterns of appropriate behavior in this or that situation. However, it must be said that such a paradigm is not only a sign of biblical sapiential literature, but also the ancient tradition. Ancient historical writings also use numerous examples from the mythical past and historical examples as a means of interpreting the present and predicting the future. At the same time, in the biblical literature of Wisdom there is a king, but there is no general, which is present in ancient narratives. Therefore, it can be said that the memra presents a kind of synthesis of the form of ancient speech with "embedded stories", framed by the

[353] Targum Pseudo-Ionathan on Gen 38, 25.

concept of the didactic role of history from the literature of Wisdom. But the role of fictive speeches is not limited to its moral and edifying function.

Perhaps the literary device of "embedded stories" in some Syriac memre of the 4th-5th centuries should be considered within the framework of the gradual completion of the formation of the biblical canon, which took place precisely in the fourth century. Athanasius of Alexandria (d. 373), a contemporary of Ephraim the Syrian, in his 39th Paschal Epistle, first uses the word κανονιζόμενα ("canonized") and lists twenty-two canonical books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven books of the New Testament[354]. A natural consequence of the introduction of the concept of canon was the prohibition of the use of non-canonical, apocryphal books. Meanwhile, the Apocrypha also often presents fictive speeches of biblical characters. Avril Cameron, a scholar of late antiquity, has suggested that the fictive speeches in the Syriac and Greek homilies of the fourth and fifth centuries may have been a response to the prohibition of the Apocrypha[355], a kind of pious substitute for them. Perhaps the "embedded stories" in the Syriac memre can be seen as a manifestation of a certain popularization of the biblical canon, a demonstration of the unity of the Bible with the help of a form of biblical exegesis popular in the Aramaic tradition, the narrative. For example, with the help of the speeches of the characters in the memre, the close connection between the various biblical books is demonstrated: the book of Jonah, the book of Genesis, the book of Job, the book of Exodus, the book of Deuteronomy, the book of Jeremiah, the literature of Wisdom etc.

2.4. The "fictive" speeches of the characters and the liturgical *Sitz im Leben* of the memra

But there is one essential difference between the use of "embedded stories" in ancient historical writings, in sapiential literature, in the apocrypha, and in memre, namely, that the (pseudo)historical content of the memra has *a ritual, liturgical* context. From the narrator-preacher's brief address to a real audience, it follows that the memra was clearly timed to coincide with the liturgy during a certain fast:

> At the sight of that repentance (i.e., the Ninevites – S.F.), // it is ours, like a dream. // At the sight of that prayer, // this one of ours is like the shadow of <... > There are few who have forgiven // debts in this [our] fasting <... > (vv. 96–108).

The question arises, however, as to what kind of fast we are talking about.

According to Henry Burgess, one of the first researchers of the memra, the memra may have been associated either with some regular fast of the author's community or with an irregular

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[354] *Athanas. Alex.* Ep. Pash. 39.

[355] *Cameron A.* Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: The Development of Christian Discourse. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. (Sather Classical Lectures; 55.). P. 93–119; *Idem.* Disputations, polemical literature and the formation of opinion in the early Byzantine period // Cameron A. Changing cultures in Early Byzantium. Aldershot; Hampshire: Variorum Reprints, 1996. P. 91–108. (Variorum collected studies series; 536.). Here P. 96–98.

fast during some emergency[356]. However, Burgess did not make a specific assumption about what kind of post he meant. André Alleux has suggested that this refers to the Eastern Syriac liturgical phenomenon of the "fasting of the Ninevites" or "rogation of the Ninevites", [357]which arose no earlier than the sixth century. Another suggestion was made by Rodoljub Kubat, who briefly noted that the general character of the memra makes Lent the likely context for its appearance[358]. Emanuele Zimbardi notes that both the "rogation of the Ninevites" and the Great Lent fit the character of the memra, but he does not see any irrefutable facts that would prove with certainty that the text was written specifically for these liturgical phenomena[359]. According to his assumption, based primarily on verses 1377-1380, which allegedly speak of the origin of the name of the city "Nineveh" from the prophet Jonah[360], the memra could be connected with the real Nineveh-Mosul, where, according to local tradition, a monastery dedicated to the prophet Jonah was built in the 4th century (*Nabī Yūnus*)[361].

As in the case of Ephraim the Syrian, we believe that none of the scholars has provided any decisive arguments that would tip the scales in favor of this or that liturgical phenomenon. In what follows, we will analyze the "rogation of the Ninevites" and Lent as possible contexts of the Memra and prove with a high degree of probability that the *Sitz im Leben* of the Syriac Memra was Lent.

Only later sources tell about the cause, time and place of the emergence of the so-called "rogation of the Ninevites" (ܥܕܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܘܝܐ). The study of this post is beyond the scope of this dissertation, so we will limit ourselves to only the most necessary information. According to the East Syriac liturgical collection *Hudra*[362], the Ninevites' fasting first began during the reign of the Persians, during the plague epidemic that broke out in the areas of Bet Garmai, Ator, and Nineveh, i.e., there, where the book of Jonah takes place historically. The fast was appointed by Savrisho I (596-604), bishop and metropolitan of the city of Beth Sloh[363]. According to *Hudra's* narrative, the cause of the epidemic was "a large number of human sins"[364]. After the population

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[356] *Burgess H.* The Repentance of Nineveh… P. xxx.
[357] *Halleux A.* from About the Ephremian Sermon on Jonah... P. 155.
[358] *Kubat R.* Memra of Ephrem the Syrian of Jonah… P. 206.
[359] Ephrem the Syrian Sermon on Nineveh and Jonah... P. 47–49.
[360] "Bless, Jonah, our city, // which is henceforth named after you". Is there a hint to the paronomasy ܝܘܢ of (*ywnn*) (Jonah) and ܢܝܢܘܐ (*nynwh*) (Nineveh)?
[361] *Fiey J.* Christian Assyria, contribution to the study of ecclesiastical and monastic history and geography of northern Iraq. Vol. 2. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1965. P. 497–498.
[362] Tradition associates the origin of *Hudra*'s collection with Patriarch Ishoyav III (d. 657), but most of the surviving manuscripts date from no earlier than the twelfth century.
[363] Karkha de Bet Sloh, the capital of Bet Garmai Province, present-day Kirkuk in Iraq.
[364] The Syriac text in *Krüger P.* Die Regenbitten Aphrems des Syrers: ihre Überlieferung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des nestorianischen Officiums der Ninivitenfasten und ihre religionsgeschichtliche Bedeutung // Oriens christianus. 1933. Ser. 3, vol. 8. P. 13–61, 144–151. Here S. 34.

demonstrated repentance and fasted, the epidemic stopped. After such a miraculous rescue, it was decided that this fast should henceforth be observed annually.

In terms of time, the "fast of the Ninevites" begins on the 20th day before Lent and lasts for three or four days from Monday to Thursday. The main days of the rogation are Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and the Eucharist is celebrated on Thursday[365].

In our opinion, there were in the VI-VII centuries at least two processes that may have contributed to the emergence of the "rogation of the Ninevites". First, it was during this period that the identity of Eastern Syrian Christians was formed. As part of this process, for example, the idea that Syrian Christians are descendants of the biblical Assyrians has emerged[366]. The "rogation of the Ninevites" with its clear imitation of biblical events, may have been part of this process. Secondly, it was in the sixth century that a new liturgical phenomenon arose in various Churches – the preparatory fast, which began three weeks before Great Lent, which corresponds to the beginning of the "rogation of the Ninevites" in the Eastern Syriac tradition. For example, in the Catholic Church, there is *Septuagesima*, the third Sunday before Lent. It is therefore possible that the Syriac liturgical phenomenon was part of the general liturgical development of the epoch, but it received a special, local justification in the Syriac tradition. The most important conclusion for our study that we can draw from the above analysis is that the liturgical phenomenon of the "rogation of the Ninevites" apparently could not have arisen earlier than the sixth century.

The text of the memra under study became one of the main readings during the liturgy of the "fast of the Ninevites" in both the Nestorian and Jacobite Syriac communities[367]. However, this does not mean that the text *was originally* intended for this post. In our opinion, on the contrary, it was one of the factors in the appearance of this post at a much later time. Of the discrepancies with the "rogation of the Ninevites" it should also be mentioned that while this fast lasts *three* days, the memrah constantly speaks of a fasting period of *forty* days or six weeks; while the fast of the Ninevites was declared as a result of an *epidemic*, the memrah speaks of *an earthquake*.

In our opinion, a number of arguments speak in favor of the fact that the memra was originally performed during the Lent. Firstly, the memra repeatedly emphasizes not only the duration of the Ninevites' fasting and repentance of forty days, as in the Hebrew text and the Peshitta, but also *the duration of six weeks* (vv. 1079, 1264, 1301, 1381), which corresponds to the

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[365] *Ibid.* S. 37.

[366] *Becker A.* The Ancient Near East in the Late Antique Near East: Syriac Christian Appropriation of the Biblical East // Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World / ed. by Gardner G. and Osterloh K. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008. (Texts and studies in ancient Judaism;123.). P. 394−415.

[367] *Brock S.* Ephrem's Verse Homily on Jonah... P. 73. The earliest evidence of this use of memra dates back to the twelfth century (*Ibid.*, P. 74, 85).

designation of the duration of Quadragesima. Secondly, the ascetic character of the virtues of the Ninevites, such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving, walking barefoot, self-abasement, sexual abstinence, etc., correspond to the ascetic character of the Quadragesima. Third, the fasting of the biblical Ninevites, together with the forty-day fasts of Moses and Elijah, which are also mentioned in the memra (vv. 749-750), serves as the usual justification for Quadragesima in early Christian literature[368]. Fourth, one of the most important proofs of the fact that the memra is associated with the Lent is the very communal nature of the action described in the memre, the constant emphasis on the unity of the community in repentance, and the repeated use of the pronoun "we". As Derek Kruger demonstates on the example of Byzantine hymnographic compositions for the period of the Lent, it is with the help of such characteristics that these texts expressed the idea of universal repentance during Lent [369]. In this case, the memra should be considered one of the earliest Syrian examples of the use of this idea of "communality". Fifth, the key factor is the fact that it is Lent that can explain the choice of Old Testament biblical examples in the memra and the very choice of the book of Jonah as the basis for interpretation.

From the madrasha "On the Fasting" by Ephraim the Syrian himself, we learn that the Lent[370] was a time of intense biblical readings, when "in the middle of the fast of the Scriptures came together <... >" [371]. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact range of these biblical readings in the Syriac tradition of the fourth century, but we do know what was read during the same period in Jerusalem, Milan, and Antioch. For example, Ambrose of Milan, in his letter of 385, mentions the custom of reading the book of Jonah on Holy Thursday[372]. In the ancient Jerusalem lectionaries of the 5th-8th centuries, the book of the Prophet Jonah was read in its entirety as a paremia at Vespers on Great Saturday[373]. From the homilies "On the Statues" by John Chrysostom that we have already mentioned, where numerous examples are given from the book of the prophet Jonah, we can conclude that in Antioch of the fourth century this book was one of the Lenten readings.

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[368]Cf.: *Lorgeoux O.* Lent I. Christianity. A. Patristics and Orthodox Church (Art.) // Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception. Vol. 16. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2016. P. 103–104. Here P. 104.

[369] *Krueger D.* Liturgical Subjects: Christian Ritual, Biblical Narrative, and the Formation of the Self in Byzantium. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014. P. 130–196.

[370] The hymns "On the Fasting" by Ephraim the Syrian are designated in manuscripts as "On the Holy Fast" (ܕܝܘܡܐ ܕܨܘܡܐ) or "On the Holy Fast of the Forty [Days]" (ܕܝܘܡܐ ܕܨܘܡܐ ܕܐܪܒܥܝܢ), "On the Fast of the Forty [Days]", which corresponds to the Greek ἁγία τεσσαρακοστή. As "ܕܝܘܡܐ ܕܨܘܡܐ ܕܐܪܒܥܝܢ" is translated Greek τεσσαρακοστή in the Syriac translation of the "Church Canons of the Great Council of Nicaea" (according to the manuscript of Sir. 34 from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences) (Smelova N.C. Canons of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea on manuscripts of Syr. 34 From the collection of the Institute of Oriental Monuments of the Russian Academy of Sciences // Written Monuments of the East. 2009. 2 (11). S. 42–65. Here P. 62–63, footnote. 162. The very passage of the Greek text is disputed, since it may refer not to the Lent, but to the fortieth day after Easter, i.e. the Ascension. The Syriac translator clearly understands the text as an indication of the Forty Days of Lent (we thank E.N. Meshcherskaya for pointing out this article).

[371] Hymns "On the Fasting" 6, 1.

[372] Ambrose of Milan Ep. 20, 25–26.

[373] *Renoux Ch.* Armenian Lectionary. P. 301; *Tarchnischvili M.* Great Lectionary. vol. 1. P. 111.

From the Syriac later lectionaries we learn that in the monastery of St. Matthew of the Syriac Church in Mosul, the 1st and 2nd chapters of the Book of Jonah were read on Holy Saturday (after the story of Abraham and Isaac, Gen 22:1-19)[374].

It should be noted that not only the book of the prophet Jonah, but also other Old Testament books: the Book of Psalms, the Book of Genesis, the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Proverbs of Solomon become the main reading during the period of the Lent. It is possible that the very nature of the choice of readings during the Lent, with its special attention to the Old Testament books, determined the Old Testament context, which, as we have repeatedly emphasized, prevails in the Syrian memra "On Nineveh and Jonah". For example, the presence of Old Testament examples in the nested speeches in the memre that we have analyzed in this chapter — the example of Abraham and Isaac, the story of Noah and the flood, of Job, the use of allusions to the Psalms and the book of Proverbs in the speeches of the Ninevites and the king of Nineveh — all can be explained by the corresponding Old Testament readings. Anti-Jewish criticism can also have its source in Old Testament readings: for example, the reading of the prophecy of Isaiah (1:1-20), which offers a vivid diatribe by the prophet to ungrateful Israel who has forgotten her God, corresponds to the author's anti-Jewish intention and his use of similar passages from other prophetic books.

It should be remembered that the Lent, as a general church practice, arose precisely in the fourth century, after the decisions of the Council of Nicaea. Thus, for the author of the memra it was a new liturgical phenomenon that could require the emergence of new liturgical literary genres.

In this regard, the identification of the liturgical context of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is important not only for this work, but also for the emergence of the genre of narrative memra as a whole. The fact is that the context of the appearance of poetic memre remains a mystery to this day. The only evidence of contemporaries is that Jerome of Stridon mentioned in 392 that "his (i.e., Ephraim the Syrian – S.F.) homilies (*sermones*) are read in some churches after the Holy Scriptures"[375]. Of course, it is not clear from this brief account which works are meant here by *sermones*. Perhaps it is said about memre. Most of the Syriac memre and sogyāthā, including the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", have come down to us in the liturgical manuscripts, the earliest of which dates back to the ninth century[376]. Many of them are timed to coincide with the

[374] *Baumstark A.* Nichtevangelische syrische Perikopenordnungen des ersten Jahrtausends. Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1921. P. 45.
[375] Hieron. De vir. illustr. 115.
[376] *Brock S.* Disputations in Syriac Literature // Disputation Literature in the Near East and Beyond / ed. by Jiménez E., Mittermayer C. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. P. 159–174. Here P. 172.

celebration of the Nativity-Epiphany and the Bright Week[377]. However, this does not mean that this was the original context of the memra.

Sebastian Brock and other researchers have suggested that the memre may have been recited during the night vigils that preceded major holidays[378]. But this hypothesis is based, in fact, on only two circumstances: on the psychological factor that such "entertaining" texts could successfully prevent people from falling asleep during the night services, and on a comparison with the kontakion of Romanos the Melodist, which is known for sure to be performed during night vigils[379]. Both circumstances are not conclusive evidence in the case of Syrian narrative memre. The researchers of memre often note that that there is little or no reference to their liturgical context in these works[380]. However, the question arises as to what is meant by such indications. The liturgical context may not be explicitly named, but there may be implicit features of it that derive from the very nature of the text[381]. Using the example of one of the liturgical poems of the Jewish liturgical poet of the late 5th and early 6th centuries, Jannaeus notes that liturgical poetry appears at the intersection of three vectors: one points to the biblical past (exegesis), another to God (prayer), and the third to the community (rhetoric).[382] All three vectors are represented in many Syrian memrs, indicating their homiletic character.

If the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" was indeed written in the fourth century, and its liturgical *Sitz im Leben* is the Lent, then this may provide a clue to the origins of the genre as a whole: it is possible that narrative memre were originally indeed used during night vigils, but specifically during Lent.

Having identified the probable liturgical context of the memra, we will continue to analyze the functions of nested stories in this work.

If we consider the speeches of the characters and the "embedded" stories in them in a liturgical context, they assume, in addition to their moral and pedagogical function, another dimension, one might say, *magical*. In the author's opinion, events from the mythical past, connected by analogies with modern events, can *have an impact* to these events, to become these events themselves. Not only does the audience have to identify with the fictive protagonists and

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377 *Ibid*., P. 170–171.
378 *Brock S.* Disputations... P. 171.
379 *Krueger D.* Liturgical Subjects… P. 30.
380 *Brock S.* Dramatic Narrative Poems on Biblical Topics in Syriac // Studia Patristica. 2010. 45. P. 183–196. Here P. 185; *Rodrigues Pereira A.* Two Syriac Verse Homilies on Joseph // Jahrbericht Ex Oriente Lux. 1989–1990. № 31. P. 95–120. Here P. 102–103 et al.
381 Cf., for example, the study of Zvi Novik, who proves the liturgical character of the biblical books of Ruth and Tobit: *Novick T.* Liturgy and the First Person in Narratives of the Second Temple Period // Prooftexts. 2012. Vol. 32. № 3. P. 269–291.
382 *Novick T.* The Poetics of Yannai's Sixth: Between Scripture, God, and Congregation // Giving a Diamond: Essays in Honor of Joseph Yahalom on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday / ed. by van Bekkum W., Katsumata N. Leiden: Brill, 2011. P. 69–81. Here P. 69.

take them as a model of ideal moral behavior, but the narrative itself, with its magical function, *will make* them act that way, and as a result, they will receive the same miraculous salvation from God as Noah, like Job, like the people of Nineveh.

In order to better understand what this is all about, it is useful to recall such ancient texts as the so-called *historiola*[383]. The term is used for a range of texts, which are brief narrative extensions in magic spells found among a wide variety of peoples, such as Babylon, ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, Coptic and Syrian Christians. One of their main elements was to establish an analogy between ancient mythical events that had already taken place and modern ones that had not yet been resolved. In texts of this type, as the researchers formulate, there was a "performative transition of the power contained in the narrative to the human present" [384]. The very pronunciation of the narrative thus became a cult action capable of influencing the favorable outcome of a crisis situation. Functionally, this is not much different from what the author of the Nineveh and Jonah memra does. When the Nineveh fathers comfort their children, their comfort becomes a prophecy that eventually comes true. Mirrored to the real communicative level, the very recitation of the memra could become a prophecy of a favorable outcome from a crisis situation.

At the same time, it follows from the text that the author clearly understands an important feature of a catastrophic situation — the possibility of its recurrence, its relevance at almost any time[385]. That is why he chooses such a form for his work – a combination of "historicism" with a timeless perspective. The "embedded stories" are a key element of this strategy. These include identification not only between the protagonists and the original audience of the memra, but also with any other audience in the later period. The "embedded stories" become a tool that triggers the mechanism of eternal repetition of the content of the memra. The biblical precedent for this idea is the allusion to sapiential literature, where it is about the transmission of information from generation to generation. And so it really happened, because, as we said above, the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" began to be used during the liturgy of the so-called "rogation of the Ninevites" and is still used in both the Eastern and Western Syrian Churches.

So, we can distinguish four functions of the "embedded stories" in the memra:

- edifying and exhorting;

-(pseudo)historical;

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[383] The importance of these texts for the understanding of Jewish and Syriac narrative liturgical works was first pointed out by Ophir Münz-Manor: *Münz-Manor O.* Narrating Salvation: Verbal sacrifices in Late Antique Liturgical Poetry // Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire: The Poetics of Power in Late Antiquity / ed. by Dohrmann N., Reed A. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. P. 154–166. Here P. 160.

[384] *Frankfurter D.* Narrating Power: The Teory and Practice of the Magical Historiola in Ritual Spells //in Ancient Magic and Ritual Power / Meyer M., Mirecki P. Leiden: Brill, 1995. P. 464.

[385] Cf. "This holiday is great! The memory of him *in all generations* (ܕܒܟܠ ܕܪܐ ܘܕܪܐ ܢܫܒܚ). // One generation will tell the next (ܕܪܐ ܠܕܪܐ ܢܫܒܚ ܥܒܕܟ) (cf. Ps 77(78), 6) // of our sorrow and of our salvation" (vv. 1385-1388).

- expressing the unity of the Bible (literary);
- ritual (liturgical).

Conclusions of the chapter 2

Perhaps the theological idea underlying the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" – the righteous will be saved and the wicked will be punished – is not the most difficult, but its artistic implementation in the memra is sophisticated. The author of the memra knows the Old Testament very well, as well the connections between the books in it, he is guided by the weakest "signals". In this chapter we have considered examples from which it is clear that the Syriac poet-theologian superimposes on the biblical story of the prophet Jonah and the Ninevites the "matrix" of the literature of Wisdom, and the meaning of the Syriac work can only be understood by discerning this method. At the same time, we are talking not only about borrowing keywords, quotes or allusions, but about borrowings of structural and functional ones. We do not have any textbooks of rhetoric from fourth-century Syria, and we do not know how the text was perceived by its listeners, but it can be assumed that the "clue", the discovery of this principle of the construction of the memra on the model of the literature of Wisdom, may have evoked in the listeners a certain aesthetic feeling.

But the recognition of the "model" had more than just an aesthetic function. The use of the literature of Wisdom in the meme sets a certain principle of cognition of the surrounding reality. The definition of Marvin Minsky, the developer of the frame theory, which is increasingly used in cognitive research, including literary criticism, is quite applicable to what the Syrian poet-theologian is doing. For example, the researcher writes: "... a person, trying to cognize a situation that is new to him, or to look at things that are already familiar in a new way, selects from his memory a certain structure of data (an image), which we call a frame, in such a way that, by changing individual details in it, he will make it suitable for the understanding of a wider class of phenomena or processes"[386]. Likewise, the king of Nineveh in the memra uses a method from the literature of Wisdom as a "frame" for his knowledge of a new situation, the preaching of the prophet Jonah. And according to the framework of the identification of the real and the depicted in the memra, it seems that the listener of the memra must also (co)work with the biblical text.

After the analysis, it is time to clarify the concept of exegesis of the Holy Scriptures in memre. In the first chapter, we said that scholars define the type of exegesis represented in the Nineveh and Jonah memr and other similar works as "*narrative exegesis*". However, can we even speak of the exegesis of the book of Jonah in memre? The point is that the definition of narrative exegesis speaks only of the *form of* interpretation in the form of a "narrative" but not of *the content of* the exegesis. In terms of content, as we have shown above, the memra is not at all devoted to the

[386] *Minsky M.* Frames... P. 5.

exegesis of the biblical book of the prophet Jonah, as it would seem from its name; Biblical material in the work is used, rather, as an illustration to reveal certain ideological positions of the author, in particular, anti-Jewish criticism, combined with criticism of one's own Christian community, with its perception of crisis situations. At the same time, the author's special interpretation stems from certain exegetical motifs typical for the interpretation of the book of the prophet Jonah, such as the confrontation between pagans and Jews, the virtuous behavior of the Ninevites, the likening of Nineveh to the Church, the reception of the Good News, etc.

We have shown that the author of the memra is well versed in the Old Testament and understands the intertextual connections between the individual books of the Bible, which have only recently been recognized by modern scholars. Thus, he is well aware of the role that the literature of Wisdom played in the prophetic discourse and ideas about the chosenness of the Jewish people in Deuteronomy, and he places the book of Jonah in this set of ideas. His paraphrase of the book of Jonah in the memra is perfectly correct from the point of view of the Bible, it does not contradict the logic of the Holy Scriptures in any way, it is not at all *fantastic*, as Winfried Cramer, Uwe Steffen and other researchers believed. It is not a matter of fantasy, but of the fact that, to use Zvi Novik's expression, we can say that the interpretation of the Bible by the author of the memra *is not exegetically* unconditioned[387]. For example, he calls the Ninevites "descendants of Canaan", and this is quite true from the point of view of the Bible. But *none* of the Christian or Jewish writers before him used this definition. In this way, the author of the memra uses the possibilities inherent in the Bible, which remain untapped for other interpreters, who are "bound" by the predetermination of exegetical moves. In other words, his "repertoire" of choice of possibilities for interpreting the biblical text is greater than that of those exegetes who are rigidly bound by tradition. Hence, it can be said that in his interpretation More individual traits are revealed. Of course, the author of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is not unique, but until recently such cases did not attract much attention from scholars who were devoted to the "serious" theological topics in commentaries and treatises. It is only recently that attempts have been made to define "exegesis" similar to that used in the Syriac memre, such as "involved exegesis" and "incidental exegesis".

The concept of the "engaged exegesis" (*l'exégèse engagée*) was applied by the French researcher Judith Kecskeméti on the basis of the Greek homilies of pseudo-John Chrysostom. These homilies, like the Syriac memre, represent a narrative, often accompanied by fictive speeches of the characters. In order to determine the type of exegesis represented in these texts, the researcher introduces a distinction between "objective exegesis" (*l'exégèse objective*) and

[387] *Novick T.* Ritual and Rhetoric among Jews, Christians, and Samaritans: Two Comparative Observations // Oqimta. 2020. № 6. P. 23–39. Here P. 31.

"engaged exegesis" (*l'exégèse engagée*). In the first approach, the exegete's task is to explain the text in terms that are more understandable to the addressees. In the second approach, the exegete, instead of explaining the text, uses it to demonstrate his own ideas[388].

A second useful definition, in our opinion, is the notion of "implicit exegesis" and "*incidental exegesis*", which are used to define a particular kind of exegesis in some post-biblical Jewish writings. The "implicit" exegesis, i.e., "hidden" exegesis, is represented in works that cannot be fully called "exegetical" because their author has no explicit intention to comment on the biblical text. Such works include, for example, historical works, prayers, hymns, literature of Wisdom, etc.[389] Gabriel Barzilai clarifies this definition of "implicit exegesis" by introducing the concept of "*incidental exegesis*"[390]. Such exegesis, according to the researcher, is an unintentional, often very fragmentary, commentary on biblical verse, in works that are not strictly exegetical, but written for other educational and religious purposes. At the same time, there may be some points of contact with "traditional" exegesis, since the interpreter, when writing his work, keeps in mind a system of views and imagery that is generally known to him and his audience[391], in other words, a "frame". To some extent, this can also be applied to memre: some traditional exegetical motifs of the interpretation of the book of the prophet Jonah are found in the memre, but often they are rather fragmentary. which can only be completed by knowing other works that represent a real exegesis of the book of the prophet Jonah.

In general, the interpretation of the Holy Scripture in the memra is distinguished by the following features:

1) The main difference between the exegesis of the biblical book of the prophet Jonah in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" from the madrashe of Ephraim the Syrian "On Jonah" and from the Greek and Latin theological commentaries of the 4th-6th centuries is the choice of a moral interpretation of biblical events instead of typological exegesis, which is manifested in Syriac terminology by the example of the following change in semantics: such terms as ܕܡܘܬܐ ,ܨܠܡܐ and others, signifying in the framework of typological exegesis "type, type, likeness" in the memra receive the meanings of "(moral) example, pattern (of proper or improper) behavior".

2) Memra is characterized by a high degree of freedom of interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, almost a "literary" treatment. It derives its source from a good knowledge of the connections between the individual biblical narratives and seems to have been reinforced by the

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[388] *Kecskeméti J.* Chrysostomian Exegesis and Committed Exegesis // Studia Patristica. 1989. Vol. 22. P. 136–147. Here P. 136–139.
[389] *Kugel J.* Some Instances of Biblical Interpretation in the Hymns and Wisdom Writings of Qumran // Studies in Ancient Midrash /ed. by Kugel J. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2001. P. 155–169.
[390] *Barzilai G.* Incidental Biblical Exegesis in The Qumran Scrolls and Its Importance for The Study of The Second Temple Period // Dead Sea Discoveries. 2007. 14. 1. P. 1–24. Here P. 2.
[391] *Ibid.* P. 2.

author's particular reading circle – (Judeo)-Hellenistic and/or Aramaic narrative texts, apocrypha, etc.

3) Intentional (pseudo)historicity of the narrative: an average appearance of the city with various social strata, professions, objects of "real" space – roads, houses, city walls, and, nevertheless, *no* unambiguous references to a particular city. The author deliberately describes *any* city at *any* historical moment in a catastrophic situation.

4) The role of visual descriptions in the memra: Anti-Jewish criticism in the memra is presented *exclusively through the eyes* of the characters, the prophet Jonah and the Ninevites, and not on behalf of the author-theologian, as in the commentary.

Chapter 3. The rhetorical form of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah"

As we shall demonstrate in this chapter, the memr presents a rich rhetorical form. There is hardly a single verse that does not present some kind of trope or rhetorical figure. The methodological problem is that we have no evidence of the existence of any textbooks on Syriac rhetoric in the early period of its development, similar to the ancient collections known as *progymnasmata*[392]. We can find certain rhetorical figures and tropes in Syriac writings, but we don't know if they had any special names, we don't know how the Syrians defined them. Therefore, we will describe the rhetoric of the memra using traditional terminology based on the ancient rhetorical tradition and biblical rhetoric.

It should be noted that there is still no complete description of early Syriac rhetoric until the sixth century, when translations of Aristotle's works into Syriac and original Syriac works on grammar and philosophy appeared[393]. Existing works by Leo Hafley, Andrew Palmer, Phil Botha, Robert Murray, Sebastian Brock, Kathleen McVie, Jeffrey Weeks, Robert Phenix, and others [394], consecrated to various aspects of the rhetoric of the works of Aphraates, Ephraim the Syrian, Narsai, and Balai, nevertheless, do not give an exhaustive picture of the emergence and development of Syrian rhetoric.

A rhetorical analysis of Syriac writings before the sixth century, when the influence of the ancient tradition on Syriac literature becomes apparent, may show the influence on Syriac rhetoric of various traditions, both Hellenistic and local, Judeo-Aramaic[395], which until recently remained virtually undescribed. However, in the last decade, a number of works by the younger generation

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[392] As one of the earliest attempts to create such a textbook in Syrian Edessa, researchers consider a collection of passages from various ancient texts in a 7th-century Syriac manuscript. BL Add. 14,658. See: *King D.* Origenism in Sixth Century Syria: The Case of a Syriac Manuscript of Pagan Philosophy // Origenes und sein Erbe in Orient und Okzident / ed by Fürst A. Münster: Aschendorff, 2010. P. 179–212. The first fundamental work on Syriac rhetoric, the Rhetoric of Antonius Tagrit, appears only in the ninth century (*Eskenasy P.* Antony of Tagrit's Rhetoric Book One: Introduction, Partial Translation, and Commentary, unpublished PhD. thesis, Harvard University, 1991).

[393] *Watt J.* Grammar, rhetoric, and the enkyklios paideia in Syriac // Journal of the German Oriental Society. 1993. Vol. 143. P. 45–71.

[394] *Haefeli L.* Stilmittel bei Afrahat dem Persichen Weisen. Leipzig: G/J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1932; *Palmer A.* A Single Human Being Divided in Himself: Ephraim the Syrian, the Man in the Middle // Hugoye. 1998. Vol. 1.2. P. 119–163; *Botha P.* The Poetic Face of Rhetoric: Ephrem's Polemics against the Jews and Heretics in Contra Haereses XXV // Acta Patristica et Byzantina. 1991. № 2. P. 16–36; *Idem.* Antithesis and Argument in the Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian // Hervormde teologiese studies. 1988. №44. P. 581–595; *McVey K.* The Memra of Narsai on the Three Nestorian Doctors as an example of forensic rhetoric // Orientalia Christiana Analecta. № 49. 1983. P. 87–96; *Murray R.* Hellenistic-Jewish Rhetoric in Aphrahat // Orientalia Christiana Analecta. № 221. 1983. P. 79–85; *Idem.* Some Rhetorical Patterns in Early Syriac Literature // A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus / Ed. by Robert H. Fischer. Chicago: the Lutheran School of Theology, 1977; *Phenix R.* The Sermons on Joseph of Balai of Qenneshrin.Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008; *Rodrigues Pereira A.* Studies in Aramaic Poetry C. 100 B.c.e.-c. 600 C.e: Selected Jewish, Christian and Samaritan Poems. Leiden: Brill, 2018. (Studia Semitica Neerlandica; 34.) et al.

[395] *Rigolio A.* Towards a History of Syriac Rhetoric… P. 197–218.

of Israeli scholars, such as Ofir Müntz Manor[396], Zvi Novik[397], as well as the American scholar Laura Lieber, [398] have appeared, in which the rhetoric of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek liturgical texts of late antiquity has appeared. These scholars often draw on Syriac Christian literature for comparison, which allows them to see a wider palette of rhetorical possibilities. Analysis The rich rhetorical form of the Syriac memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" can be a valuable contribution to the study of early Syriac rhetoric and the rhetoric of poetic liturgical works of late Antiquity in general.

3.1. The rhetorical figures in the memra

One of the main rhetorical figures used in memr is **parallelism**. Since Robert Lauth, who first defined biblical parallelism[399], *parallelismus membrorum* has been described in three broad categories: *synonymous* parallelism (proposition B repeats proposition A in other words); *synthetic* parallelism (statement B complements statement A) and *antithetical* parallelism (statement B expresses the opposite of statement A). Since Lauth, the problem of parallelism has been dealt with by many researchers from different points of view, making changes to this original classification. For example, James Kugel believed that the expression "synonymous parallelism" did not adequately describe the phenomenon[400]. In his view, proposition B always goes a little further than proposition A. Therefore, according to Kugel, there are two main kinds of parallelism: synthetic and antithetical.

A good, though not exhaustive, classification of parallelism, which we will use in our study, was proposed by L.A. Schökel[401]. Thus he takes into account the following parameters:

1. **Number** of parallel lines: double, triple, quadruple, etc.
2. **Level**: Two or more half-verses, verses, couplets, or stanzas.
3. **Logical** relations: synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic parallelism. Regarding this parameter, Schöckel notes that there can be more subsections.

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[396] *Münz-Manor O.* Narrating Salvation…; *Idem.* Soundscapes of Salvation: Resounding Refrains in Jewish and Christian Liturgical Poems // Studies in Late Antiquity. 2019. vol. 3. P. 36–55; *Idem.* Liturgical Poetry in the Late Antique Near East: A Comparative Approach // Journal of Ancient Judaism. 2010. Vol. 1 (3). P. 336–361; *Idem.* Jewish and Christian Dispute Poems on the Relationship between the Body and the Soul // Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature. 2013. № 25. P. 187–209 [in Hebrew] et al.

[397] *Novick T.* Scripture as Rhetor: A Study in Early Rabbinic Midrash // Hebrew Union College Annual. 2011–2012. Vol. 82–83. P. 37–59; *Idem.* Liturgy and the First Person in Narratives of the Second Temple Period // Prooftexts. 2012. Vol. 32. № 3. P. 269–291; *Idem.* Ritual and Rhetoric among Jews, Christians, and Samaritans: Two Comparative Observations // Oqimta. 2020. № 6. P. 23–39 et al.

[398] *Lieber L.* Jewish Aramaic poetry from late antiquity: Translations and commentaries// Etudes Sur Le Judaisme Medieval.2018. 75, 1–245; *Idem.* Theater of the Holy: Performative Elements of Late Ancient Hymnography // Harvard Theological Review. 2015. Vol. 108(3). P. 327–355; *Idem.* The rhetoric of participation: Experiential elements of early hebrew liturgical poetry // Journal of Religion. 2010. Vol. 90(2). P. 119–147; *Idem*. The Exegesis of Love: Text and Context in the Poetry of the Early Synagogue // Review of Rabbinic Judaism. 2008. Vol. 11. P. 73–99 et al.

[399] *Lowth R.* Isaiah. A New Translation with a Preliminary Dissertation and Notes. London, 1778.

[400] *Kugel J.* The Idea of Biblical Poetry. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1981. P. 8–12.

[401] *Schökel L.* A Manual of Hebrew Poetics. Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1988. P. 52–57.

4. **Completeness of** parallelism: whether all words in parallel text elements correspond to each other.

5. **Double and triple** repetitions: one of the elements of a parallel pair can, in turn, form a series of synonymous statements.

A classification of types of parallelism based on imagery in parallel elements was also proposed by the Russian researcher A. S. Desnitsky[402]. Its model takes into account the logical relationships between two parallel elements of the text (unity, juxtaposition, and interaction with subsections); basic concurrency functions; the degree of implicitness/explicitness of images in parallelism; the degree of closeness of the two concepts (expectation/surprise); polysemy ("Janus parallelism"); change of context ("reverse parallelism"). In our work, we will also use Desnicki's classification, especially as it relates to the logical relationships between parallel elements.

As for Aramaic poetry, in addition to synthetic and antithetical parallelism, it is characterized by another, special kind of synthetic parallelism: the parallelism of *repetition*[403]. It seems, as we shall show, that Syriac poetry inherits these principles.

All three types of parallelism are represented in the memre, but not all with the same frequency. For example, **synthetic parallelism** in its pure form is quite rare:

Example 1.

He is not afraid (ܕܚܠ ܠܐ) of the military commander when he bandages him and makes an incision in him.
He does not tremble (ܪܓܙ ܠܐ) before the hero, // when his power is weakened by cauterization (vv. 727-730).

Example 2.

The sea was disturbed (ܥܓܥ) when he (i.e., Jonah) fled. // The dry land trembled (ܪܓܙ) as he preached (vv. 13-14).

Example 3.

The fish that swallowed him was mighty (ܪܒܝܐ), and the king who listened to him was mighty (ܪܒܝܐ).
The fish prepared the way for him (ܩܕܡ ܠܗ ܐܬܪܐ), and the king cleared the way (ܦܬܚ ܠܗ ܡܫܥܐ) (v. 1541–1544).

Example 4.

There was a storm (ܣܥܪܬܐ) in the abyss, // and in the city there was great turmoil (ܪܓܫܐ) (v. 1533–1534).

Example 5.

Their rulers are wicked (ܫܠܝܛ), // their judges are deceitful (ܓܕܫ).
Their stinginess (ܩܡܨܢܘܬܗ) is like fire (ܐܝܩܕܬܐ), // and their greed (ܩܡܨܢܘܬܗ) is gehenna (ܓܗܢܡ).
Their poor are the abyss (ܡܣܟܝܢ), // and the rich are the throat (ܡܥܠܩ).
Like a stove (ܟܐܢܘܢܐ) — a borrower (ܡܫܠܐ), // and a lender (ܡܫܠܡ ܐܢܫ) — like Satan (art. 1789–1796).

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[402] *Desnitsky A. S.* Principles of Parallelism's Classification (Based on the Material of the Old Testament) // Izvestiya RAN. Literature and Language Series. 2007. T. 66. № 5. P. 1–8.

[403] *Greenfield J.* Early Aramaic Poetry // Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society. 1979. Vol. 11. Issue 1. 1979. P. 45–51. Here P. 47, 48.

Antithetical parallelism is much more common:

Example 1.

He crossed the sea, *descending*, // and the land, *ascending* <... >.
On the wet road he *descended*, // and on the land he *ascended* (vv. 1529-1536).

Example 2.

Under the earth he *was humbled*, // and on it he *was exalted*.
The lot in the sea *accused him*, // the city on the land *praised him* (vv. 1521-1524).

The largest series of antitheses, as we mentioned in chapter 3, are used to express the author's anti-Jewish intent:

Example 3.

He (i.e., the prophet Jonah – S.F.) saw that the seed of Canaan was corrected, // and the seed of Jacob walked in bad ways.
He saw the uncircumcised circumcise their hearts, // and the circumcised harden their hearts (vv. 905-908).

It is not uncommon for **synthetic and antithetical parallelism** to be combined:

Example 1.

Jonah went down to the sea (and) *stirred* it up (ܥܒܥ). // *Went up* on the dry land and *disturbed* it (ܫܠܓ) (vv. 11-12).

But the most common type of parallelism in a memra is **repetitive parallelism**:

Example 1. Lexical repetition in the form of anaphora "he is not afraid" is repeated 3 times:

He is not afraid (ܠܐ ܕܚܠ) of the king either, // to say these things to him when he is sick.
He is not afraid of the king's son, // gives him a powerful medicine to drink.
He is not afraid of the commander // when he bandages him and cuts him (vv. 723-728).

Example 2.

Lexical repetition in the form of the epiphora "big" in each half-verse:

He prayed in a *large fish* (ܪܒܬܐ), and the Ninevites in a *large city* (ܪܒܬܐ) (vv. 17-18).

Example 3. Lexical repetition in the form of anaphora. Each anaphora is repeated 2 times:

By these (ܒܗܠܝܢ) let your mind be exalted, // that all acknowledge your God.
In this (ܒܗܠܝܢ) let your mind be comforted, // that the city and its king serve you.
*Look (*ܚܙܝ) at the children who have been saved, // and pray again for their lives!
Look (ܚܙܝ) at the infants who have been preserved, // and put your hand on their heads!
Bless (ܒܪܟ) the city that has been preserved, // so that the memory of you may grow in it!
Bless (ܒܪܟ) Jonah, our city, // which is henceforth named after you (vv. 1369-1379).

Example 4.

God *showed the way* (ܐܘܕܥ ,ܐܠ) // the fish *how it* (should) (ܐܟ) swim.
The king *showed the way* (ܐܘܕܥ ,ܐܠ) // the prophet *how he* (should) (ܐܟ) ride (v. 1551–1554).

Example 4.

Tammuz, who disappeared from our land, // *how* is he *here* (ܐܟ ܗܟܐ) mourned again?
The star Venus, which we have rejected, // *how* is it *served here* (ܐܟ ܗܟܐ)? (p. 1823–1826).

Example 3.

Jonah *counted* (ܡܢ) the days, // and the Ninevites *counted* (ܡܢ) their sins.
Jonah *calculated* (ܚܫܒ) the nights, // and Nineveh *calculated* (ܚܫܒ) her evil deeds (vv. 1075-1078).

In each half-verse, one word is repeated, and in the next half-verse, its synonym is used, i.e., we have synthetic parallelism and parallelism of repetitions.

Example 5.

Lexical repetition with the anaphora "there was":

There was also (ܐܝܬ ܟܠ) avarice, // and its commodity, greed.
There was excess, // and her sister, drunkenness.
There was depravity, // and that which was in the same yoke as her, adultery.
There was deceit, // and its cousin, theft.
There was an incantation, // and her initiate, sorcery.
There was magic // and its confidant, divination.
There was open wickedness, // and his spouse, manifest vice (vv. 1767-1780).

Example 6.

Lexical repetition with anaphora ܚܙܐ " he (i.e. Jonah) saw":

When Jonah saw (ܗܕܐ ܚܙܐ) (this), he was seized with terror, // he was ashamed of the sons of his people.
In the Ninevites *he saw* (ܚܙܐ) victory, // and over the seed of Abraham he wept.
He saw that the seed of Canaan had been reformed, and the seed of Jacob had gone astray.
He saw how the uncircumcised circumcised their hearts, and the circumcised made their hearts hard.
He saw the Sabbaths that were not kept, // when the commandments were kept (vv. 901ff.) <... >.
He saw their souls poured out, like water, before the Most High.
He saw the children stretched out, // fasting, on the ashes.
He saw the children as they wailed, the calves and lambs as they bleated.
He saw mothers who poured out their love on their children <... >.
He saw the elders when they wept, and the elders of his people when they were luxurious.
He saw Nineveh when it mourned, and Zion when it rejoiced wickedly.
He saw Assyria, and his contempt for the Jerusalem of the proud increased.
He saw the unclean women become blameless, // and the daughters of his people stained themselves.
He saw in Nineveh the demon-possessed, // who had calmed down and learned the truth.
And *he saw* in Zion prophets, // deceitful, full of deceit.
He saw idols that had clearly been destroyed among the pagan peoples.

He looked (ܒܥܐ) and *saw* (ܚܙܐ) how the chambers of the (chosen) people were full of paganism (vv. 1089-1114).

Example 6.

Lexical repetition in the form of anaphora ܠܐ ”nor” (4 times) + lexical repetition ܬܡܢ “there” (4 times):

Nor (ܠܐ) one eye remained *there* (ܬܡܢ) dry // without weeping repentance.
Not a single tongue *was silent there*, // crying and begging for mercy.
Not a single ear heard *there* // no other sound <... >.
We didn't see *the* pupils *there* // nor the shining color of the faces <... > (vv. 993–1002).

In the following passage: lexical repetition ܟܠ ܟܠܗ “every/all” (hour/day, species/variety/help/consolation) (8 times) + ܬܡܢ “there” (4 times):

Every hour they shed new tears in repentance,
Alms of *all* kinds (ܟܠܗ) // *every* (ܟܠ) *day* (ܝܘܡ) *there* (ܬܡܢ) was given.
Prayers *of all* kinds (ܟܠܗ) // *were renewed* there every day,
Litanies *of all* (ܟܠܗ) types of help // *were shown there every day* .
And the source *of all* (ܟܠܗ) consolations // in mercy was revealed there (vv. 1005-1014).

Example 7.

Love between (ܚܒܐ) young men, // *truth between* men;
Reconciliation among those who are angry, // and *concord* among those who are divided;
Between women is their peace, // and a silence full of usefulness.
Between the elders, their reconciliation, // (and) valuable advice.
The young men are chastity, // the virgins are pure,
Between the maids and the mistresses // one (ܚܕܐ) agreement was established,
One was (ܚܕ ܗܘܐ) a ghostly appearance, // one *was a* garment of humiliation.
There were no (ܬܡܢ) second wives, // jealousy disappeared because of [Divine] wrath.
One was (ܚܕ ܚܕܐ) barefoot // their servants and their kings.
One was the bread of humiliation // for the rich and the poor.
One was the drink of equality // for masters and servants.
One was the appearance of sackcloth // for day laborers and nobility.
Under *one* yoke, *the whole city* (ܟܠܗ ܚܕܬ) // rushed to repentance.
He served one service, // to receive *one* salvation.
The cry *of all kinds* of voices (ܩܠܝ ܟܠܗ) // *there every day* (ܝܘܡ ܟܠ ܬܡܢ) is heard.
The wailing of *all kinds of* suffering (ܥܢܝܐ ܟܠܗ) // *there every day* (ܝܘܡ ܟܠ ܬܡܢ) is found.
The roar *of all kinds* of pains (ܟܐܒܐ ܟܠܗ) // from *each* (ܟܠ) side is heard.
In shock *(*ܙܥܪܘܬܐ) *of all* kinds (ܙܥܪ ܙܥܪܘܬܐ) // the *whole city shook* (ܟܠܗ ܚܕܬ).
In the *shock* (ܙܥܪܘܬܐ) *of all* the horrors (ܗܘܠ ܟܠܗ) // the *whole city* trembled (vv. 1025–1062).

In this fragment the anaphora “between” is repeated 7 times (vv. 1025–1032; 1035). At the same time, in verses 1025-1028, the anaphora is observed in both half-verses. From verse 1036 onwards the anaphora “one/one/one was/one was” appears (10 times). In verse 1039 the adverb “there” reappears, which is repeated further from v. 1049 in the expression “there every day” (2

times). The phrase “the whole city” is also repeated (3 times), with vs. 1053, synonymous expressions with the meaning of “all possible” are added, formed with the help of reduplication (4 times), while the synonymous phrase “of all horrors” in vs. 1061 is no longer formed by reduplication, but again with the help of حد. In addition to this, the word “shock” is repeated (2 times) (vv. 1059-1062).

Thus, in this passage we observe, without exaggeration, a huge number of lexical repetitions: “nor” (4 times), “one/one” (10 times), “there” (5 times), “every day there” (5 times), “all/each” (5 times), “the whole city” (3 times), “shock” (2 times). If we count how many times the words “there” and “all” are used (separately plus as part of phrases), we get: “all/every” (8 times) (+ 4 times reduplication with the meaning “all possible”, so 12 words with the meaning “all, everyone”), “there” (10 times). It is hardly possible to imagine a greater number of repetitions on a limited fragment of the text. At the same time, it should be noted that antonyms are also used in the passage to describe various social strata (maids/mistresses, slaves/kings, rich/poor, masters/servants, day laborers/nobles), synonyms (weeping, wailing, roaring; shaking, trembling; peace, reconciliation; purity, purity; suffering, pain, etc.).

One of the common rhetorical figures in memr is also **chiasm** according to the A//B model B’//A’:

Example 1.

We didn’t sacrifice *children* to demons, // here we see them *being slaughtered*.
We *sacrificed* animals, // here *daughters are* sacrificed! (vv. 1859–1862).

Example 2.

Jonah was heard by the *thieves*, // *the loot* was returned *to the owners*.
The owners of the plunder turned a blind eye, // To the *thieves* they became forgiving (vv. 69-72).

Example 3.

Everyone judged himself, // and *pitied* his comrade.
There was no one who judged *his fellow,* // for *every man judged himself* (vv. 73-76).

Example 4.

Let’s forge new *weapons* // for the new *struggle* that calls us!
This is a hidden *war*, my beloved, // let’s take a hidden *weapon*! (vv. 571–574).

Example 5.

Like a bird on a thorn branch, // the *city* sat in terror.
The city shook and swayed, // *like* reeds in the wind.

In the memra are very common the lexical repetitions:

Example 1.

The word "serpent" is repeated 4 times:

To the brazen *serpent* in our land // no one made libations or worshipped.
In this people dwells // the curse of the ancient *serpent*.
Cursed as a living *serpent* are those who made a libation to a dead *serpent* (vv. 1853-1858).

Example 2.

The word ܢܡܘܣܐ "law" is repeated 5 times; ܢܡܘܣܐ ܩܡ "to establish (the law)" (1 time), "He who establishes the law" (2 times); the expression "higher for them" (ܥܠ ܗܢ ܕܝ) (3 times):

Higher to them (ܥܠ ܗܢ ܕܝ) is he name of Abraham, // than the way of life of Abraham,
And *higher for them* (ܥܠ ܟܝܢܐ) is circumcision, // than his faith.
They also blame God if he overrides their *laws*.
They *establish the law* (ܢܡܘܣܐ ܝܩܝܡ) // even for *the One who makes the law* (ܢܡܘܣܐ ܒܥܠ ܬ).
They are *without the law*, // and God is under *the law*.
For *the law* (ܢܡܘܣܐ) *is higher for them* (ܥܠ ܗܢ ܕܝ) // *The one who establishes the law* (.ܢܡܘܣܐ ܒܥܠ ܩܝܡ ܗܘ)
Not in order to preserve the *law*, // but to dishonor its Giver (v. 1889-1904).

At the same time, in the verses 1897-1902 the word "law" forms **an epiphora** in both half-verses, in vs.1896 the epiphora only in the second half-verse, and in vs. 1903 the epiphora only in the first half-verse, so that a certain symmetrical chiastic pattern is formed:

They also accuse God if He abolishes their *laws*.
They establish the *law* // even for the One who makes the *law*.
They — no *law*, //and God — under *the law*!
For to them the law is higher.
Not to keep the *law*, // but to dishonor[404] its Giver.

In the memra is often used **a rhetorical question**:

Example 1.

A series of rhetorical questions with **antitheses**:

The Ninevites were horrified // at the wickedness they saw there [i.e., in Israel – S.F.].
One said to the other: // "Are we not dreaming?
Is this the Promised Land // or do we see Sodom?
Is it the seed of Abraham // or maybe we have met the demons?
Do we see people, // or spirits and shadows?
Is it here that the wickedness that has fled from our land has moved and come?
Are the idols that we broke there (i.e., in Nineveh) set up again? <... >
Tammuz, who disappeared in our land, // how is he mourned here again?
The star Venus, which we have rejected, // how is it served here?" (vv. 1807–1826).

It should be emphasized that our division into separate rhetorical figures is, in fact, somewhat artificial. In fact, several rhetorical figures can be used simultaneously in the same rhetorically related fragment:

[404] Dishonor] "unravel, untie" **Y**.

Example 1.

Nor is he afraid of the king, // to say these things to him when he is sick.
He is not afraid of the king's son, // gives him a powerful medicine to drink.
He is not afraid of the commander // when he bandages him and makes an incision in him.
He does not tremble before the hero, // when his power weakens him by cauterization (vv. 723-730).

Synonymous parallelism, parallelism of repetitions with anaphora, gradation (king-son of the king-commander-hero) are used here.

Example 2.

The fish (ܚܘܬܐ) that swallowed him (ܒܠܥܗ), (was) mighty (ܚܣܝܢ), // and the *king* (ܡܠܟܐ) who listened to him (ܕܫܡܥ), (was) mighty (ܚܣܝܢ).
The fish (ܚܘܬܐ) prepared the way (ܐܬܩܢ ܠܗ ܫܒܝܠܐ) *for him* (ܠܗ), // and the *king* (ܡܠܟܐ) cleared the way (ܦܬܚ ܠܗ ܐܪܚܐ) *for him* (ܠܗ) (vv. 1541–1544).

The parallelism of the repetitions is used here with the anaphora “fish” in the first half of the verse and the anaphora “king” in the second and the epiphora “to him” in the second verse; synthetic parallelism with the synonymy mighty/mighty in the first verse, which can be expressed by the following formula:

Noun + possessive particle ܕ + ch. in perfect + adjective “mighty”// Noun + possessive particlę + Verb in perfect + adjective “mighty”.

At the same time, the verbs in the perfect correspond to each other not only grammatically, but also form a paronomasy: ܒܠܥܗ (*dbl'h*) /(*dšm'h*) ܕܫܡܥ .

The second verse uses a synthetic parallelism with the synonymy “prepared/cleared; path/road”:

Noun + Verb in perfect + noun + pronoun // Noun + Verb in perfect + pronoun.

From the rhetorical form of the memra analyzed above, the following conclusion can be drawn. One of the most striking features of the rhetorical form of the memra is the use of lexical repetition. Repetitions can be in the form of anaphora (the same words can be repeated only at the beginning of a verse, or at the beginning of each half-verse), epiphora (the same words can be repeated only at the end of a verse, or at the end of each half-verse).

Anaphora can be situated:

1. At the beginning of the verse:

A...//

A...//

He saw the uncircumcised circumcise their hearts <... >
He saw the Sabbaths that were not kept <... >

1. At the beginning of each half-verse:

A...//A...

A...//A...

Love between (صحبة) young men, // truth *between* men;
Reconciliation *between* those who are angry, // and concord *among* those who are divided <... >

2a. At the same time, different cases of anaphora can be used at the beginning of the half-poem:

A...//B...

A...//B…

The fish that swallowed him [was] mighty, // and *the king* who listened to him [was] mighty.
The fish prepared the way for him, // and the *king* cleared the way for him (vv. 1541-1544).

2. **The anaphora** can only be placed at the beginning of the second half-poem:

...//A...

...//A...

Alms of all kinds // were given *there every day*.
Prayers of all kinds // *were renewed* there every day <…> (vv. 1009–1010).

At the same time, anaphora can connect several dozen verses. In one rhetorically related piece of text, several keywords can be repeated at once, each of which can be repeated more than 10 times.

Epiphores can be found

1. in the concession verse:

...//... A

...//... A

1. At the end of each half-verse:

... A//... A

They establish the *law* // even for the One who makes the *law*.
They have no *law*, /and God — under the *law* <... >.

Adjacent verses can be combined with both **anaphora** and **epiphora** (both half-verses in the second verse):

A…//B…

A…C//B…C

The fish that swallowed him [was] mighty, // and *the king* who listened to him [was] mighty.
The fish prepared the way for *him*, // and the *king* cleared the way *for him* (vv. 1541-1544).

Lexical repetitions can be intentionally placed not only at the end and at the beginning of a verse/half-poem, but also in the second place, as, for example, the word (جدا) “all” and the word “there” 3 times:

... And.../...B...

... And...//...B...

Alms of *all kinds* (ܟܠ ܗܢ) // were given there every day.
Prayers *of all* kinds (ܟܠ ܗܢ) //were renewed *there every day*,
Litanies *of all* (ܟܠ ܗܢ) types of help // *were shown there* every day.
And the source *of all* (ܟܠ ܗܢ) consolations // in mercy was revealed there (vv. 1005-1014).

From this we can conclude that we are not talking about anaphoras and epiphora, but about three equal types of possible repetitions of words in the first, second and third places and their combinations. Thus, we can see that lexical repetition and parallelism are among the most important features of rhetoric in the Syrian memra. In the next paragraph, we will show that perhaps the indulgences in the memr are a striking manifestation of the peculiarities of Syriac poetics that go back to Aramaic.

3.2. The repetitions as a feature of the Syriac poetry

Some important features of Syriac poetry in comparison with Hebrew and Greek poetry were demonstrated by Vido van Persen in his study of the Syriac translation of the book of Jesus, the son of Sirach. The scholar notes with regard to the Syriac translation of Sirach that parallelism and repetition are the most obvious features of the Syriac text. Moreover, repetitions occur even where there are different words in the Hebrew text [405]. For example, Sir 8: 1–2:

Do not communicate (ܠܐ ܬܬܚܫ) with a person who is stronger than you <... >
Do not associate (ܠܐ ܬܬܚܫ) with the owner of the gold <... >

However, where the Syriac text repeats the word "do not communicate" ܬܬܚܫ, the Hebrew uses different words: תריב and תחרש, respectively.

Sir 8:3–4:

Do not quarrel (ܠܐ ܬܫܝ) with a talkative person <... >
Do not quarrel (ܠܐ ܬܫܝ) with a shameless <... >

Sir 8:2-13:

Do not lend *to someone who is stronger than you* (ܠܐ ܬܗܒ ܠܓܒܪ ܕܝܩܝܪ) <... >
Do not trust *someone who is stronger than you* (ܠܐ ܬܗܒ ܠܓܒܪ ܕܝܩܝܪ) <... >

Again, where the Syriac text repeats the word ܠܓܒܪ ܕܝܩܝܪ, the Hebrew uses different words: ממך חזק and ממך יתר. There are many such [406]examples.

It is important that lexical repetitions are present not only in half-verse and adjacent verses, but also throughout large text fragments. For example, in Sir 1:14-18 "the fear of the Lord is the

[405] *Van Peursen W.* Language and Interpretation in the Syriac Text of Ben Sira. Leiden: Brill, 2007. (Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden. Studies in the Syriac Versions of the Bible and Their Cultural Contexts; 16.). P. 63.
[406] Sir 24, 32–33 (repetition of words ܐܝܟ ܕܐܦ ܐܢܐ ܐܦ); Syr 20, 7 (repetition of words ܡܢ ܕܐ ܡܢ); Sir 18, 20–21 (repetition of words ܠܐ ܠܐ); Sir 22, 13 (repetition of words ܡܢ ܥܡ ܓܒܪ); Cp 36, 4 (repetition of words ܐܬܪܚܡ and ܐܬܪܚܡ); Syr 38, 2–3 (repetition of word ܐܠܗ), etc. (*Van Peursen W.* Language and Interpretation... P. 64, 65).

beginning of wisdom" (ܪܝܫܝܬ ܚܟܡܬ ܡܘܢ ܥܕ); in 31:5–9, the keywords "Mammon, the rich" (ܥܬܝܪ) and "to errend" (ܚܛܐ) are repeated 4 and 5 times, respectively. At the same time, in the Hebrew *Vorlage* Different equivalents are used. In the same passage, anaphora with rhetorical questions is used, which is very similar to the Syriac memrah (Sir 31:9-11):

Who is this (ܡܢ ܗܘ)? That we may glorify him <... >
Who is this (ܡܢ ܗܘ)? In order to (could) stick (ܕܒܩ) to it <... >
Who is this (ܡܢ ܗܘ) who (could) have found error and not gone astray? <... >

A good example of typically Syrian rhetoric is also the following passage from Sirach:

The pillars of the haughty (ܪܫܝܥܐ) were overthrown (ܗܦܟ) by the Lord, and in their place (ܒܬܪܝܗܘܢ ܢܛܥ) He placed the humble (ܥܢܝܐ).
The Lord uprooted (ܢܛܥ) the haughty (ܪܫܝܥܐ) and planted in their place the humble (ܢܛܥ ܥܢܝܐ ܒܬܪܝܗܘܢ).
The traces of the haughty (ܪܫܝܥܐ) were uprooted (ܢܛܥ) by the Lord and destroyed (ܐܒܕ) the memory of them (ܕܟܪܢܗܘܢ) on earth.
He destroyed (ܐܒܕ) them, and overthrew (ܗܦܟ) them, and uprooted (ܢܛܥ) them, and removed the memory of them from the people (ܕܟܪܢܗܘܢ) (Sir 10:14-17).

These poems are organized according to the principle of clear parallelism, with the first two being filled with the epiphora "humble instead of them" (ܥܢܝܐ ܒܬܪܝܗܘܢ), and the last two with the epiphora "memory of them" (ܕܟܪܢܗܘܢ). In addition, other repetitions of keywords are used: "haughty" (ܪܫܝܥܐ) —3 times, words with the root "eradicate" (ܢܛܥ) — 4 times, "overthrow" (ܗܦܟ) — 2 times, the plural pronoun of 3 person "they, their" (ܗܢܘܢ) — 3 times, the possessive plural pronoun "their" (ܗܘܢ) — 4 times.

In other passages, such as Sir 19, 20-30, the words with the root ܚܛܐ ("sin") are used 6 times; in Sir 34, 10-12, the verb is used 3 times ܢܣܐ in Pa$^{\varsigma}$el ("to test"); in the "Hymn of the Fathers" 44, 18-24, the remark is repeated three times that God swore an oath (ܠܐ ܢܫܚܬ ܒܝܡܝܢܐ). All these cases, in our opinion, are very similar to the above examples, with a huge number of repetitions of key words in the Syriac memra.

Van Persen draws the following conclusion from his analysis: while the synonymous parallelism in the Syriac text of Sirach is in most cases a reflection of its presence in the Hebrew *Vorlage*, the repetitions, on the contrary, are absent in the original text and are therefore the fruit of the conscious work of the Syriac translator[407]. This, of course, is an important conclusion. The researcher, without dwelling on this issue in detail, also notes that "the repetition of words in verses connected by parallelism is one of the characteristics of the Aramaic-Syriac poetic tradition"[408]. Indeed, other scholars, such as Jonas Greenfield, have also noted the use of repetition as one of the

[407] *Van Peursen W.* Language and Interpretation…. P. 67.
[408] *Ibid.*, P. 63.

distinct features of early Aramaic poetry[409]. Greenfield gives the following example from the Aramaic part of the book of Daniel, which is replete with repetitions:

> Whom he wanted, he killed (דִּי הֲוָה צָבֵא הֲוָא קָטֵל),
> And whom he willed, he left alive (וְדִי הֲוָה צָבֵא הֲוָה מַחֵא),
> И кого хотел, он возвышал (וְדִי הֲוָה צָבֵא הֲוָה מָרִים),
> И кого хотел, он понижал (וְדִי הֲוָה צָבֵא הֲוָה מַשְׁפִּיל) (Dan 5:19).

Zvi Novick, a scholar of early Jewish rhetoric, has paid great attention in his recent studies to the different kinds of repetition in Hebrew, Samaritan, and Syriac literature. Novick argues that writers writing in Hebrew, Aramaic, Samaritan Hebrew, Syriac, and other Semitic languages had a wide range of similar rhetorical possibilities, and the constant strategic choice of one or the other was determined by the way in which these texts were used in the communities[410].

Although, of course, the above information is not sufficient to draw any irrefutable conclusions, it can be assumed that the frequent use of repetitions of key words ("repetition parallelism") in the Syriac memra is a development of a feature already characteristic of early Aramaic and Syriac poetry. Apparently, such repetitions had a special aesthetic function for her listeners/readers.

However, in addition to the aesthetic component, the parallelism of repetitions, like other features of the rhetorical form of the memra, has other functions. With the help of repetitions, the ideas that are important to the author are marked, which he wants to convey to the audience and contribute to their memory. For example, in the passage analyzed above, with the repeated repetition of the key word "law" (vv. 1897–1902), the author's intention to actualize a certain "frame" in the perception of the addressees, associated with the Jewish people and the role of the law for them, is clearly visible. God, the Jews, and the law are a multitude of inextricably linked elements for all who are familiar with the Bible. But the author of the memra divides this set into two subsets that are not identical with each other: "the law of God" and "the law of the Jews". By contrasting these subsets with each other, the author of the memra demonstrates the falsity of the Jewish conception of the law. Thus, we can talk about a certain "pedagogical", "educational" function of repetitions in memre.

Above we analyzed examples from the fictive speeches of the characters and drew attention to the fact that in the memra there is a very close connection between form and content—in fact, in this narrative work, where there is no abstract theological reasoning, theology is inserted, as it were, into a rhetorical form. Thus, the anti-Jewish criticism is expressed by means of antitheses; The theologically important oppositions "hidden" vs. "explicit", "reason" vs. "tongue" etc., are expressed using systems of synthetic parallelism combined with antithetical parallelism; Keyword

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[409] *Greenfield J.* Early Aramaic Poetry… P. 47.
[410] *Novick T.* Ritual and Rhetoric among Jews… P. 37.

repetitions mark important ideas. In the next paragraph, we will continue to explore such examples in memre, where the form itself is a concentrated expression of certain ideas.

3.3. The rhetorical patterns in the memra

The Syriac memra is characterized by the presence of a large number of the "rhetorical patterns" — the fragments of text connected by the unity of the rhetorical form and the idea expressed with their help[411]. Let us consider the following fragment and analyze its rhetorical form and content.

Alms (ܙܕܩܬܐ) *of all* kinds (ܟܠ) (ܓܢܣܝܢ) // *every day there* (ܒܟܠ ܝܘܡ ܒܗ) were used (ܡܬܥܒܕ).
Prayers (ܙܨܠܘܬܐ) *of all* varieties (ܓܢܣܝܢ) // (were renewed *there every day (*ܡܬܚܕܬ),
The litany (ܙܥܘܬܐ) *of all* (ܟܠ) [types] of help (ܓܢܣܝܢ) // *was shown there every day* (ܐܬܚܙܝ),
And the source (ܡܒܥܐ) *of all* (ܟܠ) consolations (ܢܚܡܬܐ) // in mercy was revealed there (ܐܬܓܠܝ) (vv. 1007-1014).

This passage, one of the many examples of the unprecedented repentance of the Ninevites in the memra, is an example of an almost perfect semantic and grammatical unity. In each half-verse 3 words are used (in the Syriac original), i.e. a total of 24 words, of which 11, i.e. almost half, are repeated. There are also grammatical repetitions: there are used 2 nouns of the feminine gender plural st. emph. (ܙܕܩܬܐ, ܙܨܠܘܬܐ) with the same ending (*ātā*) and with similar semantics from the sphere of religious virtue ("almsgiving", "prayers") and 1 more time — the noun of the feminine gender sg. st. emph. with a similar ending (*tā*) and with the same semantics (ܙܥܘܬܐ) ("litany"). All 4 verses are connected to each other through the repetition of the word in second place: "all" (ܟܠ) and nouns with similar semantics ("species, variety") and the same grammatical form (the masculine gender plural st. abs.) (with ending *īn*).

At the same time, a noun with the same semantics, from the religious sphere ("litany"), but standing in the singular, and not in the plural, corresponds after the general repetition of the word "all" to a word with a different semantics (not "species, variety", but "help"), and it, like the nouns with semantics ("species, variety") in the previous verses, is in the plural.

The same goes for the word "source" in the penultimate half-verse: it is of a different semantics, but of the same number as the noun in the previous half-verse ("litany"), so it also corresponds to a noun with a different semantics ("consolation" rather than "species, variety"), but in the same plural as the corresponding words in the previous half-verses ("species", "varieties", "[kinds] of help").

As for the half-verses "on the right", we observe grammatical and semantic unity with some variations: "every day" and "there" are repeated three times each (with a variation in the location

[411] We distinguish the *rhetorical patterns* in Syriac texts, following Robert *R.* Some Rhetorical Patterns... P. 125–131).

of the word “there” in the second or first place in the half-verse) in combination with the perfect verbs of reflexive breeds in the masculine or feminine gender, twice with similar semantics (“to show/open”).

In terms of content, the fragment analyzed says that the Ninevites constantly (“every day”) demonstrate all sorts of virtuous religious behavior, such as giving alms, performing prayers, and litanies. As a consequence, a “source of consolation” is revealed to them. The idea of the incessant practice of virtues is expressed with the help of an appropriate rhetorical form, using a large number of lexical and grammatical repetitions. This pattern can be conventionally expressed by the following formula:

A noun denoting religious virtue (plural/singular) + “of all kinds” // “every day there” + the perfect of the verb in the passive-reflexive stem.

At the same time, some deviations from the grammatical and semantic unity are probably not accidental, but are intended to make the whole structure not static and ideal, but dynamic. For example, deviations in semantics correspond to deviations in grammar. At the same time, even words with different semantics turn out to be close (not only “prayer”, “almsgiving” and “litany”, but also “source”, “help”, “consolation” are also words with positive religious characteristics), and words with completely different semantics — “varieties” and “help” — turn out to be grammatically related, like masculine plural nouns. Such transitions from near-perfect parallelism to intentionally “non-perfect” parallelism, like a change of registers, signal a move on to the next topic. For example, the semantic and corresponding grammatical changes in the final verse of the pattern:

And the source (ܡܥܒܕܢܐ) *of all* (ܟܠ) consolations (ܢܚܡܬܐ) // in mercy *was revealed* there (ܐܬܓܠܝ).

They signal that we are dealing with some new information: firstly, it contains a conclusion from the previous three verses, and secondly, there is a transition to the next rhetorical pattern, which, while having a strong internal connection of its own, also retains a semantic and grammatical connection with the passage analyzed above, albeit a weaker one:

[In] chastity (ܒܬܘܠܬܐ) *without* (ܠܐ) obstacle (ܒܣܟܘܠܐ) // men and women wrapped themselves up (ܐܬܚܦܝ).
Cleanliness (ܒܬܘܠܝܬܐ) *without* (ܠܐ) disturbance (ܒܥܓܘܓܐ) // in fasting *was* preserved there (ܐܬܛܢܝ) (vv. 1015–1018).

Here again we see a clear rhetorical pattern: the nouns of the feminine gender sg. st. emph. “chastity” and “purity” (ܒܬܘܠܬܐ, ܒܬܘܠܝܬܐ) with the same ending (*tā*) and similar semantics of religious virtue continue a series of feminine nouns with the same semantics and with the same ending (*tā*) given by the previous rhetorical pattern (“alms”, “prayers”, “litanies”, “purity”, “purity”). The repetition of the two-syllable phrase consisting of the pronoun “all” and the

possessive particle (ܕ) (ܕܚܠ) there corresponds to phonetically and grammatically close (with the same possessive particle), but semantically opposite repetition of the two-syllable preposition ܠܝܬ "without". Its opposite meaning, however, is leveled by the fact that it denies nouns that are again similar in form phonetically and grammatically and have a common negative semantics ("obstacle", "anxiety"). At the same time, in the "right" half-verses, similar to the previous pattern, there are used the verbs in the perfect of the passive-reflexive stem, i.e. we can express this rhetorical pattern with the following formula:

A noun denoting religious virtue + the preposition "without" + a noun with a negative connotation in the religious sphere // a verb of the passive-reflexive stem in perfect

It is important to note the repetition of the word "there" so characteristic of the previous pattern. It emphasizes the importance of the spatial dimension of what is happening, "there" in the city of Nineveh. It is perhaps difficult to imagine a greater unity of form and content. In doing so, we have analyzed only two examples of the numerous and even longer rhetorical patterns in the Syrian memre. It is sufficient to recall the 7th example from section 3.1 discussed above, where, with the help of an unprecedented number of lexical repetitions of the words "all", "each", "one", combined with the commonality of grammatical and semantic patterns, a grandiose picture is drawn of the unity of repentance, humiliation, wearing sackcloth, walking barefoot of all social strata of Nineveh, from slave to king, in space and time.

Having analyzed some examples of the use of rhetorical figures in memre, we will also pay attention to the tropes presented here.

3.4. The trops in the memra

In the memra is used vivid, figurative comparisons: the city wavers "like a bird on a thorn branch" (v. 1063); "like a reed in the wind" (v. 1066). The Ninevites are like "dark shadows" (v. 1313) from their long torment, they are "burned like firebrands"[412] (v. 1315).

In the memra is used very often is a play of words based on paronomasia: bird (ܨܦܪܐ) and early morning (ܨܦܪܐ); suddenly (ܦܬܐܡ) and calm down (ܐܬܪ); the sword (ܚܪܒܐ) and the mouth (ܦܘܡܐ); to comfort (ܢܚܡ) and prophesy (ܢܒܐ); door (ܬܪܥܐ) and reconcile (ܐܬܪܥܝ), etc. At the same time, the cases of paronomasia are important for the author from a theological, psychological and literary points of view: a catastrophic situation *is suddenly calmed* down due to the intervention of God; as the *mouth* of an accusing prophet *is struck* by a sword; *consolation* in the mouth of the

[412] Cf. Is 7:4.

righteous becomes *prophecy*; repentance is able to open the doors of heaven and *reconcile with* God, and so on.

Also, groups of the same root words are often used in memre: “to believe” (ܗܡܢܐ), “hope” (ܫܒܪܐ), “Good news” (ܒܫܪܬܐ), “despair” (ܫܒܪܐ ܕܠܐ ܐܝܬ); “surgical incision, decree” (ܦܣܩܐ) and “sentence” (ܦܣܩܐ ܕܕܝܢܐ); “to treat”, “to visit” (ܐܣܝ), a “visitor” (ܐܣܝܐ), a “visit” (ܫܒܪܐ), etc.

3.5. The formulae in the memra

In the analyzed Syriac work, a large number of **synonyms of** both individual words and whole expressions consisting of the same number of syllables are used within the framework of parallelism, which can be considered as the use of **formulae**[413], following the definition of Milman Perry, who understood a formula as “a group of words that are regularly used under the same metric conditions to express a given essential idea” [414], for example:

<u>Two-syllable formulae:</u>

1. believe (ܗܡܢ)
   think (ܣܒܪ)
2. cry (ܙܥܩ)
   lamentation (ܝܠܠܐ)
   roar (ܫܓܓܐ)
3. cry (ܙܥܩ)
   moan (ܢܗܡ)
   roar (ܙܥܩ)
4. count (ܡܢܐ)
   compute (ܚܫܒ)
5. came (ܐܬܐ)
   approached (ܩܪܒ)
6. companion (ܚܒܪ)
   brother (ܐܚܐ)
   beloved (ܚܒܝܒ)
   relative (ܩܪܝܒ ܕܡ) (trisyllabic)
7. horror (ܕܚܠܬܐ)
   horror (ܕܚܠܬܐ)
   fear (ܕܚܠܬ)
8. meet (ܦܓܥ)
   meet (ܣܥܪ)

<u>Three-syllable Formulae</u>

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[413] Manolis Papoutsakis was one of the first who pointed out the use of formulae in the Syriac memre on the example of the works by Jacob of Sarug: *Papoutsakis M.* Formulaic Language in the Metrical Homilies of Jacob of Serugh // Symposium Syriacum VII / ed by Lavenant R. Rome: PIO, 1998. P. 445–451.

[414] *Parry M.* The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry by Milman Parry / ed. by Parry A. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971. P. 272.

1. lamentation (ܩܕܠܘܢ)
   wailing (ܩܕܝܫ)
2. upside down (ܩܛܛܒܪ)
   destroyed (ܩܫܘܕܪ)
   reduced to ruins (ܩܪܝ ܛܒܪ)
3. did not recognize (ܠܐ ܝܕܥ)
   did not distinguish (ܠܐ ܦܠܓ)

Four-syllable and polysyllabic formulae

1. on the eve of Death (ܩܒܠ ܡܘܬ ܥܠ)
   in the neck of Sheol (ܒܓܘ ܕܫܐܠ)
2. at what time (ܩܒܥ ܕܡܬܝ)
   at what point (ܒܐܝ ܙܒܢ ܕܡܬܝ)
3. a day of despair (ܩܝܡ ܡܪܝܪ ܕܒܐ)
   a moment of despair (ܒܙܒܢ ܡܪܝܪ ܕܚܕ)
1. the earth did not cease to shake (ܠܐ ܒܛܠ ܕܐܪܥ ܠܡܪܓܙ)
   that the earth has ceased to tremble (ܕܒܛܠ ܐܪܥ ܕܐܪܓܙ)
2. to which end they are invited (ܠܡܢܐ ܩܪܝܢ ܠܗ)
   what kind of death he is prepared for (ܡܢ ܡܘܬ ܩܐ ܡܬܟܢܫ).

After analyzing the rhetorical figures and tropes in the memre, in the next paragraph we will look at the larger rhetorical forms, and there are "units" of praise for the Ninevites and the blasphemy of the Jews, arranged roughly symmetrically at the beginning and end of the memra.

3.6. The symmetrical "units" of the praise and blasphemy in the memra

As we have shown in chapters 3 and 6, the anti-Jewish criticism in the memra is often presented in the form of long lines of antitheses between the godly behavior of the Ninevites and the wicked behavior of the Jews. But apart from the two antithesis speeches, the Ninevites *vs*. the Jews, the largest anti-Jewish diatribe is an array of text that speaks on behalf of the Ninevites about the sins of the Jews in the Promised Land. Among other things, it highlights the wicked behavior of the Jewish rulers and social inequalities:

Their rulers are wicked, // Their judges are deceitful.
Their avarice is like fire in them, // and their greed is hell.
Their poor are the abyss, // and the rich are their throats.
The borrower is like a pit of fire, and the lender is like Satan (vv. 1789-1796).

We want to draw attention to the fact that this passage seems to be to some extent intentionally symmetrical to the passages at the beginning of the memra that describe the godly behavior of the various social strata of the Ninevites: rulers, judges, rich and poor, lenders and borrowers:

The kings heard him (i.e. Jonah) and were humbled, // took off their crowns and humbled themselves.
When the nobles heard him, they were terrified, and instead of fine garments they put on sackcloth.
The venerable elders heard him, // and sprinkled ashes on their heads.
The rich heard him, // and opened their treasuries to the poor.
Creditors also heard him, // with their debt letters they distributed alms.
Borrowers have heard about justice[415] , // that they should not keep debts.
Borrowers have become rewarding, // and lenders have become forgiving (vv. 49-62).

At the same time, the descriptions of the sins of the Jews emphasize that the poor and the rich, the borrowers and the creditors, are equal in their misery and wickedness:

Both are equal to each other (ܫܘܝܝܢ ܠܚܕܕ), // because they are fulfilled by the same [and the same] suffering (ܥܝܢܐ) (v. 1797–1798).

This seems to be a symmetrical anti-response to the many examples of equality that the Ninevites exhibit in their virtues:

All were *equal* (ܫܘܝ), as members, // for everyone prayed for each <... > In concord and *equality,* as the members (of one body) were mixed <... > One drink *of equality* (ܫܘܝܢܘܬܐ) // for masters and servants.

There is also some symmetry in the lists of the virtues of the Ninevites and the wicked sins of the Jews:

In concord and equality // as the members [of one body] mingled <... > (1021–1022).
One was a phantom look, // one was a garment of humiliation.
There were no second wives there, // jealousy vanished because of the wrath [of God's judgment].
One was barefoot in their servants and their kings.
One was the bread of humiliation // for the rich and the poor.
One was the drink of equality // for masters and servants.
One was the appearance of sackcloth // for day laborers and nobility.
Under one yoke, the whole city // rushed to repentance.
He served one service, // that he might receive one salvation (vv. 1037-1052).

There (i.e. in the Promised Land – S.F.) there was also avarice, // and its commodity, greed.
There was excess, // and her sister, drunkenness.
There was depravity, // and that which was in the same yoke as her, adultery.
There was deceit, // and its cousin, theft.
There was an incantation, // and her initiate, sorcery.
There was magic // and its confidant, divination.
There was open wickedness, // and his spouse, manifest vice (vv. 1767-1780).

We can note a very similar rhetorical structure of the two “catalogues” of virtues and vices, respectively. Both follow a clear rhetorical pattern with anaphora (“one/one was/was” and “there was/was”), which frame, in the first case, the virtues: walking barefoot, humiliation, equality, sackcloth, repentance, and in the second, the vices: avarice, intemperance, depravity, theft, witchcraft, etc. Both “catalogs” use a metaphor based on the semantics of unity: in the case of the

[415] Lit. “fairly”.

Ninevites, we have a somatic metaphor, when the unity of repentance among different social strata of the population emphasized by the metaphor of the Ninevites as members of one body; In the case of the Jews, their unity in vice is conveyed through the analogy of kinship/intimacy.

Other symmetrical descriptions of the righteousness of the Ninevites and the wicked behavior of the Jews based on somatic imagery can also be found:

Not a single *eye* remained dry there // without weeping repentance.
Not a single *tongue* was silent there, // crying and begging for mercy.
Not a single *ear* heard there // no other sound <... >.
They didn't see the *pupils* (ܪܫܝܡ)// Nor the shining color of the faces,
Not a laughing *mouth*, // for they were sad and broken (vv. 993-1004).

On their *foreheads* dwells // the insolence that we have cast aside.
And the lust that fled from us // settled in their *eyes*.
From within *the pupils* [of their eyes] (ܒܪܫܝܡܗ) it is shown, // in their *nostrils* (ܒܢܝܚܪܗ) it protrudes (v. 1833–1838).

From this we can conclude that not only in the "smaller" forms the anti-Jewish criticism is presented in the form of antitheses, where the virtues of the Ninevites are contrasted with the wickedness of the Jews, but also in the larger "units" separated by a considerable amount of text, there is also a certain symmetry between the praise of the Ninevites and the blasphemy of the Jews.

Conclusions of the chapter 3

From the above analysis of the rhetorical form of the memra, the following conclusions can be drawn. The rhetorical form of the Syriac memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is characterized by the following features:

- the memra is characterized by a rather rich rhetorical form;
- in the memra are widely represented synonymous parallelism, antithetical parallelism, and their combinations;
- in the memra are presented a huge number of lexical repetitions and the "parallelism of repetitions";
- in the memra are represented a large number of rhetorical patterns, which are characterized by a high degree of unity of form and content;
- in the memra are presented two-syllable, three-syllable, and multi-compound formulae;
- The rhetoric of the memra is a concentrated expression of the author's theology.

As for the "parallelism of repetitions", it is possible that we are talking about the legacy of the general principles of Aramaic and Syriac poetics in the memre. On the other hand, the presence of a large number of repetitions, rhetorical patterns, and formulae in the memre may be a sign of the homiletic nature of the work[416]. This issue needs further research.

[416] Cf. Zvi Novick's study of repetitions in piyyuts as an important feature of their homiletic character as opposed to midrash: *Novick T.* Piyyut and Midrash: Form, Genre, and History. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 2018. (Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements; 30).

Chapter 4. The genre of the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah"

In this chapter, taking into account all the above analysis, we will try to define the genre of the Syriac work of Nineveh and Jonah. In the manuscripts in which the title of the text has been preserved, it is referred to as "memra" (Sir. ܡܶܡ̈ܪܳܐ "word, speech", from the verb ܐܡܰܪ "to speak").[417] But the "memra" is a rather vague term that can refer to completely different works. If only poetic strophic works can be called madrash, then both poetic and prose works can be referred to as a "memra". For example, the "prosaic" memre by Ephraim the Syrian include the five memrs "To Hypatius", the memre "Against Bardeisan, Marcion and Mani", the memra "About our Lord", as well as the one attributed to Ephraim the Syrian, but, most likely, written in the fifth century by his successors, the memra "On the Signs Performed by Moses in Egypt". At the same time, the last two works can be designated in manuscripts not only as "memra", but also as "turgama" ("interpretation, interpretation, commentary")[418]. Of course, the definition of "prosaic" in relation to these works is rather arbitrary. Their form can be defined rather as *Kunstprosa*, and they are often structured [419]in a certain way, but still not as regular as memre in poetic form, which have a clear isosyllabic meter. For the poetic memeras attributed to Ephraim the Syrian, it is 7 + 7 meters, i.e. each verse consists of two half-verses of 7 syllables each.

Edmund Beck included the memre "On Faith", the 1st memra "On the Exhortation", the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", and the memre "On Nicomedia" among the authentic poetic memre of Ephraim the Syrian. Among the memre, probably from the pen of a Syrian poet-theologian, he included the memra "On a sinful woman" (from Luke 7) and the memra "Discourse against the Jews, spoken on the week: Hosanna". But even these poetic works differ from each other. For example, only three of them—the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", the memra "On the Sinner", and the memra "Discourse Against the Jews Spoken on the Sunday: Hosanna" —are narratives of a specific biblical story with dramatic elements. Other works, for example, the memre "On the Faith", although they are poetic memre in form, practically repeat the madrashe of Ephraim the Syrian "On the Faith", whose main theme is the struggle against (neo)arian theology.

The difficulty lies in the fact that there has not yet been a theory of the memra genre, as Frédéric Rillier complained in 1987: "Perhaps we should start by creating a typology and precise terminology that will make it clear what we are talking about when we talk about [Syriac – S.F.]

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[417] In the translation of the memra into Greek, the name is rendered as "the word (*λόγος*) of our holy father Ephraim to the prophet Jonah and about the repentance of the Ninevites".

[418] As "turgama" is expressed one of the two authentic prose biblical commentaries of Ephraim the Syrian, the commentary on the book of Exodus.

[419] For example, Zvi Novick has shown that the "prosaic" memra "On the Signs Performed by Moses in Egypt" uses the lexical repetitions in pairs of couplets (*Novick T.* Ritual and Rhetoric among Jews... P. 32–38).

homilies, on the model of the midrash in biblical studies"[420]. It is not the purpose of this dissertation to create such a theory, but a study of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" as one of the earliest examples of the genre may shed light on the development of the genre of narrative memr.

Naturally, the problems of defining the genre arise for the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah". For example, different researchers use the word "memra" to refer to this work in different ways. Edmund Beck translated the Syriac word "memra" into German as "Sermo", "Homilie", i.e. "homily", "preaching". Sebastian Brock calls the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" a "dramatic narrative poem"[421] or a "memra with a dramatic narrative"[422], i.e. emphasizes that it is a narrative in poetic form. Winfried Cramer defines the genre of a work as "a memra, i.e. a thematic speech or sermon of a high style, fixed in written form" [423]. Whereas Beck and Kramer actually view the memra as a sermon, Brock, on the contrary, notes that "Ephraim here tells more than he preaches", and that the homiletic element is practically absent in this memra[424]. However, as our analysis has shown, this is not the case at all, "story" and "sermon" do not contradict each other, and homiletic elements are embedded in the structure of the narrative itself.

Summing up, it can be noted that the observations of researchers about the genre of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" are rather vague, too general, and often contradict each other. Our analysis will help to more accurately determine the genre specifics of the Syrian work.

To begin with, we will try to determine how the author himself perceives the genre of his work. On the one hand, apart from the title "memra", which may have been given to the work later, the text does not explicitly say anything about this or that "genre". On the other hand, we have shown that the Syriac work under analysis is permeated with a strategy of identifying the depicted world with the real world. Using this circumstance, we can regard some key words within the framework of a fictive narrative as indications of the real genre of the work, or at least its characteristic features, from the point of view of its author.

4.1. The "story", "taḥwita" and other genres

First of all, it should be noted that within the framework of a fictive narrative, the word "story" is used in the memra. Thus, in the speech of the king of Nineveh, this word refers to the interpolated account of Noah and the flood (vv. 597–598). Meanwhile, this word is one of the synonyms for "memra"[425]. Thus, "story, narration" is one of the terms that define the general

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[420] *Rilliet F.* Rhetoric and Style in the Age of Jacques de Saroug // IV Symposium Syriacum 1984. Literary Genres in Syriac Literature (Groningen - Oosterhesselen 10-12 September) /ed. by Drijvers H., Lavenant R., Molenberg C., Reinink G. Roma: Pont. Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987. pp. 289–295. (OCA; 229.). Here P. 292.
[421] *Brock S.* Dramatic Narrative Poems… P. 185.
[422] *Brock S.* Dramatic Dialogue Poems… P. 138.
[423] *Cramer W.* Frohbotschaft... P. 95.
[424] *Brock S.* Dramatic Narrative Poems… P. 185.
[425] For example, Jacob of Sarug, "On Jonah" 122.393, 13-16; "On Abraham and Isaac", v. 1 (translated into *N. G. Golovnina*, *E. D. Dmitrieva.* Anonymous Sogita about Abraham and Isaac... P. 141) and others.

character of a work. But it is not just a "story", of course. The word ܡܬܠܐ and its cognates appear in the memre, as we showed above, as part of the allusions to the Psalms associated with the literature of the Wisdom. These are the "stories" of fathers and ancestors that contain important information for posterity.

In the memra is also used a rich vocabulary associated with the pronounced didactic, educational function of the events described in it: "to teach, to make wise" (ܚܟܡ) (vs. 386, 388), "to teach" (ܝܠܦ) (vs. 207), "to learn" (vs. 381, 1428, 1578, 1617, 1619, 1621, 1623), "to educate, to punish" (ܡܪܐ). With the help of numerous synonyms with the meanings of "model, likeness, example, (illustrative) explanation", the role of the described events as a kind of model, a model for imitation is emphasized: ܕܡܐܝܢ (for example, v. 1658), ܡܬܚܙܐ (v. 31), ܡܚܘܝܐ (v. 1664), ܡܝܬܪ (vs. 1581, 1583), ܡܬܠܐ (vs. 877, 1566). An important term attached to this series is the "mirror" (vs. 402, 587, 687, 1567, 1643), used in memra in the sense of "mirror", a (moral) model for listeners. At the same time, all these terms are placed in the framework of "moral" antonyms: on the one hand, "righteousness, justice" (ܙܕܝܩܐ), "good" (ܛܒܐ), and, on the other hand, "spots" (ܥܝܒܬܐ), "ugly, disgusting (deeds)" (ܪܓܣ), "dirt" (ܙܒܠܐ), "sins" (ܚܛܝܬܐ), etc.[426] In this way, the mirror of the memra serves as a means of distinguishing between (moral) "beauty" and (moral) "ugliness", inviting the addressees to imitate good examples and reject bad ones. Such a conception, as we have shown, seems to have its origin in the doctrine of the two paths in the literature of Wisdom.

It is noteworthy that one of the many synonyms with the meaning of "example, sample" used in the memra is ܡܬܠܐ, "(visual) explanation; demonstration" is the term for the works of the Syrian writer Aphraates (d. c. 345). And in the fifth century, as Robert Phenix has shown, the word is often used in the memre of the Syrian poet-theologian Balai's "On Joseph"[427], becoming the *terminus technicus* of the moral interpretation of biblical history.

Other terms are also presented in the memre, which allow us to draw conclusions about its genre specifics.

4.2. The elements of the genre of the "dispute poem"

The denunciation of the Jews by the Ninevites, who saw their sins in the Promised Land, is indicated in the memr as ܡܝܬܪ "dispute":

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[426] *Lattke M.* Solomon's Ode 13 in the mirror image of the works of Ephraem Syrus // The Odes of Solomon in their significance for the New Testament and Gnosis: Volume IV: Selected Studies and Lectures / ed. by Lattke M. Freiburg; Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg, 1989. P. 75−87. (Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis; 4.). Here P. 80.
[427] *Phenix R.* The Sermons… P. 191.

Thus spoke in the dispute (ܣܓܝܬܐ) // the penitents (i.e., the Ninevites – S.F.) with the Jews (vv. 1915-1916).

Meanwhile, ܣܓܝܬܐ is one of the terms denoting such an ancient genre of Syriac literature as "poems-disputes",[428] syr. "sogitha". In this genre, which goes back to ancient Mesopotamian models[429], there is a dispute between two or more personages or personifications, for example, between Abraham and Isaac, the Church and the Synagogue, the Body and the Soul, etc. Such disputes were written both by anonymous Syrian authors of the fifth century and by the great poets and theologians Narsai, Jacob of Sarug, and others. is Ephraim the Syrian himself, with his lengthy dialogues between Death and Satan in the Nisiban hymns[430], the dispute between Reason and Love in his hymns "On the Church"[431] etc.

In these dialogues and later sogits, we are confronted with an argument, a contest in the form of more or less short alternating remarks made by the disputing parties. In the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" we see echoes of this genre. What is happening between the Ninevites and the Jews is called a "dispute", but only one side, the Ninevites, speaks, and they do not utter isolated remarks, but lengthy monologues. The Jews, on the other hand, are left without speeches at all. Perhaps, in this way, the author deliberately demonstrates the fact that Jews are deprived of any right to vote. At the same time, the one-sided "dispute" is framed by a lengthy narrative "frame".

In this connection, we should also recall the large "units" of relatively symmetrical speeches praising the Ninevites and blaspheming the Jews on behalf of the narrator, which we discussed in section 1.6.2. They also form a kind of argument, a competition, a "poem of praise" and a "poem of blasphemy", but they are separated from each other by large volumes of text. Consequently, there is a feeling that the author of the memra is aware of certain examples of the genre of poems-disputes, but deliberately changes its configuration.

Summing up, let us note that, from the author's point of view, the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" was something like a "mirror", an edifying, wise story with a pronounced contrast between the "righteous" Ninevites and the "wicked" Jews, which, apparently, is a certain transformation of the genres of the poem-dispute, the poem-"blasphemy" and the poem of praise. However, this description does not exhaust the genre specificity of the Syrian work. For example, there are elements of "lamentation" in it, which have also undergone a significant authorial transformation.

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[428] *Murray R.* Aramaic and Syriac Dispute Poems and Their Connections // Studia Aramaica. New Sources and New Approaches // ed. by Geller M., J. Greenfield, Weitzman M. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. P. 157–187. Here P. 173–174.
[429] *Ibid*. P. 158–160.
[430] For example, Nisibis Hymns 52–57 and others.
[431] Hymns "On the Church" 9.

4.3. The “lamentation” in the memra

The biblical book of Jonah is a book about an impending catastrophe that has not come to pass. The author of the memra makes full use of this situation in his work. He describes the behavior of the various social strata of the Ninevites and their king in the run-up to the impending catastrophe with the help of numerous rhetorical patterns similar to those we described in the previous chapter. For example, to describe the change in the situation in Nineveh before the judgment, catechumens by Jonah, and after it the pattern “**when** (ܟܕ) ... **who** (ܡܢ)... “ with a series of antitheses:

The feast of the kings is over, // and the banquet of the rulers. // *When* (ܟܕ) infants abstain from milk, // *Who* (ܡܢ) will demand food? // The cattle were not given water. // *Who* can drink wine? // *When the* king is clothed in sackcloth, // *Who* will wrap himself in splendid garments? // *When* Even the unclean [harlots] have become abstinent, // *Who* will think of conjugal relations? // *When the* licentious are terrified, // *Who* will burst into laughter? // *When the* merry ones have wept, // *Who* will rejoice in the joke? // *When* thieves have given alms, // *Who* will profit from his neighbor selfishly? // *When* The whole city trembled, // Who would watch over his house? (vv. 165–182).

The same pattern is used by Ephraim the Syrian in his memos on Nicomedia to describe the real disaster that befell Nicomedia, the earthquake of 358:

Who will run into the buildings, // *when* the buildings have buried their masters? <... > *Who* will wash his body with water, // *when* his comrades were stained with blood? // *Who* will use perfume, // *when the* whole region is poisoned by the stench of corpses? // *What* young bride will be happy to suffocate, // *when* the whole city stinks of the dead? // *Who* will enjoy food, // *If* his brothers are dead at the table? // For *Who* will taste the drink // *when the* drink and the drinker perish? // *Who* will be able to partake of the feasts, // *When* our comrades have died during the feasts? // *Who* will be able to partake of the feasts, // *when the* **feasts of the [Divine] wrath have come to an end? //** *Who* will indulge in merriment, // *when* Are the suffocated sad in hell? Who will buy and sell, // *when* trading suddenly stopped? (Memra On Nicomedia, 8:185-205).

It should be noted that among the synonymous antitheses describing the change in social life before and after the catastrophe/anticipation of the catastrophe, there is also an almost identical verse about the feasts that ended.

Another important pattern used to describe the change in life in the city before and after the disaster is “**instead of** (ܒܬܟ) + **antithesis** (sometimes + **“invited**”)”:

Who could not cry (ܡܢ ܠܐ ܢܒܟܐ ܥܡ ܡܠܟܐ ܕܒܟܐ) // at the sight of the king who wept? //
Who, *instead of* (ܒܬܟ) his royal palace, // *invited* (ܐܙܡܝ) to descend into Sheol? //
And who was king among the living, // turned to dust among the dead?
Instead of his splendid chariot // he heard of his city to be destroyed. //
Instead of his splendid food // he heard that he would be swallowed up by death. //
And *instead of* the bed of his repose // to the abyss of wrath he *is invited* (ܐܙܡܝ). //
In the midst of his life*, he is* invited (ܐܙܡܝ) to death, // suddenly (ܒܦܬܐ ܥܠܝܗ), the city and its king) (vv. 491–504).

In the last verse of the pattern, the word “suddenly” is used, which we have already mentioned more than once in our study, which is an important marker of a catastrophic situation.

The pattern "**instead of**..." is also presented in the descriptions of the aftermath of the earthquake in the memra "On Nicomedia":

It's silence *instead of* a word, // and a desert *instead of* whispering. // *Instead* of shouting and orators, // public places were devoid of orators. // And *instead of a* hubbub of voices // A muffled "woe!" in the voices. // There are no more melodious songs in the squares, // since the amusements have been interrupted. // *Instead of the* round dances of the young newlyweds, // There was a shudder of the palaces. // And *instead of* dances of young men, // there was a swaying of the columns (Memra "On Nicomedia" 8, 267-278).

In the meme "About Nineveh and Jonah" the pattern "**instead of**..." is an element of other patterns related to the description of the disaster: "**Who is this?** (ܡܢ) + **verb. in perfect**", "**Who was able to endure** (ܡܢ ܟܝ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܢܫܡܥ)?". These rhetorical questions with anaphora emphasize the unprecedented nature of the misfortune that befell the Ninevites and the unparalleled nature of their repentance, for example:

The whole city wept; The stones in the walls they made me cry!
Who (ܡܢ) thus (ܐܝܟܢܐ) prayed, // who thus (ܐܝܟܢܐ) inquired! //
Who thus (ܡܢ ܗܟܢܐ) humiliated, // who thus (ܡܢ ܗܟܢܐ) prostrated! //
Who (ܡܢ) threw away his hatred // hidden as well as overt! //
Who (ܡܢ) cut off and threw away from himself // pleasures like members of his body! //
Who (ܡܢ), having heard only the voice [i.e. Jonah], // and tore his heart with sins! //
Whoever (ܡܢ) heard the word of the mouth, // and terror arose in his mind! //
Who (ܡܢ), because of the faint voice, // was seized with mortal terror! //
To whom (ܡܢ) the image of God // appeared before his eyes in repentance! //
Who (ܡܢ) saw the Just One, // when He drew His invisible sword! //
Who (ܡܢ) saw a big city, // when it was all (ܟܠܗ) wept and wept! //
Who was able to endure (ܡܢ ܟܝ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܢܫܡܥ) // the voice and crying of children! //
They, who desired (ܕܒܥܘ) a long life, // heard that their lives would be shortened. //
Who (ܡܢ ܟܝ) was able to endure the weeping of the elders (ܘܢܫܡܥ)? //
They, who desired (ܕܒܥܘ) a grave (ܩܒܪܐ) and buried (ܩܒܝܪ), // heard that the city would be destroyed. //
Who was able to endure (ܡܢ ܟܝ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܢܫܡܥ) // the great lamentation of unmarried young men? //
They, who watched their wedding festivities, // *are invited* (ܐܙܠ) to death // *Who was able to endure* (ܡܢ ܟܝ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܘܢܫܡܥ) // the voices and crying of brides? //
They, who sat in their wedding chambers, // into the earthen pits (ܒܐܪ) *are invited* <... > (vv. 453–490).

Note that within the framework of large rhetorical patterns, smaller ones appear, for example:

"They, who desired (ܕܒܥܘ) A ... heard Ā[432]" (vv. 477-478; 481-482).

"They, who looked ((ܕܚܙܝ ܒܥܝܢ at A ... invited (ܐܙܠ) to Ā" (vv. 485–486).

"They, who sat (ܕܝܬܒ ܒܒܝܬ) in A, ... to Ā (ܐܙܠ) are invited" (vv. 489–490).

Such examples allow us to emphasize once again the sophisticated rhetorical form of the Syriac work, which is more complex in comparison with other works of the same genre (e.g., the memre "On Nicomedia").

It must be said that the ideas expressed with the help of the rhetorical patterns analyzed above, such as the description of universal lamentation, the opposition of peaceful life before tragic

[432] where A, Ā are antonyms/antonymic expressions.

events and destruction and death after them, the disintegration of social relations, the cessation of feasts, holidays, weddings, etc., are universal in the description of any catastrophe. They can be found in almost every lament, from the oldest in world literature, the Lamentation for the Destruction of Ur (2112–2004 BCE), to the biblical Lamentations of Jeremiah. The patterns we have noted, which are common to the "Nineveh and Jonah" and the memre "On Nicomedia", seem to be productive models for describing the catastrophic situation in the Syriac memre. The memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" explicitly uses the intertextuality with some biblical accounts of catastrophes. For example, chapter 7 of the book of Ezekiel plays an important role, where the refrain is repeated in the phrase "the end has come" (Heb. הקץ בא; Syr. ܐܬܐ ܣܘܦܐ , ܐܬܐ ܫܥܬܐ) (Ezek. 7. 1, 2, 6, 7) and "the time has come, the day has come" (Sir. . ܐܬܐ ܝܘܡܐ ܕܐܬܐ ,ܐܬܐ) (Ezekiel 7:7, 12). These expressions are often used in those parts of the memrah where it refers to the expectation of the impending calamity of the Ninevites, for example:

As the *end was standing* (ܩܐܡ ܣܘܦܐ ܩܪܒ ܗܘܐ) at the door, // the king came out and appeared <... > (vv. 443–444).

The day (ܝܘܡܐ ܐܬܐ) is about to be turned upside down, // *the day* (ܝܘܡܐ ܕܐܬܐ)is approachin , when it is about to be reduced to ruins (vv. 1181-1182).

*The day (*ܝܘܡܐ ܐܬܐ) of despair has arrived, // when wrath was to be fulfilled (vv. 1261-1262), etc.

All of this speaks to the spirit of catastrophe that permeates the memra. The author even repeatedly mentions the shaking of the earth, darkness, misty clouds, lightning, thunder, and other meteorological phenomena that occurred in Nineveh during the forty days after Jonah's judgment, although there is nothing of the kind in the biblical book:

Forty days of shaking, // the earth did not cease to shake (vv. 1285-1286).
The lightnings and thunders ceased, // the ear and the eye rejoiced (vv. 1295-1296).
The clouds and the mist suddenly // dissipated, passed, and came to an end (vv. 1323-1324), etc.

However, the Syriac work, as in a number of other cases, remains faithful to its idea of the tansformation of the biblical text and surrounding phenomena in general. On the one hand, the nearness of death, the description of fear and terror, the cessation of fun and social life, the incessant weeping and sobbing resemble weeping, the description of the devastation caused by natural or man-made disasters. This is emphasized by the use of the same rhetorical patterns in the memr that are used to describe real catastrophes in other works. On the other hand, no one died. There is no real destruction, all changes take place within people. There is no hopelessness, despair, and gloom in the memrah of Ezekiel 7, because the book of Jonah is a book about hope, the catastrophe never happens, and the author of the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" emphasizes this biblical story of "anti-catastrophe" and amplifies it many times over by imposing the matrix of a "lamentation" on the biblical book, just as he did with the matrix of the "literature of wisdom".

Let us also pay attention to the idea of an anti-Jewish inversion of the biblical text, which appears again and again in the memre: the wrath that threatens wicked Judah in the book of Ezekiel threatens the Ninevites in the memre, but thanks to their righteousness, it passes them by, and falls on Israel.

Now we will consider the genre of the work from the point of view of a modern researcher.

4.4. The memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" as polemical *rewritten Bible*

In Syriac Christian literature, there are many works in the genre of "memra", they could be devoted to both Old and New Testament themes. Their narrative exegesis does not involve a commentary on the biblical text in the usual sense, but the creation of a new narrative on a well-known plot, richly equipped with dramatic elements in the form of monologues and dialogues of the protagonists[433]. If the memra of Nineveh and Jonah was written in the fourth century, it is the earliest surviving example of the genre. As we have demonstrated above, there is predictably little interest in typology, since the author's main task focuses primarily on the Old Testament context of the events described.

However, the essence of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is not limited to the definition of a "narrative memra with dramatic elements". The broader literary context must be taken into account here. In one of his articles, Sebastian Brock makes an important comparison between the memr and *the rewritten Bible*, a genre that emerged in Jewish literature during the Second Temple period[434], and lists the main features of this type of text. The plot should be taken from the biblical books (in the memra under study it is the Book of the Prophet Jonah), the exegetical tasks are selective and limited (there is practically no typology in the memre), the necessary rearrangement of the narrative accents (the change of the main character, who in the memr becomes the Ninevites), the absence of biblical quotations equipped with a special marker "as it is written". But the memra "Of Nineveh and Jonah" is not just *a rewritten Bible*, it is, as we first defined, an anti-Jewish *rewritten Bible*, i.e., a paraphrase of the Old Testament Book of Jonah from the point of view of the Ninevites in denunciation of the Jews[435]. The later Syriac tradition is rich in anti-Jewish poetic memrs, such as those of John of Antioch, Narsai, and James of Sarug. But none of them is an anti-Jewish paraphrase of a particular biblical book. In this regard, the closest analogue of the

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[433] *Brock S.* Dramatic Narrative Poems… P. 183–196.

[434] *Brock S.* Dramatic Narrative Poems... P. 188, 195. About the genre of the *rewritten Bible* cf.: *Philip A.* Retelling the Old Testament // It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars, SSF / ed. by Carson D., Williamson H. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988. P. 99–121.

[435] *Fomicheva S. V.* Nineveh vs Israel: How Christian Exegetes Interpret Historical Events // The Bible and Christian Antiquity. 2022. № 1 (12). С. 68–87. Here P. 82.

Memra of Nineveh and Jonah, though much more extensive, is the sixth-century Syriac text The Cave of Treasures, which rewrites the entire Sacred History in an anti-Jewish vein[436].

The genre of such texts can be compared to "*counterhistories*"[437]. At the heart of this genre is the idea that the true essence of any narrative lies in a hidden tradition that must be revealed[438]. The main function of such texts is polemics, they systematically revise the most authoritative sources for the opponent, offering a variant that is a rival to the original narrative. Such works include, for example, a text attributed to the ancient Egyptian priest Manetho (3rd century B.C.), which rewrites the story of the Exodus in a negative way: Jews suffering from leprosy are forcibly expelled from the country. As a matter of fact, the author of the Syrian memra does something very similar to this. He rewrote the Book of the Prophet Jonah, authoritative for the Jews, bringing to the fore the confrontation between the Ninevites and the Jews, which is implicitly discernible in it, and reconstructed the biblical plot, giving it an anti-Jewish orientation. At the same time, the interpretation becomes really offensive to the Jews: as we have shown in the previous chapters of our study, it is not just the Gentiles who take the place of the chosen people, but the descendants of Canaan, the worst enemies of the Jews! We have said that the memrah may even be a parody of a range of certain Jewish texts emphasizing the wisdom of the Jewish people. Thus, the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is not just a narrative dramatic meme, or even just *a rewritten Bible*, but an anti-Jewish paraphrase, a "counter-history" containing rather harsh sarcasm.

4.5. The elements of the sermon in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah"

However, there are other features in the memra that allow us to see in it the signs of another genre: preaching. We have said that there can be an actualized interpretation of biblical events in the memre, i.e., these events are used to illustrate contemporary historical events, which is typical of sermons. Looking at the vivid descriptions of the ideal behavior of the Ninevites in the light of the writings of Ephraim the Syrian from the Nisiban period, we find that the inhabitants of pagan Nineveh are praised for behavior that is the exact opposite of the wicked behavior exhibited by the inhabitants of the Syrian poet-theologian's hometown. It is possible that the sharp anti-Jewish polemics in the memra are combined with the author's criticism of his own church community, and the wickedness of the Jews, in addition to the criticism of the Jews themselves, can serve as a topical negative example for the Christian audience.

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[436]About this text cf.: *Minov S.* Memory and Identity in the Syriac "Cave of Treasures": Rewriting the Bible in Sasanian Iran. Leiden: Brill, 2020.

[437] The term was used firstly by D. Biale and A. Funkenstein in *Biale D.*, *Sholem G.* Kabbalah and Counter-History. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979. P. 189; *Funkenstein A.* Perceptions of Jewish History. Berkley: University of California Press, 1993. P. 36.

[438] *Biale D.* Kabbalah and Counter-History… P. 11.

Even if we cannot identify the historical background of the memra one hundred percent, it nevertheless has a clear homiletic character, which follows from its inherent formal and substantive features. For example, the author's obvious desire for identification between the protagonists and the addressees of the memra, expressed with the help of the "rhetoric of participation" or, in the language of narratology, the desire to erase the boundaries between the depicted world and the real one, testifies to the homiletic nature of the Syrian work. The use of repetitions of key words as signals of ideas important for the addressees to memorize, the presentation of material with the use of vivid visual images, theology "dissolved" in rhetoric — all this can also be attributed to the signs of homiletic elements in the memre.

If it is difficult to determine the historical background, then, as we showed in 5.9.4, the liturgical *Sitz im Leben* can be determined with a high degree of certainty: the Lent. The communal character of repentance, the unparalleled descriptions of the unity of the Ninevites, the special role of the Old Testament, anti-Jewish criticism — all these themes of the memrah seem to have originated in the precepts of the Lent, but, developing in this Syriac work, along the way combined with other ancient motifs and embodied in an sophisticated rhetorical form, they turn into a real epic canvas.

4.6. The hybrid genre of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah"

Thus, in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" are combined the elements of different genres. First, the sacred text is interpreted according to the laws of narrative exegesis with dramatic elements. Secondly, the explicit denunciation of the Jews given in the memra turns it into an anti-Jewish paraphrase, a counter-history built according to the rules established in the literature of the *rewritten Bible*. Thirdly, the text for the period of Lent has similarities with a sermon. Intra-textual terms describe the memra as an "edifying story", a "Christian Wisdom" with elements of an anti-Jewish "disputation poem" and the lamentation.

It is important that the observations made about the genre specificity of this memra serve not only for the interpretation of the memra itself or for the analysis of the legacy of Ephraim the Syrian, but they should also be taken into account in the study of all early Syriac literature of the corresponding genres.

Conclusions of the chapter 4

The memra “Of Nineveh and Jonah” is a transformation of several genres and carries their “fragments”. The memrah of Nineveh and Jonah is a lamentation during a catastrophe that turns into a story of repentance and salvation. This is an instructive story for Christians, built on the “framework” of sapiential literature, an edifying “mirror”. This is a cruel mockery of the Jews, who for centuries have portrayed themselves as wise teachers of the Gentiles. It is a transformed debate poem in which one of the parties, the Jews, is deprived of a voice. And all this is inserted into the frame of a Lenten sermon.

Conclusion

Emanuele Zimbardi in one of his presentations deduced the following "formula" of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah":

"Historical Reality + Biblical Reminiscences + Literary Fiction + Utopian Hopes"[439]

We would replace "historical reality" with "(pseudo)historical", but, in general, the formula is correct. As we have demonstrated, identifying reminiscences, allusions to biblical texts in the memre, and structural parallels to them is the key to understanding the work. In order to understand the text as the author understood it, it is necessary to identify the intertexts that served as the basis for it, the source material for its transformations.

Our main finding, we believe, is the discovery of the role of Wisdom literature in this memra, including as a source of binary structure for the moral opposition of Jews and Ninevites. No less important is the fact that this and other intertexts in the memr have, in our opinion, a liturgical impulse — the circle of Old Testament Lenten readings. Biblical intertexts are superimposed on the author's rhetorically conditioned "fantasy", literary fiction (*literary fiction*), as Zimbardi called it. We have shown that it is not yet possible to speak of the "fictiveness" of a literary work in the memre, and that the Syrian author does not distinguish between "fictiveness" and "falsehood" or "invention". But there are some things he begins to think about, and he tries to justify his "fictional" narrative with the analogy of Abraham, who lied for the sake of Isaac's peace of mind, and whose "white lie" turned into the truth. Again, this is a unique elaboration of the biblical story: that Abraham "prophesied" is said by all Christian exegetes, but it has never occurred to anyone to connect this "prophecy" with the function of a "fictive" narrative. *The individual* elaboration of traditional plots and the presence of unlikely interpretations are what distinguish the Syriac memra "On Nineveh and Jonah", and after it, to a greater or lesser extent, the Syriac dramatic memre as a whole. It is, of course, not yet fiction, but its distant ancestor[440]. Therefore, in our opinion, the identification of special rhetorical, literary tools inherent in the Syriac memre and their influence on later liturgical poetic works Christian, Byzantine, and Jewish is a task that deserves close attention, a task whose importance goes beyond the boundaries of Syriology.

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[439] *Zimbardi E.* Jerusalem, Niniveh, and Edessa: between real and ideal spaces in a Syriac homily of the 4th century PG & EC Late Antiquity Network workshop 'Ideal Spaces' (London, 14th January 2019). P. 11. Posted on the academia.edu website. Accessed on 06.03. 2024.

[440] Cf., for example, the appearance in memre of non-biblical characters devoid of specifically religious essence: for example, the seller of incense in the memra "On a Sinnful Woman" (Ephraim the Syrian?) or the hunter who shows Joseph the way to his brothers (the 4th memra "On Joseph"). The latter example is particularly illustrative, since in other works it is a religious personage, an angel (Targums, homilies of Pseudo-Basil) (Rodrigues Pereira A. Two Syriac Verse Homilies... P. 100, 106).

In the Introduction, we talked about the fact that there has been an increasing number of works on Jewish, Syrian, Samaritan, and Byzantine liturgical poetry in recent years—the work of Derek Krueger, Ofir Münz-Manor, Laura Lieber, Zvi Novick, and others. The fact that such studies have appeared only recently is probably quite natural: researchers are beginning to be interested not only in the general, dogmatic, theoretical questions of theology that pass from work to work, but also in the role of the individual, the "artistic", the emotional, the "literary" in religious works. Scientists are beginning to focus on what is unlikely, what is "atypical".

Scholars of Christian literature are beginning to be interested in the structures by which liturgical narratives draw real audiences into their fictional world; The methods of modern narratology begin to be applied to ancient texts. And here the Syrian memra has a lot to offer. We have identified a number of tools, at the lexical, grammatical, and narrative levels as a whole, that allow addressees to identify with the protagonists of the memra. Some of these methods coincide with those identified by Laura Lieber in the Jewish piyyuts or by Derek Krueger in Byzantine liturgical writings.

Many of the features of biblical interpretation and rhetoric that we have identified in the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" are further developed in Syriac literature. Thus, the role of the literature of Wisdom as a kind of moral "framework" is clearly traced in other Syrian works. For example, in the cycle of memre "On Joseph" by the Syrian poet Balai (5th century), the biblical narrative of Joseph is seen as a source of "(illustrative) examples" (ܐܝܟܢܐ)[441], in the anonymous memra "On Abraham and Sarah in Egypt" (5th century), in the prologue (vv. 1–4) is formulated God's custom of "instructing, educating" (ܡܢܗܓ) the righteous and sinners, and "teaching" (ܡܠܦ) the whole of creation by their example[442].

Of great importance is the problem of the use of the Bible, and possibly non-biblical writings, in memre. The almost complete absence of special citation markers turns the author's word and the intertexts used into a single space. The author uses not only certain key words and expressions, but also plot devices ("anti-Exodus"), structural elements (opposition righteous/wicked) of biblical books. As for quotations and allusions to the Holy Scriptures, the author of the memrah probably uses the Syriac translation of the Peshitta, but in some cases there is a great affinity with the translation of the Targums.

It is no coincidence that the topic of "writing" is avoided in the popularized memre. In the extensive text, there is almost no mention of anything written[443], and there are no books. The

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[441] *Phenix R.* The Sermons… P. 191.

[442] *Hopkins S., Brock S.* A Verse Homily on Abraham and Sarah in Egypt… P. 104.

[443] The only exceptions are the reference to letters of promissory note (ܟܬܒ̈ܐ) of creditors (vv. 57–58; 2071–2072) and the unexpected introduction of a quotation from Amos with the formula "as it is written" (vv. 1783–1784). The last example stands out sharply from the rest of the text of the memra.

king of Nineveh, who is knowledgeable about the biblical tradition, speaks only of oral stories *heard* from his ancestors. What this indicates, the oral nature of the memr, and the possible connection with the idea of the "Oral Torah" should be shown by further research. But, in any case, the absence of any mention of the written language is clearly different from the madrash of Ephraim the Syrian, which emphasizes the special, theologically motivated role of writing and bookishness, and Ephraim the Syrian himself often refers to himself as a "scribe"[444].

The question of the combination of anti-Jewish polemics and internal criticism in this memra and other liturgical works needs further study. We have shown that it is quite probable that the memra presents two objects to which the main function of the text, the polemic and accusatory, is directed: these are the Jews in terms of the exegetical narrative and the contemporary Christians in the part of the sermon with its moralizing pathos. It is noteworthy that a similar situation can be observed in the Jewish piyyuts of the sixth century: for example, in some of Jannaeus's poems, anti-Christian polemics are combined with criticism of his own Jewish community[445].

It is noteworthy that, although certain formal and substantive features of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" can be found in other works of a similar genre, it still stands apart from the Syrian narrative memre and sogyāthā. Its length, the complexity of its ideas, the presence of extensive "embedded stories" in the speeches of the characters — all this distinguishes it from, say, such works as the memra "Of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt", memra "On Abraham and Isaac", the sogitha "On the Daughter of Jephthah", etc. It seems that while certain rhetorical elements are being consolidated and refined, such as the fictive speeches of the characters as a whole, and are becoming more and more similar to the Greek examples of *ethopoiia*, others, such as the "embedded stories", are not particularly anchored in tradition, being reduced at best to brief analogies. Perhaps, the audience begins to regard them as too complicated, excessive, too "fantastic". Although the king of Nineveh "quoting" the books of the Bible is a fascinating picture with great literary and religious potential.

It is also worth noting that this memra does not use the so-called "*rhetoric of humiliation*", which is so characteristic of the hymns of Ephraim the Syrian[446], as well as of the authors of later memre[447], as well as Byzantine liturgical poetry[448]. It is within the framework of this rhetoric that the hymnographer's communication with God usually develops, he asks God for

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[444] Compare, e.g., *S. V. Fomicheva.* Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period...

[445] *Van Bekkum W.* Anti-Christian Polemics in the Hebrew Liturgical Poetry (*Piyyuṭ*) of the Sixth and Seventh Centuries // Early Christian Poetry. A Collection of Essays / ed. by Den Boeft J., Hilhorst A. Leiden, Brill: 1993. P. 297–308.

[446] *Wickes J.* Bible and Poetry in Late Antique Mesopotamia. Ephrem's Hymns on Faith. University of California Press, 2019. (Christianity in Late Antiquity; 5.). P. 63–83.

[447] *Harvey S.* The Poet's Prayer: Invocational Prayers in the Mêmrê of Jacob of Sarug // Studia Patristica. 2017. Vol. 78. P. 51–60.

[448] *Krueger D.* Liturgical Subjects… P. 33.

"sanction" for his bold speech — a hymn, a memra, in spite of his humiliated state and sinful human nature.

The memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is not only entertainment and interest. With the help of refined rhetorical form, antitheses, paradoxes, and rhetorical patterns, the Syriac work expresses important theological ideas: theology of supersessionism, the punishment of the wicked, "Divine pedagogy" in times of calamity, the role of repentance, the relationship between divine and human knowledge. The theme of catastrophe in the memra, viewed through the prism of the Divine attributes of Justice and Goodness, makes this work, as the author intended, relevant at any moment in time, including ours.

The study of the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah" is of considerable interest for understanding the bilingual Greco-Syriac world in the 5th-6th centuries, when a huge number of narrative homilies of "Greek Ephraim", pseudo-John Chrysostom, Amphilochius of Iconium, and other Byzantine authors appeared. In this direction, Emanuele Zimbardi's research on the ancient translation of the memra into Greek is of great importance.

Of great interest, of course, is the question of the origin of such works as the memra "On Nineveh and Jonah". The scholars speak of the Jewish origin of narrative exegesis, which became the main method of interpretation in the Syriac memre. In our dissertation, we did not set out to answer this question, but we believe that attention should be focused not only on the Jewish midrash and targums as examples of narrative exegesis, but also on Jewish works of the Second Temple period, both Aramaic and Judeo-Hellenistic. It is these texts that develop the impulse in Deuteronomy for the Jews as wise teachers of the Gentiles, an idea so ingeniously parodied by the author of the Syriac memra "On Nineveh and Jonah".

Abbreviations

TSO – the works of the Holy Fathers in Russian translation, published at the MDA

AB – Anchor Bible

BZAW – Supplement to the Journal of Old Testament Studies

CCSL – Corpus Christianorum Series Latina

CSCO – Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium

MT – Masoretic Bible Text

OCA – Orientalia Christiana Analecta

PG – Patrologia Graeca

PL – Patrologia Latina

T – Dublin B. 5.18

The – Vatican. Sir. 117

W – British Library Add. 14573

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