

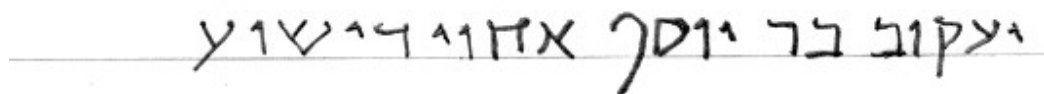
ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION DATA FROM SYRIAN ORTHODOX ANNALS

(1) ANDREW GABRIEL ROTH COUNTERS THE “FORSAKE” THEOLOGICAL SET-PIECE WHICH DOES NOT CORRESPOND WITH ARAMAIC USAGE

These discrepancies between various versions have been the cause of contentions and divisions among sincere men and women who are earnestly seeking to understand the Word of God. At times, they do not know what to believe and what not to believe. They cannot understand why the Scripture in one place says, "Love your father and mother" and in another place admonishes, "Hate your father and mother." Moreover, they are bewildered when told that Jesus on the cross cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The King James says in John 16:32, "Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, **and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.**" Then again, the Old Testament in many instances states that **God does not forsake the righteous** nor those who trust in him. Jesus was the son of God and entrusted his spirit to God. Jesus could not have contradicted himself. The Peshitta text reads: "**My God, my God, for this I was spared!**" After all the Bible is an Eastern Book, written primarily for the Israelites, and then for the Gentile world.

(2) ROTH ON THE “JAMES” INSCRIPTION

The first example is an important inscription from Jerusalem which has been **dated by archaeologists to the first century AD**. Following its discovery and an article in Biblical Archaeology Review, it was published widely in the media around the world. I have transcribed the following text from a photograph of the inscription which was published in the Daily Telegraph [1]:



Transliteration; 'Ya`cob bar Yoseph, a^hui dYeshu`a.'

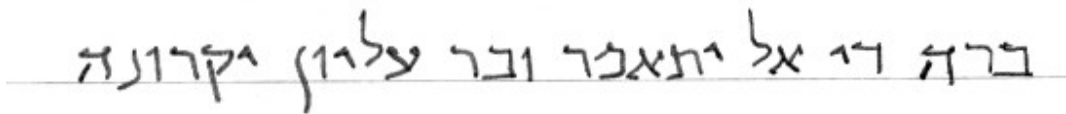
Translation; 'Ya`cob the son of Yoseph, Yeshu`a's brother!'

The last word of this inscription mentions Yeshu`a, which is Jesus' real name written in His own Aramaic language in a near contemporary inscription from Jerusalem. The names Ya`cob and Yoseph we know from their anglicized derivatives as James and Joseph. According to the gospel of Matthew and the apostle Paul, Yeshu`a the Messiah had a half brother called Ya`cob (James) who was the son of Yoseph, (see Mt13v55, Mt27v56, Mk6v3 and Gal1v19). Although no-one can be absolutely certain that the Ya`cob mentioned in this inscription

was the same Ya`cob mentioned in the gospels and by the apostle Paul, there is every indication that he was.

[3] A Messianic apocalyptic text from the Dead Sea Scrolls

The DSS collection of manuscripts come from a Judean archaeological context dated from around the 2nd century BC up to about **AD 60**. I have transcribed the following short excerpt from one Aramaic language scroll, 4Q246 column II, line 1. 4Q246 has been published a number of times, for this excerpt see; [2] p. 70 and [3] pp. 493 – 495. Here it is:

A photograph of a handwritten line of Aramaic text from a scroll. The text is written in a cursive script on a light-colored background. The characters are dark and clearly legible.

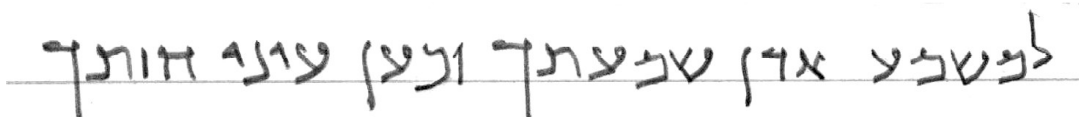
Transliteration: '**Bareh de 'El eth'amar wabar `elyon eqroneh'**

Translation: ' **“The Son of God!” it will be said, and “The Son of the Highest” they will call Him.**'

Compare this Jewish Palestinian Messianic text with two verses found in the gospel of Luke at Lk1v32, 35. Notice that Yeshu`a is given the same two Messianic titles in Luke's gospel which are also found in this text. These two pieces of evidence (amongst others) indicate that Palestinian Aramaic literature provides us with the correct cultural *context* to understand the original *text* of the gospel.

[4] A quote from an Aramaic biblical manuscript in the Dead Sea Scrolls

A beautiful handwritten manuscript of the book of Job can be found amongst the Aramaic corpus from the Dead Sea. Certain features of this text and other historical data indicate that **Job was originally written in Aramaic** rather than in Hebrew. I have transcribed the following quotation from **11Q10**, column XXXVII lines 7 and 8. This text has been published a few times- see for example [3], p. 1201. Here it is:

A photograph of a handwritten line of Aramaic text from a scroll. The text is written in a cursive script on a light-colored background. The characters are dark and clearly legible.

Transliteration: '**Lmishema `aden shema`thak wak`an `ayni hazthak'**

Translation: ' **“An ear that may hear, I have heard you and now, my eyes, I have seen you!”**

The corresponding place in the book of Job is Job42v5. This passage is interesting linguistically because it contains an Aramaic idiom, 'an ear that may hear'. **According to the Greek version of the Gospels, this idiom was spoken by Christ four times.** These four sayings are recorded a total of seven times in the Greek gospels; It can be found three times Matthew's gospel at Mt11v15 and at Mt13v9, 43 and the parallels of the latter two verses also found in Mark and Luke, (see Mk4v9, 23, Lk8v8) and again in Lk14v35. Compared to the way our idiom is written in the Job text, in all seven places in the Peshitta Syriac version of the gospels, this idiom is written differently and incorrectly. If the idiom in our text was known in Syriac, it would have been used in the Peshitta. No reviser would have needed to change it, because, as we have seen, our idiom does not contradict the Greek text. Therefore, the consistent variance of the Peshitta demonstrates that our idiom was not used in the Syriac dialect of Aramaic. **We are led to conclude that our idiom originated from Palestine where according to the Greek gospels, Christ used it four times and where our Aramaic copy of Job was actually found.** So it is surprising, and of some historical significance, that the correct Palestinian Aramaic idiomatic expression found in our text from Job can also be found written correctly in six places spread over three early Syriac gospel manuscripts. (Compare this Palestinian text with the appropriate Syriac example given below.)

The survival of an alien Palestinian Aramaic idiom in the Syriac gospel tradition points to a *textual link* between the Syriac gospel tradition and a primitive Palestinian Aramaic gospel text. However, this is only one data point. A textual link would mean that there are other such relics to be found dotted around in the Syriac literature, as in fact there are. **The Greek and Syriac gospel traditions and the Palestinian Aramaic linguistic evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls taken together demonstrate that there was a primitive gospel text written in Palestinian Aramaic which was originally used in the Syriac-speaking east and also translated into Greek for use in the Hellenistic world.**

[5] Syriac handwriting examples

A Palestinian Aramaic idiom found written in the Syriac gospels

Related to the Palestinian Aramaic text just discussed, here is the same Palestinian Aramaic idiom preserved intact in three early copies of the Syriac gospels; the of Matthew and two early copies of the Peshitta gospels.



Transliteration: 'Man da-'it leh 'adne' lemeshem`a nesh-shem`a '

Translation: ' "Whoever has an ear that he may hear, he will hear!"

[6] The earliest form of the Lord's prayer written in Syriac, two excerpts

The Lord's prayer is a very famous text from the gospels and every new Christian has been taught this prayer from the beginning of the Christian faith. Presented here are two excerpts from the Lord's prayer as it was read and used in the early Syriac speaking churches, long before the Peshitta revision existed. The Syriac text has been critically reconstructed by the present author from twelve Syriac sources including biblical manuscripts and early patristic sources:

ⲕⲁⲗ ⲉⲛⲏⲁ ⲛⲉⲧⲏⲗⲁⲃⲁⲥⲏⲥ ⲥⲏⲙⲁⲕ

Transliteration: ' **Abba' debashmaya' nethqadash shmak'**

Translation: ' **“Father that is in heaven, will be hallowed your name”** '

ⲙⲁⲗⲁⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲉⲧⲏⲗⲁⲃⲁⲥⲏⲥ ⲛⲉⲧⲏⲗⲁⲃⲁⲥⲏⲥ
ⲛⲉⲧⲏⲗⲁⲃⲁⲥⲏⲥ ⲛⲉⲧⲏⲗⲁⲃⲁⲥⲏⲥ

Transliteration: '**Wa-tethe melkuthak wa-nayuan tsabyan-nayak ba'ar`a ayk dabashmaya'**

Translation: ' **“And your kingdom will come and your wills will be done in the earth, as [they are] in heaven.”** '

Introduction to (History of) the Khabouris Manuscript

Reverend Deaconess Nancy Witt, PT, MSW, MSJ With Abbott Gerrit Crawford, PhD, MSJ Western-Rite Syrian Orthodox Church in America



THE KHABOURIS MANUSCRIPT

The Khabouris (also spelled Khaburis) Codex is a copy of the oldest known Eastern Canon of the New Testament in its native, and the original language of the Scriptures, Aramaic. **The physical manuscript has been carbon-dated at approximately 1000 AD plus or minus 50 years.** The colophon bears the seal and signature of the Bishop at the Church at Nineveh, then capital of the Assyrian Empire located today in the present-day Iraqi city of Mosul. **According to colophon it is a copy of a text from approximately 164 AD (internally documented as 100 years after the great persecution of the Christians by Nero, in 65AD).** It was scribed on lamb parchment and hand bound between olive wood covers adorned with gold clasps, hinges and corner-brackets. The scribe would have been in ancient Nineveh (present-day Mosul, Iraq), according to the Colophon signed by a Bishop of the Church at Nineveh. Of particular interest, is the fact that the Khabouris is written entirely in Aramaic, the tongue of Y'Shua, otherwise popularly known as Jesus, the Nazarene.

The original second century manuscript, as well as the Khabouris, were **scribed in the ancient Estrangelo script. The script which was developed at the School of Edessa (100AD) in order to record the Teachings of Y'Shua.** The word, Estrangelo, actually means "to write the Revealed Message." Prior to this script, as in the older Syriac and Hebrew writings, ancient Aramaic used only consonants as a form of shorthand. This became a challenge for the early Christians, as the Word spread out from its origin in time and place. To preserve accuracy in comprehension of the message, the writings needed to clearly represent the pronunciation of the vowels in each word. **So, in Estrangelo, vowel points were added to clarify the pronunciations, and meanings. It appears that Estrangelo was the first such Semitic writing to include these vowel points.** Translations of the New Testament into Greek, then Latin, then Middle English, and then Modern English progressively lost more and more of the nuances of the Aramaic. Until this past century, those Western languages/cultures could not express certain concepts core to the Aramaic understandings of the mind. With the translation of this manuscript using these re-discovered understandings, entire concepts that seemed, at times, baffling, become crystal clear. The message in Y'Shua's Teachings becomes even more logical, and ever more centered around the concepts of Love and Forgiveness.

Within Eastern Christianity, the spiritual tradition of the "Targums" (similar to the Jewish tradition of Midrash) meant that people would come together to study the Scriptures and learn from discussion. Owning a copy of the New Testament was dependent on a family being able to hire a scribe to make a copy. In western culture, for many centuries, access to the Bible was limited to clergy, and until the advent of the printing press, common westerners did not have the same first-hand access as the eastern peoples did to Y'Shua's Teachings. Bibles were passed from generation to generation. The Khabouris is one such New Testament. "The Manuscript was written as a whole New Testament of the twenty-two books of the Oriental Canon, which excludes Revelations and four short Epistles (II Peter, II and III John, and Jude)."1 Its actual history is uncertain.

In the early 1960's two Americans, Drs. Norman Malik Yonan and Dan MacDougald, Jr., set out to locate an intact Aramaic New Testament. Their hope was to uncover the meaning behind Y'Shua's Aramaic words, by which he was able to "drive out demons" and cure mental illness. Because the Yonan (Family) Codex (c. 400-700 CE) was amended and incomplete, they were interested to see if finding a more intact version of the New Testament could be enlightening. Their journey led them into Mesopotamia, and eventually **to a monastery on the River Khabur, a tributary of the River Euphrates, in the mountainous region of northern Syria, and southern Turkey, a region, populated to this day, with Aramaic-speaking Christians. It was here, at this monastery on the River Khabur, that the Khabouris Codex had been treasured for centuries.** At the monastery, they spent time with a centenarian monk, who was able to help them to understand some of the meanings.

As it turned out, they ended up actually purchasing the manuscript and bringing it back to America, where, for some years, a team of Aramaic-speaking scholars from the Yonan Codex Foundation labored to decipher and translate from the ancient script. This work eventually led to some amazing discoveries, due to the newly revealed concepts from the original Aramaic. The Teachings of Y'Shua came fully alive, with new meaning and importance. As His Teachings became clearer, Dr. Dan MacDougald, Jr., an attorney in Georgia, developed a course of study, Emotional Maturity Instruction, based on the elemental Teachings of Y'Shua found in Aramaic. Over a period of years, this course proved to make significant improvements in the mental health of those who took it, including many in the penal and mental health systems. An updated version of this course, now called Laws of Living, was co-authored by Dr. MacDougald

and dr. michael ryce. This course continues to be taught, annually, by dr. ryce at Heartland, his teaching center in the Ozark Mountains of Southern Missouri.

The work of the original Yonan Codex Foundation ended prior to the completion of translation. Before Dan MacDougald passed away, he left the Khabouris in the stewardship of the Western-Rite Syrian Orthodox Church, in order that the validation, documentation, conservation, translation, publication and exhibition could be completed. Work continues on these processes, as well as development of several related books.

Resources: 1) Unpublished writings of Abbott Gerrit Crawford, PhD, MSJ, Western-Rite Syrian Orthodox Church in America 2) fr. michael ryce, N.D., D.C.P. 3) Enlightenment, Khabouris Manuscript, The Yonan Codex Foundation, Inc. Atlanta, GA 1993

From the Book of Margaritha (The Pearl)

On the Truth of Christianity

Written by Mar Odisho, Metropolitan of N'siwin and Armenia, A.D. 1298
The "Holy" thrice repeated in the seraphic hymn, as mentioned by Isaiah, joined with one "Lord", attests Three Qnume in One nature. The words of David, also, are of 'the same import: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth;" and many other like references. Let the heathen, then, and Jews who rail at the truth of the Catholic Church, on account of her faith in the Trinity, be confounded and put to shame. Here endeth the first part.

Assyrians and Syriac Christianity

Aziz Suryal Atiya, a historian and professor of history, discusses the origin of Syriac / Assyrian Christianity under the heading of "Age of Legend" thus, "Assyrian or Syriac traditions link the establishment of Syrian [the Greek for Assyrian] Christianity with the earliest Apostolic age. Some even assert that the evangelization of Edessa occurred within the lifetime of Jesus Christ himself. Accordingly, the Nestorians promoted three legends in support of that contention while relating them to the three Magi and their visit to the infant Jesus, the story of King Abgar of Edessa, and the Acts of St. Thomas the Apostle... Whatever the historicity of those legends may be, the moral is that the roots of Assyrian Christianity are deep in antiquity. Though it may be hard to accept the hypothesis of Abgar V's conversion around the middle of the first century AD, Abgar VIII (176-213) is known to have been a Christian from the testimony of Sextus Julius Africanus, who visited his court." [59]

We read in 'Edessa the Blessed City' [60] by J.B. Segal that Abgar the black of the first century AD wrote a letter to Narsai King of Assyria. Historical evidence indicates that Narsai King of Adiabene also known as King of Assyria was a contemporary of the Abgar the Great (177-204 AD). Reportedly the Parthians drowned Narsai in the Great Zab for his pro-Roman sympathies. [61]

A reference from the Encyclopedia Britannica CD 98 takes one back to the fourth century AD of Assyrian Christianity. "Aphraates became a convert to Christianity during the reign of the anti-Christian Persian king Shapur II (309-379), after which he led a monastic life, possibly at the monastery of St. Matthew near Mosul, Iraq... insulated from the intellectual currents traversing the Greco-Roman ecclesiastical world, the "Homilies" manifest a teaching indigenous to early Assyrian Judeo-Christianity."

The history of the Assyrian Churches has no shortage of names of martyrs who affixed Assyrian to their names from the early days of Christianity. We read of Tatian the Assyrian, a philosopher

who was born in AD 130, and Mar Behnam and his sister Sarah, the children of Sennacherib, king of Ashur, who were martyred in AD 352.[62]

Rev. Aubrey R. Vine in his book *The Nestorian Churches*[63] mentions that the Church of the East had Metropolitan Sees at Nisibis and Adiabene (Arbil) and Bishoprics at Nineveh and Singara, all formerly Assyrian imperial cities.[64]

Philip Hitti, Professor of Semitic literature at Princeton University, in his book *History of Syria*[65], writes that, "Before the rise of Islam the Syrian (Suryani) Christian Church had split into several communities. There was first the East Syrian Church or the Church of the East. This communion, established in the late second century, claims uninterrupted descent in its teachings, liturgy, consecration and tradition from the time the Edessene King Abgar allegedly wrote to Christ asking him to relieve him of an incurable disease and Christ promised to send him one of his disciples after his ascension.

Later Aramaic Translations

Evangelion Damhalte

(The Diatessaron

[

aka-Evangelion da Mehallette]

)

The form of the Glad Tidings text used by the early Syriac Congregation is a topic of much debate. One of the earliest forms of the Syriac Glad Tidings of which we are certain is the Diatessaron, a Greek word means 'through [the] four [Glad Tidings]'. This is a harmony of the four Glad Tidings; that is, it is a mixture of the four Glad Tidings in one. It was composed by Tatian, a native theologian of Syria from the middle of the second century. This Diatessaron is known in Syriac as *Evangelion Damhalte* or 'Glad Tidings of the Mixed'. Its text is, alas, lost. St. Ephrem, the Great Syriac theologian, wrote a commentary on the Diatessaron where he cites many verses from it. Until 1957, even St. Ephrem's commentary was presumed lost until fragments of one manuscript containing the commentary started to appear over the course of almost 30 years, some in the black markets of Paris! No one knows where the manuscript came from, but its authenticity is well established in scholarly circles. The composer of the Diatessaron felt free to introduce material not found elsewhere in what we now call canonical Glad Tidings: *Mattith Yahu* 4:4 and *Markos* 1:6, for example, talk of *YoKhawnawn* the Immerser having lived off 'locusts and wild honey,' which is unusual to an ascetic since locust is a non-vegetarian diet. Tatian felt free to resolve the problem by modifying the text. He substituted 'locusts' with 'milk of the mountains,' the food of the promised land which is mentioned in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 6.3). A reconstruction of the text of the Diatessaron faces several difficulties. Two issues are to be tackled: What was the actual text? And since it is a mixture of the four Glad Tidings, what is the sequence of verses and from which Glad Tidings was each taken? To help resolve this, one of course must consider translations of the Diatessaron, but then one is faced with manuscripts from the sixth to fifteenth century which originate from as far east as Turfan, in China, and as far west as England. Whether scholars will ever be able to provide us with an acceptable reconstruction of the Diatessaron remains to be seen. Some Syriac Assemblies used the Diatessaron as an authoritative text until the fifth century when it was replaced by the *Evangelion Dampharshe* separate Old Syriac Glad Tidings.

Evangelion Dampharshe

(The Old Syriac Translation

[aka-Evangelion de Mepharreshe])

The Old Syriac is known in Syriac as "Evangelion Dampharshe" meaning 'Glad Tidings of the Separated [Evangelists]', in order to distinguish it from the Diatessaron, 'Gospel of the Mixed'. This translation was made early fourth century by Rabulla from the Western Greek text (aka *Codex Bezae*, aka *Manuscript D*). Instead of a literal translation, this was a rather free translation from the Greek. A series of revisions took place over a long period of time

which brought the Old Syriac into closer line with the Greek. The original translation of the Old Syriac is thought by some to be lost, and that we are fortunate to have two lacunous manuscripts which represent different stages of the revisions: the Sinaiticus palimpsest and the Curetonianus manuscript. This is their reasoning as to how they account for the many differences between the two. Yet as mentioned it was simply a translation from the Greek Bezae text, and has no Aramaic original of which it was from.

The Curetonianus manuscript was acquired, among others, by the British Museum and reached its new home on the first day of March 1843. Some further pages arrived in England and Berlin in the form of fly-leaves to strengthen the bindings of other manuscripts. The original home of the manuscript is Deir el-Surian, 'Monastery of the Syrians,' in Egypt. William Cureton, then assistant keeper of the manuscripts at the British Museum, falsely claimed to have discovered that the volume contained pre-Peshitta readings and concluded that he had discovered "the identical terms and expressions which the Apostle himself employed,"— a gross exaggeration. An unusual characteristic of the Curetonianus manuscript is the order of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, with John following Luke on the same page. The Sinaiticus manuscript is a palimpsest; that is, a later scribe rubbed off the original writing of the Gospels and wrote a new text on top of it, a popular activity in antiquity when parchment was rare and expensive. The translator(s) of this manuscript is/are unknown, although it is thought to be a revision of the Curetonianus manuscript. It had undergone many revisions before finally being scratched off to make room for the newer text. Apparently this translational effort was counted as a total débouché of the Gospels by the scribe that scratched it off to make room for something he actually felt deserved to be preserved for posterity's sake. The manuscript is preserved at the ancient library of St. Catherine Monastery in Sinai which contains many ancient Syriac manuscripts. This particular manuscript was discovered in 1892 by Agnes Lewis and her twin sister Margaret Gibson, two Scottish widows. They took 400 photographs of the manuscript and sent them to Cambridge, England, where they were deciphered by two English scholars, Bensly and Burkitt, who concluded its affinity with the Curetonianus manuscript, despite the vast differences between the two. It took many visits to the home of the manuscript in Sinai until the text was deciphered. A chemical reagent was used to help in reading the text, which, alas, contributed to further deterioration of the manuscript. Recently, new photographs have been taken by Bruce Zuckermann (University of Southern California) and James Charlesworth (Princeton Theological Seminary) using the latest photographic techniques. Whether new readings will emerge from this endeavor remains to be seen.

The Western Peshitto

In the early fifth century, a revision of the Eastern Peshitta brought about the Western Peshitto version. The word Peshitto in the Western Syriac dialect means the same as the Eastern's Peshitta— i.e.—'straight', 'simple', or 'clear'. Hence, the Peshitto is not a new translation of the Greek manuscripts as the Curetonianus and possibly the Sinaiticus manuscripts were, but rather this time was a revision of the Eastern Aramaic Peshitta to conform it into line with the Greek translations. The Peshitto also contains the rest of the books of the Renewed Covenant including the Minor Catholic Epistles (2 Peter, 2 and 3 John plus Yehudah) and the Book of Revelation. Being there are no Books of these in the Hebrew or Aramaic languages these Books were translated straight from the Greek manuscripts. Through the centuries the Western Peshitto was altered here and there in order to keep up with the Greek scribe's inundations. Yet was not enough for the liking of other Syriac churchmen who felt a need to produce two more new texts: The Philoxenian and Harklean. The Philoxenian being a totally new translation from the Greek and Harklean simply a revision of the Philoxenian. Scholars have regarded the Harklean as the last of the Syriac revisions, however, in the Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels (1996), Andreas Juckel successfully demonstrates that the Harklean was by no means the last of the revisions. Juckel describes two post Harklean revisions: the first by the Syriac Orthodox scholar Mor Dionysius bar Salibi (d. 1171) and the other represented in J. White's edition of the Harklean, not earlier than the 12th century. These translations were aimed at bringing its text further in line with their contemporary Greek texts.

The Philoxenian

In A.D. 508, a new revision was completed by Chorepiscopus Polycarp, who was commissioned by Philoxenos of Mabbug; hence, the name Philoxenian version. The motivation behind this revision was theological in nature. Philoxenos contended that some of the texts in the Western Peshitto readings gave room for what he called a Nestorian

interpretation. "When those of old undertook to translate these passages," he remarks, "they made mistakes in many things, whether intentionally or through ignorance. These mistakes concerned not only what is taught about the Economy in the flesh, but various other things concerning different matters. It was for this reason that we have now taken the trouble to have the Consecrated Scriptures translated anew from Greek into Syriac." As we can see, the motivation behind this translation was a theological one. This was caused by the Christological controversies of the fifth century. Philoxenos felt that there was a need for a more accurate and literal translation of the Greek New Testament, seeing that the Western Peshitto was just a revision of the Aramaic Text and not an actual translation of the Greek texts themselves. The Philoxenian version did not find favor among the Syriac Christians; as a result, not a single manuscript survives. However, a number of quotations from it are preserved in Philoxenos' commentaries on the Gospels.

The Harklean

In A.D. 616, Thomas of Harqel completed another revision based on the Philoxenian version. The motivation in this case was a philological one. Thomas aimed at providing a literal translation of the Greek even if that meant unintelligible Syriac. The Harklean is considered a masterpiece in mirror translation: every particle in the original Greek is somehow represented in Syriac. The Harklean being such a literal translation of the Greek resulted in obscure Syriac. As is the case with the Western Peshitto, the Harklean is not a new translation, rather a revision of the Philoxenian. The Harklean and the Western Peshitto are the only versions which include the entire text of the ReNewed Covenant. The German scholar A. Juckel notes: "This version is not simply a Syriac translation of its Greek Vorlage; [rather] it is a scholarly edition of the ReNewed Covenant, furnished with a critical apparatus [i.e., notes] in the margin, the sort of work that is much appreciated by modern scholars." (Introduction in Kiraz's Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels, 1996). The Harklean became popular in the Syrian Orthodox Church and was used in the liturgy for centuries. Eventually, however, the translation lost favor, because of its obscure Syriac, and is rarely used today.

Archaeology and history tells us that the language of Babylon and Assyria was Ar a m a i c and that the common people who lived in Israel during the times of Jesus spoke Aramaic. Greek translations of the New Testament Bible contain many references to Aramaic terms which are often bracketed and their meaning explained and narrated within the text. It is clear that the original thinking behind the New Testament is Aramaic; the Church of the East has maintained their Aramaic New Testament Bibles since the days of the original Apostles. The most famous historian of his day was a man named Josephus, a contemporary of Apostle Paul who wrote historical accounts in Aramaic (Preface to the Jewish War 1.1).

Jewish commentaries and tradition are recorded in the Aramaic language. Aramaic is a sister language with Hebrew and most terms are easily identifiable between these two languages.

Dead Sea Scrol l s were written in Hebrew and Ar a m a i c . Aramaic was spoken in the land of Israel from 200 BCE to 200 CE by the Jewish people.

Kh a b o u r i s (or Yonan Codex) is a recently discovered Aramaic New Testament text which has also confirmed that the language of Jesus and the Apostles was Ar a m a i c .

Cr a w f o r d , Shem Tob, DuTillet and Munster manuscripts indicate that there was a Jewish following of Jesus that maintained a Hebrew understanding of the New Tes t a m e n t .

Pe s h i t t a (Eastern) and Western Syriac New Tes t a m e n t (Peshitto) Bibles have carried the New Testament through the centuries in the Aramaic language.

Testimonies of Church founders from both the Eastern and Western Churches tell us that the New Testament was originally written in Aramaic and Hebrew.

Papias and Ireneus (150-170 C.E.) both stated that Matthew was originally composed in Hebrew.

Clement of Alexandria (150-212 C.E.) gave accounts of the book of Hebrews written by Paul in Hebrew.

Origen (c. 210 C.E.) stated that Matthew was first published for Jewish believers in Hebrew.

Eusebius (c. 315 C.E.) stated that Matthew wrote in his native Hebrew tongue and that Paul addressed the Hebrews in his native Hebrew tongue.

Pantaenus reported that upon his arrival to India that copies of the Hebrew Book of Matthew were already in circulation.

Epiphanes (370 C.E.) stated that the Nazarenes (original followers of Jesus) had preserved the Gospel in the Hebrew language.

Jerome (382 C.E.) stated that Paul being a Hebrew also wrote in his own tongue of Hebrew and that his writing was eloquently turned into Greek.

Jewish Talmudic Rabbis had debates concerning New Testament manuscripts (Mas Shabbath 116a). A question arose among them because the New Testament contained the Name of Yahweh (YHWH – hwhy) that indicates that the New Testament had not yet translated the Name of YHWH into the Greek Kurios then into the English LORD.

Disciples of Jesus were Jewish (originally) and at the time of Jesus their country was under foreign occupation by the Romans. Aramaic was the common language of the Israelites who heard the original Gospel in Aramaic and Hebrew.

The Western text type may well be the oldest Greek text type. Its claim to antiquity seems solid. The quotations of the “New Testament” books by many of the second century “Church Fathers” generally support the Western type of text. Moreover it was clearly the Western type of text, which served as the basis for the earliest versions including the Old Latin (a point which will be further discussed in the Chapter on Latin Versions). Many of the oldest Papyri fragments of the New Testament agree with the Western text Type. Among these are:

P29 - This is a 3rd century fragment in the Oxford Bodl. Library containing Acts 26:7-8, 20

P38 - This is a 3rd century fragment at the University of Michigan containing Acts 18:27-19:6, 12-16

P45 - This is the well known 3rd century “Chester Beatty I” Papyri containing several fragments from the Four Gospels and Acts.

P48 - This 3rd century fragment contains Acts 23:11-17, 25-29.

P69 – A 3rd century fragment containing Luke 22:41, 45-48; 58-61

P52 - This is the famous “John Rylands’ Fragment” containing John 18:31-33, 37-38. This fragment dates to about 130 C.E. and is the oldest known fragment of any portion of the New Testament. This fragment follows the Western Text against the traditional Greek text as shown below:

Jn. 18:33a

P52 follows the word order:

“entered then again into the praetorium Pilate”

In agreement with the Western type text of Codex D, the Old Latin and the Latin Vulgate.

However the Alexandrian and Byzantine types (such as Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae, Codex A, and the Majority Text) read with the word order:

“entered then into the praetorium again Pilate”

(Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae, A, C2, Mj).

Thus the oldest fragment of any New Testament book is of the Western Text type.

Not only is the Western text type of the Old Syriac older than the Byzantine text type of the Peshitta but much of the earliest Aramaic Church Literature cites readings as they appear in the Old Syriac rather than the Peshitta, though later manuscripts of these same writings have often been revised to agree with the readings in the Peshitta.

[Jewish Times](#)

The last of the Aramaic speakers

In a race against time, a team of elite scholars work together to record the final remnants of a rich linguistic history



LONDON — Geoffrey Khan had almost given up. A linguist at the University of Cambridge, he was in Tbilisi, Georgia, to find the last speakers of a rare dialect of Aramaic. The first of his three leads, an old man in his 80s or 90s, had a stroke the previous month, and could no longer talk. The second, an elderly woman of nervous disposition, lived by herself with four howling rottweilers who made conversation impossible. The next day he visited the third address, a tall Soviet-style apartment block with dark corridors. A tiny old woman answered the door, and as she served him tea at the kitchen table, her hand started shaking.

“She was exhausted just pouring. I didn’t know if she would survive the interview,” he recalls. “I said, ‘Can I ask you a few questions about your language? You’re one of the final speakers.’ This little frail arm came over the table and grabbed my wrist and she said, ‘Ask me, ask me anything you like.’ I asked her a few questions and said, ‘I don’t want to exhaust you, have you had enough?’ She said no and gripped me tighter, telling me to ask everything I needed to know.

“She was looking at me and I knew she felt she had to tell me everything because she was the end of a line of language that goes back 3,000 years. She didn’t let me go for two hours. It was very emotional.”

For most people, that there are any native speakers of Aramaic left at all will come as a surprise. In fact there are half-a-million, and Khan is one of a tiny band of researchers trying to document their speech. But it is a race against time. The most fluent speakers are all beyond retirement age, and the language is expected to die within a generation.

‘The final voices are with us for another 10 years, but will be silent very soon’

“The final voices are with us for another 10 years, but will be silent very soon,” says Khan.

Partially as a result, there has been a recent surge of interest, with 11 of the leading academics in the field spending up to 10 months this past year at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University (HUJI), comparing notes on individual projects and working together on a new book of neo-Aramaic. At the end of May, an academic conference marking the end of the joint study year attracted around 50 people.

“That was practically everyone in the world” working on it, says Professor Steven Fassberg, Caspar Leviai Chair in Ancient Semitic Languages at HUJI, who co-convened the conference. “It is a hot topic – at least in certain circles.”

What makes the effort so difficult is that modern Aramaic is not one language but more like a family of languages, with up to 150 different dialects. None of them sound like the language of the Babylonian Talmud or of Jesus. According to Professor Otto Jastrow, professor of Arabic in the department of Middle East and Asian studies at the Estonian Institute of Humanities of the Tallinn University, “a speaker from biblical times wouldn’t understand a single word, or even recognize it’s Aramaic.”

‘A speaker from biblical times wouldn’t understand a single word, or even recognize it’s Aramaic’

Nevertheless, there is a direct relationship. Aramaic emerged around 1,000 BCE in the Middle East, and spread throughout the area nowadays known as Kurdistan – northern Iraq, western Iran and south-eastern Turkey. Like all languages, it evolved over time (Khan notes that modern English-speakers can barely understand texts like Beowulf, written in old English just 1,000 years ago). It also evolved geographically, particularly as many speakers lived in isolated villages deep in the mountains. And for the past millennium, there has also been a split between Christian and Jewish speakers, whose dialects can differ radically.

Aramaic’s downfall was that its speakers – Christians, Jews and Mandaeans — were all minorities in the Middle East, and over the past century have suffered such persecution that they have mostly dispersed. Jewish speakers moved mainly to Israel between the 1950s and 1970s. Christian speakers, who are by far the larger group – perhaps as much as 85 percent, says Khan – moved throughout Western Europe and America, but are also found in the Caucasus, Lebanon, and as far afield as Australia and New Zealand. Turlock, California, is “the Mecca” of Aramaic speakers.



Christian Aramaic speakers in the small village of Harbole in southeast Turkey. (photo credit: courtesy)

In Sweden there are enough people to support a newspaper, radio show and television station, while famously, Mel Gibson managed to film parts of his 2004 movie “The Passion of the Christ” in Aramaic. (Khan says that he has consulted on a couple of Exorcist spin-offs where either the devil or God spoke Aramaic.)

In Israel, a group meets in Jerusalem every few weeks to read poetry together; one budding poet even wrote verse about Khan. There were Aramaic plays staged in Holon but it is becoming harder to find actors and audience members and an Israeli Aramaic journal has folded.

As in most immigrant communities, the difficulty is transmitting the language to the next generation, who assimilate into the culture of the majority.

“It dies in stages,” says Khan. “The second generation will understand and still be able to communicate, but there is already a loss of vocabulary, particularly to do with the traditional way of life. There is often a desire to pass it to the third generation, but it is hard to pass on the language in all its richness.”

In fact, by the third generation, there is usually very little Aramaic left. And after decades in the “diaspora,” even native speakers may find that they can’t speak as well as they used to, or that their vocabulary has been influenced by friends and family from other regions, making it hard for researchers to find “pure” examples of particular dialects.



Final Jewish speaker from Kaledex in northern Iraq. (photo credit: courtesy)

Tracking them down, says Jastrow, can be like “a detective novel.” The German professor was one of the pioneers in neo-Aramaic, specializing in the 1960s after realizing how rare it was to be able to study a language that had been spoken continuously for 3,000 years. In the early years he conducted fieldwork among Christian speakers in Turkey without the requisite research permit, which he felt was unlikely to be granted because the community was oppressed. He was eventually arrested, interrogated and expelled from the country.

He is particularly proud of finding two “final speakers” of Aramaic dialects, including one, in Syria, to whom he was introduced while searching for an Arabic dialect also nearing extinction.

“He was afraid to talk to me, but I got enough to write a book,” he says.

The last speaker died in 1998.

The death of the dialect, says Jastrow, “is very sad but you see it coming. The process stretches over years or decades. But you also care for the people. In Western Europe where neo-Aramaic is dying, but the people are well-established and integrating into Western European society, it is a linguistic tragedy but you don’t feel sorry for the people themselves. It’s a different story when the people are massacred and dispersed around the globe.”



Jewish speaker from Almaty in Kazakhstan. (photo credit: courtesy)

Fassberg has never needed to venture further afield than Beit Shemesh, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, for his Aramaic research, as there are strong concentrations of speakers in the moshavim surrounding Jerusalem and in its suburbs. But even in this limited region, finding good speakers can be a lengthy process. Fassberg recalls how one man originally from the village of Challa in Turkey referred him to a friend’s Aramaic-speaking father-in-law, who in turn led him to a retired policeman who came to Israel in the 1930s on a donkey.

“He already wasn’t a very good speaker but he had a cousin who came to Israel in 1951 as an adult. He spoke to me freely and when he died a few years ago, with him died the entire Aramaic of his village,” Fassberg says.

He finds the process emotional from a national-religious perspective.

'It's an unbroken tradition from the days of the Talmud. They have been there since the Babylonian exile'

"It's tracing Judaism back to its roots," he says. "It's an unbroken tradition from the days of the Talmud. They have been there since the Babylonian exile."

Inevitably, he is exposed to harrowing stories of life back in Kurdistan, including stories of siblings being kidnapped by Muslims, converted and married off. As an American-born oleh who grew up in a safe environment, this can be difficult to listen to.

"I heard of one person who went back to Kurdistan to meet up with his sister, who had [willingly] converted and brought her children up as Muslims," he says. "He was very upset to talk."

On the whole, however, his sources are not overly emotional about their histories.

"A lot of the things are over 50 years old."

Fassberg says that the native Aramaic speakers know that their language is nearing its end, but are too old to do anything about it themselves. But Khan says that the Aramaic-speaking community needs to take a role in the language's preservation. He has fundraised among them in the States to pay for a research assistant, who ran sessions in Iraq training Aramaic-speakers to record their own language. He is also in the process of building a [website](#) with recordings of different dialects, for the communities themselves to use.

Khan – who is a Christian Briton with Indian heritage – fell in love with neo-Aramaic after 10 years of studying the manuscripts of the Cairo Genizah. After a month looking at microfilms in a dark room in Jerusalem in the early 1990s, he decided to venture into the sunshine and find an Aramaic speaker "for fun."



Christians in the village of Ishshi in southeast Turkey (photo credit: courtesy)

"Trying to investigate a spoken language with a living speaker blew my mind," says the Regius Professor of Hebrew from his Cambridge office, which is lined with mostly Hebrew books, including the Mishnah. "Instead of a manuscript, I had a human being, and language was part of them. It really brought it to life."

Ironically one of the peculiarities of studying neo-Aramaic is that there are very few manuscripts; it is a largely oral tradition, which makes documenting modern speech even more important.

“The Talmud is a record of oral discussion,” Khan notes. “They were not writing books, they were writing law. The Talmud is in vernacular language and our knowledge of the modern vernacular helps us understand that – although I’m not sure yeshiva bochurs would be very excited about this.”

Worryingly, he says that Jewish Aramaic is even more vulnerable to extinction than its Christian counterparts, partially because of the ideal of speaking Hebrew in Israel. He urges Jews around the world not to be complacent about the impending death of the language and to do what they can to support research and documentation, financially and otherwise.

‘When one talks about Jewish heritage, language is critically part of that’

“When one talks about Jewish heritage, language is critically part of that,” he says.

Jastrow notes that academic research into neo-Aramaic began far later in Israel than elsewhere and that although it has now caught up, there is still particularly low awareness in Israel.

“Kurds in Israel are not regarded as a Jewish group of high culture or education – rather the opposite, they are looked down upon,” he says. “This is completely unjust, and is based on ignorance of the public who haven’t realized they spoke extremely interesting languages and had a very elaborate popular culture.”

So can the entire family of languages be documented in time?

Fassberg says that the Aramaic of the larger villages and towns has largely been recorded, the grammars written and the texts published, but there is still much work to be done on the languages of the smaller villages. They will continue going, he vows, “till the last native Aramaic speaker is gone.” From *The Times Of Israel*

ARAMAIC MATTHEW

The Old Syriac Aramaic version of the Gospel of Matthew

according to two ancient manuscripts, the Curetonian, and the Sinaiticus (4th century CE).

Dr. F. C. Burkitt's translation, as published in 1904 by Cambridge University Press.

This text is based on Dr. Burkitt's edition of the Curetonian manuscript, with those parts that are

missing in the Curetonian having been filled in from the Sinaiticus manuscript. This is a very literal, word-for-word translation of the Aramaic text. (See more notes after Ch. 28.)

EVANGEL OF THE SEPARATED [BOOKS] -- MATTHEW

Chapter 1

1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
2 Abraham begat Isaac. Isaac begat Jacob. Jacob begat Judah and his brethren.
3 Judah begat Perez and Zerah of Tamar. Perez begat Hezron. Hezron begat Aram.
4 Aram begat Amminadab. Amminadab begat Nahshon. Nahshon begat Shala.
5 Shala begat Boaz of Rahab. Boaz begat Ober of Ruth. Ober begat Jesse.
6 Jesse begat David, the king. David begat Solomon of the wife of Uria.
7 Solomon begat Rehoboam. Rehoboam begat Abia. Abia begat Asa.
8 Asa begat Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat begat Jehoram. Jehoram begat Ahazia. Ahazia begat Joash.
Joash begat Amozia. Amozia begat Uzia.
9 Uzia begat Jotham. Jotham begat Ahaz. Ahaz begat Hezekia.
10 Hezekia begat Manasse. Manasse begat Anion. Amon begat Josia.
11 Josia begat Jechonia and his brethren in the captivity of Babylon.
12 Now after the captivity of Babylon, Jechonia begat Shealtiel. Shealtiel begat Zorobabel.
13 Zorobabel begat Abior. Abior begat Eliacim. Eliacim begat Azor.
14 Azor begat Sadoc. Sadoc begat Achim Achin begat Elijior.
15 Elijior begat Eleazar. Eleazar begat Matthan. Matthan begat Jacob.
16 Jacob begat Joseph, him to whom was betrothed Mary the Virgin, she who bare Jesus the Messiah.

17 All the generations therefore from Abraham even unto David are fourteen generations; and from David even unto the captivity of Babylon fourteen generations; and from the captivity of Babylon unto the Messiah fourteen generations.

18 Now the birth of the Messiah was thus: When Mary his mother was betrothed to Joseph, *before ever* they drew near one to the other, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.
19 Now Joseph, because he was an upright man, was not willing that he should expose Mary, and had meditated that quietly he should divorce her.
20 Now, when he meditated these things, there appeared to him, to Joseph, an angel of the LORD in a vision of the night, and said to him: "Joseph son of David, fear not to take Mary, thy betrothed, for that which is being born from her is conceived from the Holy Spirit.
21 Now she will bear thee a son, and his name shall be called Jesus, for he shall save alive the world from its sins."
22 Now this that came to pass *happened* that that might be fulfilled which was said by the LORD through the mouth of Isaiah the prophet, who had said: "Lo, the virgin

shall conceive and shall bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, which is interpreted 'Our God with us.'"

24 Now when Joseph arose from his sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him,

25 and he took Mary, and purely was dwelling with her until she bare the son; and she called his name Jesus.

Chapter 2

2:1 And when Jesus was born in Beth Lehem of Judah in the days of Herod the king, lo, Magians came from the east to Jerusalem.

2 And they say: "Where is the king of the Jews that hath been born? For we ourselves have seen his star in the east, and have come to worship him."

3 Now when Herod the king heard he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, 4 and he gathered together all the chief priests and scribes of the people and said to them: "Where is the Messiah born?"

5 They say to him: "In Beth Lehem of Judah, for thus it is written in the prophet:

6 "Thou also, Beth Lehem of Judah, art not less than the kingdom of Judah; for from thee shall go forth the king that shall tend my people Israel."

7 Then Herod secretly called those Magians, and was enquiring of them that he might know at what *time* the star appeared to them.

8 And he sent them to Beth Lehem, and said to them: "Go enquire about this same lad eagerly, and what *time* ye have found him, come *and* shew me, that I may go myself also *and* worship him."

9 Now they, when they received command from the king, went *away*, and there appeared to them that star which they had seen in the east going before them, until it came and stood over where the lad was.

10 Now they, when they saw the star, rejoiced with a great joy, and entered the house,

11 and saw the lad with Mary his mother, and fell down *and* worshipped him, and opened their treasures and offered him an offering, gold and myrrh and frankincense.

12 And it appeared to them in a vision that they should not return unto Herod, and they by another road went away to their own country.

13 And after their *visit*, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, and said to him: "Arise, take up the lad and his mother and flee to Egypt, and

there be until I say to thee, because Herod is about to seek for the lad, so that he may destroy him."

14 Now Joseph arose and took up the lad and his mother by night and went away to Egypt, and he was there until Herod the king died, that that might be fulfilled which was said by the LORD through the prophet, who had said "From Egypt I have called my son."

16 Then Herod, when he saw that those Magians had mocked at him, was furious exceedingly, and sent *and* killed all the lads that were in Beth Lehem and in all its borders, from two years old and under, according to the time that these Magians said to him.

17 Then was accomplished the word which Jeremiah the prophet said:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramtha, wailing and weeping and much groaning, the voice of Rachel who weepeth over her sons and will not be comforted, because they are not!

19 "Now when Herod the king was dead there appeared to Joseph in Egypt the angel of the LORD in a dream, and said to him:

20 "Arise, take the lad and his mother and go to the land of Israel, because those have died who were seeking the lad's life to snatch away."

21 Now he arose *and* took the lad and his mother, and came to the land of Israel.

22 Now when Joseph heard that Archelaus was king in Judaea in the room of Herod his father, he feared to go thither, and it appeared to him in a vision that he should go to the country of Galilee;

23 and he came thither and was dwelling in a certain city called Nazareth, and the word was fulfilled that was spoken by the prophet, that he should be called a Nazarene.

Chapter 3

3:1 And in those days came John the Baptist, and was preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying,

2 "Repent, because the kingdom of heaven hath drawn nigh."

3 For this is he of whom it is written in Isaiah the prophet, who had said: "A voice that calleth in the wilderness, 'Make ready a way for the Lord, and direct the paths of our God!'"

4 Now, John was clad with clothing of camels' wool, and was girt with a thong upon his loins, and his meat was locusts and honey of the waste.

5 Then were coming unto him the men of Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the

other side round about the river Jordan, and he was baptizing them in the river Jordan, each one confessing their sins.

6 Now when he saw publicans and Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: "Offspring of vipers, who is it hath shewed you to flee from the wrath that is coming?"

8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance;

9 and do not say in yourselves 'For a father we have Abraham,' for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up sons to Abraham.

10 And lo, the axe hath arrived at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruits is hewn down and goeth unto the fire.

11 Now I, lo, I baptize you with water to repentance, but the one which cometh after me is stronger than I, and I am not worthy to take up his shoes; he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire,

12 who holdeth a fan in his hand and cleanseth his threshing-floor, and the wheat he storeth into his barns, and the chaff he burneth with fire unquenchable."

13 Then came Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan to John, that he might baptize him.

14 And John forbad him and said to him: "I am fit that thou shouldest baptize me, and thou unto me hast come?"

15 Jesus saith to him: "Suffer *it* at present, because thus it behoves us to fulfil all uprightness." Then he suffered him to be baptized. And Jesus had been baptized;

16 and when he was baptized, in the same hour that Jesus came up from the water, lo, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God that came down as a dove and rested upon him.

17 And a voice was heard from heaven, saying to him: "Thou art my son and my beloved in whom I have been pleased."

Chapter 4

4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted by Satan,

2 and after forty days that he was fasting he hungered.

3 And he that tempteth drew near unto him, and said to him: "If thou be the son of God, say that these stones become bread."

4 Jesus answered and said to him: It is written "Not by bread alone liveth man, but by every utterance that goeth forth from the mouth of the LORD."

5 Then the Accuser took him and brought him to the Holy City, and made him stand upon the corner of the Temple, and said to him:

6 "If thou be the son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written 'To his angels he shall command concerning thee, that on their arms they should bear thee up, that thou shouldest never dash with thy foot against a stone.'"

7 Again, Jesus said to him: "It is written 'Thou shalt not tempt thy Lord and thy God.'"

8 Again the Accuser took him to the hill, which is exceeding high, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory,

9 and said to him: "These all will I give to thee, if so be that thou wilt fall down and worship before me."

10 Then Jesus said to him: "Get thee behind me, Satan; for it is written 'Thy Lord thy God thou shalt worship, and him alone shalt thou serve.'"

11 Then the Accuser left him for a time, and lo, angels drew near and were serving Jesus.

12 Now when Jesus heard that John was delivered up, he went away to Galilee, 13 and left Nazareth, and came *and* dwelt in Kapharnahum, which is by the sea side in the border of Zebulun and of Naphtali,

14 that that might be fulfilled which was said through Isaiah the prophet, who had said:

15 "The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the river Jordan, Galilee of the peoples;

16 the people that was sitting in darkness have seen a great light, and those that were sitting in the shadows of death, a great light hath risen upon them."

17 From then Jesus began to preach and to say: "The kingdom of heaven hath drawn nigh."

18 And when our Lord was walking by the side of the lake of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Kepha, and Andrew, his brother, casting their nets into the sea, because they were fishers.

19 Jesus saith to them: "Come after me and I will make you fishers of men."

20 And they in the same hour left their nets and went after him.

21 And when he removed thence, he saw two other brothers, James, and John, his brother, sons of Zebedee, while they were sitting in the boat with Zebedee, their father, and mending their nets. And Jesus called them;

22 and they in the same hour left their nets and went after him.

23 And he was going about in all Galilee and was teaching in the synagogues and was preaching the gospel of the kin dour and was healing all torments and all infirmities in the people.

24 And the tale of him was heard in all Syria; and they brought to him all those that were ill, and those that were infirm with stubborn infirmities, and with hateful torments, and many that were struck with palsies and lunatics, and he --

on each one of them he was laying his hand and healing them all.
25 And there went after him great multitudes from Galilee, and from the Ten Cities, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from beyond Jordan.

Chapter 5

5:1 Now when he saw the multitudes, he went up *and* sat in the hill, and his disciples drew near unto him,
2 and he opened his mouth and was teaching them and saying:
3 "HAPPY is it for the poor in their spirit, that theirs is the kingdom of heaven!
5 "HAPPY is it for the lowly, that they shall inherit the earth!
4 "HAPPY is it for the mourners, that they shall be comforted!
6 "HAPPY is it for them that hunger and thirst after righteousness, that they shall be satisfied!
7 "HAPPY is it for the compassionate, that upon them shall be compassion!
8 "HAPPY is it for them that are pure in their heart, that they shall see God!
9 "HAPPY is it for the peace-makers, that they shall be called sons of God!
10 "HAPPY is it for them that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, that theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

11 "HAPPY is it for you what *time* men persecute you, and reproach you, and say concerning you everything evil in a lie for my name's sake.
12 "But ye, rejoice ye and exult in that day that your reward is great in heaven, for so were your fathers persecuting the prophets that were before you.

13 "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if salt lose its savour and become foolish, wherewith shall it be salted? For nothing is it of use but that they should throw it away, and men will trample upon it.
14 Ye are the light of the world; and the city that is built on the hill cannot be concealed.
15 And no one lighteth a lamp and setteth it under the modius, but he setteth it on the lamp-stand, and it shineth for all those who are in the house.
16 So let your light shine before men that they may see your fair deeds, and glorify your Father in heaven.

17 "Suppose not that I have come that I might remit the law and the prophets; I have not come that I might remit them, but to fulfil them.
18 For amen, I say to you, Until heaven and earth shall pass away, one Jod-letter, or one corner shall not pass away from the law till everything come to pass.

19 Every one that shall remit therefore one of these little commandments, and shall teach so to men, shall he called less in the kingdom of heaven; but every one that shall do and teach *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say to you, Except your righteousness shall abound more than the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

21 Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time 'Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be condemned in judgement.'

22 But I say to you, Whosoever shall be wroth with his brother without cause shall be condemned to judgement; and he that shall say to his brother 'Raca' shall be condemned to the synagogue; and whosoever shall say to his brother 'Fool' shall be condemned to the Gehenna of fire.

23 "Whosoever therefore thou offerest thy offering before the altar, and there thou shalt recollect that thy brother hath aught against thee of enmity,

24 leave thy offering there before the altar, and go first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy offering.

25 "Be agreed with thine adversary quickly while yet with him thou art in the way; lest thine adversary deliver thee up to the judge, and the judge deliver thee up to the officer, and thou fall into prison,

26 and amen, I say to thee, Thou wilt not go forth from thence till thou give the last mite.

27 "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'

28 But I say to you, Whosoever seeth a woman, and longeth for her hath committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 But, if thy right eye offend thee, pluck *it* out *and* throw it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that thy one member should perish, and not all thy body go to Gehenna.

30 And, if thy right hand offend thee, cut *it* off *and* throw it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not all thy body go to Gehenna.

31 It hath been said, 'He that dismisseth his wife shall give her a letter of divorce.'

32 But I say to you, He that dismisseth his wife, concerning whom there hath not been alleged adultery, he causeth her to commit adultery; and he that taketh up a divorced woman doth indeed commit adultery.

33 "Again ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time: 'Thou shalt not swear an oath of falsehood, but shalt give to the LORD thy oath.'

34 But I say to you, Ye, your own selves, shall not swear: -- not by the heavens, because they are the throne of God;
35 nor by the earth, because it is the footstool that is under his feet; nor by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King;
36 nor *yet* by thy head shalt thou swear, because thou canst not make in it one single lock black or white.
37 But your word shall be Yea, yea, and Nay, nay; now whatsoever is more than these is from the Evil One.

38 "Ye have heard that it hath been said 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I say to you, Ye shall not stand up against the Evil One, but he that smiteth thee on thy cheek, offer him the other;
40 and he that willet to go to law with thee and take away thy coat, let him take away thy cloak also;
41 and he that saith to thee that thou shouldest go with him a mile, go with him two others.
42 And he that asketh thee -- give to him, and he that would borrow from thee - - forbid him not.
43 Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time 'Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy.'
44 But I say to you, Be loving to your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you,
45 so that ye may become the sons of your Father in heaven, he that maketh his sun to rise on the good and on the evil, and sendeth down his rain on the upright and on the wicked.
46 For if ye be loving to them that are loving to you, what is your reward? For so even the toll-gatherers do.
47 And if ye greet your brethren only, what is your kindness? Nay, do not the pagans do so?

48 "Become therefore perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Chapter 6

6:1 Beware that ye do not your gift before men, so that ye may be seen by them, else ye have no reward with your Father in heaven.

2 Whensoever therefore thou doest alms, do not blow a trumpet before thee, as the respecters of persons do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by men; amen, I say to you that they have received their reward.

3 But thou, what *time* thou doest alms, let not thy left-hand know what thy right-hand doeth,

4 that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee.

5 And what *time* thou prayest, be not as those respecters of persons, that love to stand in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets to pray, that they may be seen by men: I say to you that they have received their reward.

6 But thou, whensoever thou prayest, enter thou into the inner chamber, and shut the door in thy face, and pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee.

7 "And whensoever ye pray, do not be babbling as the respecters of persons, for they hope that by much speaking they are heard.

8 Be not therefore like to them, for your Father knoweth what is required for you before ever ye ask it.

9 But thus be praying:

Our Father in heaven, thy name be hallowed.

10 Thy kingdom come. And thy wishes be *done* in earth as in heaven.

11 And our continual bread of the day give us.

12 And forgive us our debts, so that we also may forgive our debtors.

13 And bring us not into temptation, But deliver us from the Evil One. Because thine is the kingdom and the glory, For ever and ever, Amen.

14 "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Father also in heaven will forgive you;

15 but if ye yourselves forgive not men their trespasses, neither will the Father forgive you your trespasses.

16 "And whensoever ye fast, do not be as the respecters of persons, that make gloomy their faces, that they may be seen by men that they are indeed fasting -- and amen, I say to you that they have received their reward.

17 But thou, whensoever thou dost fast, wash thy face and anoint thy head,

18 that thou be not seen by men that thou art indeed fasting, but by thy Father that knoweth in secret, and the Father that seeth in secret shall repay thee.

19 Lay not up for yourselves treasure in the earth, where the moth falleth and corrupteth, and where thieves break through and thieve.

20 But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where no moth corrupteth, nor thieves break through and thieve.

21 For where your treasure shall be, your heart shall be there also.

22 For the lamp of the body is the eye: if thine eye be single, thy whole body also will be light;

23 but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body also is dark. If therefore the light in thee is dark, thy darkness -- how great it will be!

24 "No man can serve two lords; else the one he will hate and the other he will love, or the one he will endure and the other he will despise: ye cannot serve God and mammon.

25 Therefore I say to you, Be not anxious for your life what ye shall eat, nor for your bodies wherewith ye shall be clothed; for the life is more than the food, and the body than the clothing.

26 Look at the birds of the heaven -- that they sow not nor reap nor store up, and your Father in heaven nourisheth them; are ye not therefore more than they?

27 But which of you can add unto his stature one cubit, that about clothing ye are anxious?

28 See the lilies of the plain -- how they grow, that they spin not nor toil;

29 and amen, I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was covered like them.

30 But if the grass of the field that today is, and tomorrow is plucked up and falleth into the furnace, God doth clothe, how much *more*, therefore, over you will he be careful, O, lacking in faith?

31 Be not therefore anxious and say 'What shall we eat and what shall we drink, and wherewith shall we be covered?'

32 For all these things the peoples of the earth seek after, for your Father doth know that for you also these things are required.

33 But ye, seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 Be not therefore anxious for tomorrow, because tomorrow for its own is anxious. Sufficient for the day is its evil.

Chapter 7

7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.

2 For with what judgement ye judge, ye are judged, and with the measure that ye mete it is meted to you.

3 Now, what is the mote that in thy brother's eye thou dost see, and the beam that is in thine eye thou dost not examine?

4 Or how canst thou say to thy brother, 'Let me put forth the mote from thine eye,' for lo, in thine own eye a beam is set?

5 Thou respecter of persons! put forth first the beam from thine eye, and then it will be approved for thee to put forth the mote from thy brother's eye.

6 "Give not a holy *thing* to dogs, neither cast pearls before swine, that they may not trample on them with their feet, *and* return and rend you.

7 Ask, and ye shall receive; and seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.

8 For whosoever asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and he that knocketh -- it is opened to him.

9 For which of you whose son shall ask for bread, will he hand him a stone?

10 Or if for a fish he shall ask, will he hand him a serpent?

11 If therefore ye that are evil, know how to give good gifts to your sons, how much rather your Father in heaven *knoweth* how to give good things to those that ask him.

12 Everything therefore that ye would that men should do to you, be ye doing to them; for this is the law and the prophets.

13 Enter by the straight gate, because wide is the gate, and roomy the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go therein.

14 How strait the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few are they which find it!

15 "Keep yourselves from prophets of falsehood, which come unto you in lambs' clothing, and within they are ravening wolves.

16 From their fruits therefore ye shall recognise them; for they do not pluck from thorns grapes, nor figs from briers.

17 Every good tree bringeth forth good fruits, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruits.

18 The good tree cannot bring forth evil fruits, neither can the evil tree bring forth good fruits;

19 every tree therefore that bringeth not forth good fruits is hewn down and falleth into the fire.

20 From their fruits therefore ye shall recognise them.

21 "Not every one therefore that shall say unto me, 'My Lord, my Lord,' entereth into the kingdom of heaven; but he which doeth the will of my Father which *is* in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.

22 For many will say to me in that day, 'Our Lord, our Lord, in thy name have we not eaten and drunken, and in thy name prophesied, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many mighty works?'

23 Then I shall say to them, Never have I known you; go ye away from me, doers of wickedness.

24 "Every one that heareth these my words and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, that built his house on the rock, and the rain came down, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and were dashed against that same house and

it fell not, because its foundations on the rock were laid.

26 And every one that heareth these my words and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, that built his house upon the sand,

27 and the rain came down, and the rivers came, and the winds blew, and were dashed against that same house, and it fell, and its fall was great."

28 And when Jesus finished these his words, the multitudes were astonished at his teaching, for as one authorised he was teaching them, and not as their scribes and the Pharisees.

Yuri Kurchinsky

Bob Coffey L'shuvkha Marya
To the glory of the Lord
Aramaic Bible Companion