

Doctrinal Insights from the Peshitta – Part 1

Compiled by Christopher Lancaster

Now that we have seen the internal (linguistic and apologetic) and external (historical) aspects of Peshitta Primacy, we can discover how this knowledge changes our perceptions of Christianity. What use is a “superior Bible” if it cannot bring you closer to the true Christianity? The purpose of this article is not to discuss Biblical doctrine in detail, rather, to show how the Peshitta impacts on such doctrine (for example, I have other in-depth articles discussing the importance of the Sabbath and the Divinity of Jesus).

As a result, this discussion is quite small, but makes giant strides in identifying the true Biblical doctrines. It is also interesting to note that while many of these Biblical doctrines can be gleaned from the Greek, it is much clearer in the Aramaic (not surprising when “Peshitta” means “straight”). If all Christians would use the original Aramaic New Testament, the Peshitta, there would be much less schism in the Church, which would likely have made the Apostle Paul very happy. In 1Corinthians 12:25, he explained, “That there may be no discord in the body, but that they may care one for another, all members should be equal.”

1. The Sabbath

To find out the importance of the Sabbath (the seventh day of the week), one need only choose a book from the Old or New Testaments. Few will argue the importance of observing the Sabbath in the Old Testament, but when it comes to the New Testament, there is no specific command to observe the Sabbath. At least, that’s what most of us think. Until we discover the truth about Hebrews chapter 4, particularly verse 9.

Hebrews 4:9

The KJV says: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.”

This clearly says nothing of the Sabbath.

The NIV says: “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;”

This is getting complicated (by the way, just about every Greek-based English Bible reads like this, having either “rest” or “Sabbath rest”). Since Sabbath means rest, the NIV, NASB, ASV, RSV and many more are talking about a “rest rest”. Meanwhile, versions like the KJV and NKJV speak of a “rest”. This is all looking very suspicious, so let’s take a look at what the “original Greek” really says.

Both the Byzantine and Alexandrian texts use the word σαββατισμος . Not “Sabbath rest” or “rest rest”, but “sabbatismos”, the Sabbath. It should be a clear indicator of biased translator’s intentions, when the word for Sabbath is substituted for “rest” or “Sabbath rest”. While the corruption here stems from the English translators and not the Greek, we shall still examine what the Aramaic has to offer.

The Lamsa says: “It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath.”

Lamsa may have the correct meaning of the verse here, in his translation from the Peshitta, but I will provide a more accurate translation.

The Peshitta says: **ܘܢܫܐ ܕܥܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ**

This means: “Therefore the observing of the Sabbath remains for the people of God.”

Note: The word for “remains”, can also mean “is established”.

Some may say that the Aramaic **ܘܢܫܐ** in Hebrews 4:9, is a verb meaning “resting” or “to rest”. This is false, as **ܘܢܫܐ** derives from the lexeme **ܢܫܐ** which is a verb, meaning “to observe the Sabbath”.

Now even if this point is conceded, many will say that the “people of God” does not refer to us “Gentiles”, but the Hebrews. That argument falls through as there were many Gentiles living among the Hebrews, to who this book was supposedly addressed. Furthermore, when examining history and Biblical prophecy, a great multitude of Europeans and European-based peoples are descendants of Hebrews (a topic for another article). Lastly, the Old Covenant was given to the Israelites, not the Hebrews (Israelites are Hebrews but not all Hebrews are necessarily Israelites, just as not all Semites are necessarily Israelites).

Yet more people will argue (without the slightest suspicion as to why biased translators tried to conceal the Sabbath in this verse) that the verse speaks of a “rest in Jesus”. Firstly, it is clear from the Aramaic original and even the Greek, that the verse speaks of the Sabbath. Secondly, don’t just believe the KJV that the preceding verse is speaking of Jesus:

KJV (Hebrews 4:8): “For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.”

The “Jesus” in verse 8, is none other than Joshua, son of Nun, successor to Moses! A little-known fact is that Jesus and Joshua are equivalent names (Jesus = Yeshu’ = Yehoshua = Joshua), so it is easy to understand how this misunderstanding arose.

But if “Yeshu’” can refer to Jesus, Son of God, or Joshua, son of Nun, how can we be sure either way? Because the Aramaic, unlike the Greek, leaves no question. In verse 8, this figure is referred to as **ܘܢܫܐ ܕܥܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ**, which means “Joshua the son of Nun”. We know that Jesus was not the son of Nun (while we do know that Joshua was, as seen in many verses such as Joshua 1:1), so this verse clearly speaks of Moses’ successor.

While the Greek reads similarly to the Aramaic in verse 9, highlighting the bias and corruption of the translators (from Greek to English), the Greek does differ from the Aramaic in verse 8. While the Peshitta makes it clear that the figure is “Joshua the son of Nun”, the Byzantine and Alexandrian Greek texts speak of **Ἰησοῦς**, meaning Jesus or Joshua, omitting the crucial phrase “the son of Nun”.

Let’s take a look again at this crucial statement in Hebrews 4:9

“Therefore the observing of the Sabbath remains for the people of God.”




After reading Hebrews 4:9, it is good to say, “if a person is not a “person of God”, then they needn’t worry about observing the Sabbath”. In fact, they needn’t concern themselves with any part of the Bible. With so many scholars and academics adding to or changing God’s Word to conceal this message of the Sabbath in Hebrews 4:9, perhaps we should take notice.

2. The Divinity of Jesus

When reading the New Testament, one may become confused. There seems to be ‘two people’ who have divinity and both are called ‘Lord’. Usually, ‘LORD’ and ‘Lord’ are used, to distinguish these ‘two people’. True Christians who have the Holy Spirit (I will explain this later on, from Scripture), know that Jesus IS God, they know that these ‘two people’ are really just ONE, that Jesus is a manifestation of God, not a separate God/person/Lord.

Is this differentiation of ‘LORD’ and ‘Lord’ to refer to “God the Father” and “Jesus the Son” respectively, justified? It may well be in the Greek, as different words may be used in the Greek. But this is irrelevant, as the Greek texts are merely translations from the Peshitta. So we look to the Lamsa Bible, one of the more popular translations of the Peshitta. Unfortunately, the same distinction is there, ‘LORD’ and ‘Lord’ are used, to differentiate God from Jesus. However! Often the same word is used for ‘LORD’ as ‘Lord’! Unfortunately, Lamsa, who was against the trinity and who tried to keep his version in line with the KJV, chose to translate the word for ‘LORD’ as ‘Lord’ (which is disastrous!) in verses where Jesus is being discussed. So basically, there are verses in the original New Testament, where no distinction is made between God and Jesus.

Jesus is MarYah

This word is ‘MARYAH’. MarYah literally means Mar (Lord) Yah (name of God in the singular). YHWH, arguably Yahweh, is one of the names of God.  (MarYah) is a compound name made from  ("Lord") and  ("Yah", the accepted Aramaic shortened form of YHWH). YHWH is plural, while Yah is singular.

Different groups of Judeans and other Semites in the time of Jesus, called God by different names/titles, and one of those was ‘MarYah’.


In the Gospels of the original Aramaic Scriptures, ‘MarYah’ is often used to describe God. We know it refers to God, as historically that is one of the names He was called by, and in the Gospels, before Jesus’ birth, we see often that God is referred to as ‘MarYah’. Later on in the New Testament, ‘MarYah’ is used to describe God also.

Here’s the crucial key omitted in the Greek: So is Jesus! In many verses of the New Testament, Jesus is called ‘MarYah’, a name ONLY used for God. These many verses are spread throughout the Scriptures too, not just centralised and caused by misunderstanding or some such. All the writers of the New Testament KNEW that Jesus is God, so it is not surprising to find Him being called ‘MarYah’ in many different books.

The Peshitta leaves NO DOUBT that Jesus was God Himself, manifest in the flesh. Now that you have had time to understand that ‘the LORD’ and ‘the Lord’ are the same ‘person’, the same God, let us examine some of the verses that call Jesus, ‘MarYah’, a name undisputedly used ONLY for God.

Luke2:11 of the Peshitta boldly declares that Jesus is Lord-Yah or LORD.

“For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Saviour, who is Lord-Yah the Messiah”

Other versions keep you guessing as to who the 'Lord' is. Even the Lamsa Bible which I find tremendously helpful and superior to the Greek-based Bibles, is not free from corruption. As stated above, when describing ‘God the Father’, Lamsa consistently translates the Aramaic word for LORD,  (MarYah), as 'LORD'. However,

Note: In Mark 12:29, both occurrences of 'Lord' is 'MarYah'.

Luke 2:11 For this day is born to you in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord.

Acts 10:36 For God sent the word to the children of Israel, preaching peace and tranquility by Jesus Christ; he is the Lord of all.

Romans 14:9 For to this end even Christ both died and came back to life, and rose to be Lord both of the dead and living.

1Corinthians 8:6 To us there is one God, the Father, from whom comes every thing and by whom we live; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.

Examples (from the Lamsa translation) where Jesus is "d'MarYah"

The 'd' in "d'MarYah" is a proclitic, which is a prepositional phrase that attaches to the beginning of a word. It looks like it is part of the word, but it really isn't. The 'd' in "d'MarYah" can mean 'of', 'that', 'which', 'who' etc, based on the context. This is already accounted for in the translation, so as above, just replace the word 'Lord' with 'LORD' or even better (and more accurate), replace it with Lord-Yah. As ALL these verses refer to Jesus, when corrected, these verses have a whole new meaning!

Matthew 3:3 For it was he of whom it was said by the prophet Isaiah, The voice which cries in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, and straighten his highways.

Luke 3:4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, The voice which calls in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make the paths of our God straight in the plain.

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this very Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Acts 2:38 Then Simon said to them, Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus for the remission of sins, so that you may receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

1Corinthians 11:27 Therefore whosoever shall eat of the Lord's bread and drink of his cup unworthily shall be guilty of the blood and body of the Lord.

1Corinthians 11:29 For he who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks to his condemnation; for he does not discern the Lord's body.

1Corinthians 12:3 Therefore I want you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:11 And every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God his Father.

Jesus is Alaha

As if this revelation of MarYah were not enough, there is yet more. Ancient Hebrews often called God, "Elohim" (plural) or "Eloha" (singular). The Aramaic-speaking people often call God "Alaha", the equivalent of the Hebrew Eloha.

Romans 9:5

KJV: “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.”

NIV: “Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”

Note: Notice the irony here that the “trinity Bible” (it contains the Comma Johanneum), the KJV, plays with the grammar of the Greek, changing the meaning, while the NIV (often seen as opposing Jesus’ divinity) is true to the Greek and proclaims Jesus’ divinity.

From the Greek in Romans 9:5 (both Byzantine and Alexandrian), we get the impression that Jesus is God, as the word is θεος (theos). Groups like the Jehovah’s Witnesses like to point out that theos/theon does not mean “the God”, but “a god”, thereby “proving” that Jesus is not God. This opens up a whole can of worms that is beyond the scope of this article (such as there being “one god”). The Aramaic sheds light on this verse, as always.

ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܥܡܡܐܘܪܐܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

The word translated as “theos” in the Greek, is ܕܡܫܝܚܐ, “Alaha”. Once again, the Peshitta makes it clear that Jesus IS God.

Romans 9:5 (Peshitta, translated): “And from among them is seen/revealed the Messiah in the flesh, who is Alaha”

The Aramaic version of the book of Jude, is not as direct as Romans, but still shows that Jesus is Alaha. Here is the latter part of the verse:

ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ

While talking about Alaha, it says that they: “deny he who is alone Lord Alaha and Lord Yeshua Messiah.”

This clearly talks of one being who is “Lord Alaha” and “Lord Yeshua Messiah”. This verse makes it clear that Jesus is Alaha.

The translations by Etheridge and Murdock agree:

Etheridge: “For certain men have obtained entrance, who from the beginning were proscribed in this condemnation; depraved men, who the grace of Aloha turn unto lasciviousness, and him who is the only Lord GOD, our Lord Jeshu Meshiha, deny.”

Murdock: “For some have obtained entrance, who from the beginning were registered beforehand under this condemnation: wicked men, who pervert the grace of God to impurity, and deny him who is the only Lord God and our Lord, Jesus the Messiah.”

Does the Greek make it so clear? No, the Greek allows for ambiguity (with the Alexandrian text omitting “God” altogether).

KJV: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

NIV: “For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.”

Byzantine Greek: ... και τον μονον δεσποτην θεον και κυριον ημων ιησουν χριστον αρνουμενοι

It approximately reads “... and denying the only master God and our Lord Jesus Christ”

Alexandrian Greek: ... και τον μονον δεσποτην και κυριον ημων ιησουν χριστον αρνουμενοι

It approximately reads: “... and denying the only master and our Lord Jesus Christ”

The Byzantine isn't as clear as the Aramaic in showing that Jesus is God. It is inescapable from the Aramaic. But the Alexandrian is even more guilty in omitting “God” altogether, leaving no possibility for an interpretation that Jesus is God.

The trinity and the Miltha

As for the topic of the trinity, like the oldest Greek texts, the Peshitta lacks the famous phrase (the Comma Johanneum) from 1John 5:7 of the KJV, “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” This was a later addition, as the earliest Greek and Aramaic NT manuscripts testify.

But there are far more intriguing ways in which the Peshitta deals with “trinity issues”.

John 1:1 is probably one of the most misunderstood verses of the Bible.

John 1:1

KJV: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

NIV: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Both trinitarian and “Oneness believers” claim this as proof that Jesus is God. This is clear in the Greek as well as the Aramaic. Both groups have markedly different interpretations of this verse which they use as support for their doctrine. Trinitarians believe that the verse shows that Jesus is another person from “God the Father”, as the “Word” was WITH God, while also BEING God. A challenge faces the trinitarians though, in the rendering of “God”. Both instances of “God” in the verse are the same word, “theos” in the Byzantine and Alexandrian Greek texts, and “Alaha” in the Peshitta. If they replace “God” with “God the Father”, then John 1:1 states that Jesus (undisputedly, “the Word”, as believed by both camps) is the Father, which would totally nullify the trinity doctrine. So, they can avoid that and replace “God” with “the trinity”. This causes its own problems, as then you have “Jesus was with the trinity”. This could mean that now there are four persons to the Godhead. You also would have “and Jesus was the trinity”, meaning that Jesus is not only the Son, but also the Father and the Holy Spirit.

“Oneness believers” explain that the verse does not speak of different persons of God, rather of different manifestations of God. They hence avoid the problems that a trinitarian has, when faced with this verse. In

reference to “and Jesus was the trinity”, many Oneness believers have no problem, as they believe that Jesus is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Their belief can be explained in detail by such passages as Christians being told the baptise in the name (one name, not two or more names) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, while the Apostles in Acts, baptise in the name of Jesus so many times.

How does the Aramaic original affect this verse? While the Greek says “logos”, “the Word”, the Aramaic says “Miltha”. Miltha is one of those words that are best left untranslated, as it has no equivalent in English. Some of its possible meanings include “Word”, “substance” or “manifestation”. The latter reading would seem to support the theory of the Oneness believers, as a manifestation can be “separate” and “same”, simultaneously.

While there are many more places where the Aramaic makes clear on the issues of the Divinity and trinity, the purpose of this article is not to discuss the doctrines in-depth, so we shall end our discussion here.

3. Homosexuality

Romans 1:26-27

The Lamsa says: “Therefore God has given them up to vile passions; for even their women have changed the natural use of their sex into that which is unnatural; And likewise also their men have left the natural use of the women and have run wild with lust toward one another, male with male committing shameful acts, and receiving in themselves the due recompense of their error.”

Passage such as Romans 1:26-27 seem to strongly condemn male and female homosexuality. But this can be seen in any language, whether Aramaic, Greek or English. We will focus on how the Aramaic alone, casts light on this subject.

I will mainly discuss another verse relevant to this topic, but first we shall take one more look at Romans 1:26-27, to see if the Aramaic does enhance the meaning.

The Aramaic contains the phrase **ܡܘܨܩܐ ܕܥܘܒܪܐ** which is more accurately rendered as “diseases of disgrace”, rather than the Byzantine and Alexandrian Greek texts’ rendering, **παθη ατιμιας**, meaning “vile passions/lusts”. It is no wonder then, that many Aramaic translators even take the meaning as that these homosexuals would be given up to venereal diseases. Note the “given up” is more accurately “delivered up” which is associated with death. It would seem like such a coincidence then, that homosexuals suffer from a much higher proportion of “diseases of disgrace” (if you will, “sexually-transmitted diseases”), than heterosexuals. Now, on to the main point of this section.

One of the biggest proof texts used by Christians in condemning homosexuality is 1Timothy 1:10.

1Timothy 1:10

The KJV says: “For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;”

The NIV says: “for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers--and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine”

4. The Doctrine of Agape, “the higher love”

Many Believers teach that there are two words in the Greek, translated as “love” and therefore there are two different meanings. They contend that “phileo” is a more “neighbourly love”, while “agape” is a “Godly love”. The Peshitta clarifies this issue considerably, as Paul Younan demonstrates. In fact, even the Greek gives us clues that “agape” and “phileo” are really just synonyms.

“Much hoopla has been created by the Greek Primacist arguments regarding Yukhanan John 21:15-17, and how Meshikha is supposed to have played with the meanings of the Greek words for love - "Agape" and "Phileo".

The plain truth is that "Agape" and "Phileo" are merely synonyms! The reading of the Greek versions of Yukhanan 3:35 and 5:20 (same author\translator) makes this very clear!

John 3:35 - the Father loves (Agapao) the Son

John 5:20 - the Father loves (Phileo) the Son

Furthermore, we are told by the Greek primacists that "Phileo" supposedly means a more "friendly" type of "love", whereas "Agape" is more a "Godly" type of "love."

But how can "Phileo" simply be a "friend-ly" type of love when you consider the following verses in the GNT: ?

Matt.10:37 He that loveth father or mother

John 12:25 He that loveth his life

Matt.23:6 love the uppermost rooms

John 5:20 the Father loveth the Son

John 16:27 the Father Himself loveth you

John 20:2 the other disciple, whom Jesus loved

Titus 2:4 women to be sober, to love their husbands

Conversely, how can "Agapao" be a "God-ly type of love" in light of the following verses in the GNT: ?

John 12:43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise from God

John 3:19 but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

2 Pet 2:15 who loved the wages of wickedness.

2 Tim 4:10 Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me...

Consider these two verses from the same Gospel of Yukhanan:

Concerning John the beloved disciple:

John 21:20 Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved (agapeo)...

John 20:2 She came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved (phileo)...

And these from Luke:

Luke 11:43 "...love (agapeo) the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the market-places."

Luke 20:46 "...love (phileo) to be greeted in the market-places and have the most important seats in the synagogues."

How can these two words be anything *but* synonyms? This Greek Primacist argument is simply devoid of any merit!" – Paul Younan

Concerning the examples from John and Luke above, the Greek clearly shows us that the words are synonyms. The Peshitta clarifies this by having the same word in all cases, "Rakhma".

It is also noteworthy that even if you don't believe that the Aramaic is the original, it is still true that Jesus spoke in Aramaic! If someone wants to dispute this, let them take note that Jesus was talking to his Apostles or other Aramaic-speaking people. There is no "two kinds of love" business in the Aramaic, so even if the Greek were the original, how on Earth would Jesus have differentiated between "agape" and "phileo"?

One particular passage, has been oft-used as evidence for this "two love" doctrine.

"In the Greek versions of John 21:15-17, we read the following:

"...lovest (AGAPAO) thou me more than these?

He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (PHILEO) thee

...He saith to him again the second time . . . lovest (AGAPAO) thou me?

He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love (PHILEO) thee. . .

He saith unto him the THIRD time lovest (PHILEO) thou me?

Peter was grieved because he said unto him the THIRD time, Lovest (PHILEO) thou me?

And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love (PHILEO) thee.

Traditionally, John 21:15-17 has been a rich source of what Bible scholars call "eisegesis"—reading into the text something the text itself does NOT contain. Self-styled "Greek scholars" go bonkers with this passage, seeking to get something out of the passage that is not there.

Their idea is that Meshikha was asking Keepa, with the higher Greek word (AGAPAO), if he loved Him deeply and intimately. Supposing that Meshikha thought Keepa fudged by using the lower Greek love word (PHILEO), Meshikha repeated the question three times to Keepa.

But Bible correctors have missed something. . .

It says that Meshikha said to Keepa the "**THIRD TIME**, Lovest (**PHILEO**) thou me?" Either the Greek matching words are in error or it doesn't make a hill of beans worth a difference which Greek words, "**AGAPAO**" or "**PHILEO**", are used in either place - because Meshikha and Keepa were not speaking in Greek anyway!

Besides, there is absolutely no difference between the Greek words "AGAPAO" and "PHILEO" ! Just look at the Greek versions of John 3:35 and John 5:20! The Father loves the Son — and both verbs are used interchangeably! Also, Keepa could hardly answer "Yes, Lord, I love you" if in fact he meant "No, Lord, I like you as a friend." It is very clear that Keepa got upset, not because Meshikha changed his verb in the third question, but because Meshikha asked him the same question three times — an obvious allusion to Peter's threefold denial of Jesus.

Finally, the "Greek Scholars" totally miss another linguistic feature in the original Aramaic words - that Keepa was asked this question three times because Meshikha used a different Aramaic word for "sheep" each time He asked Keepa this question! This, of course, is absent in the Greek which has only 2 different words for "sheep."

The Peshitta has Christ asking the exact same question three times - whereas the Greek has him asking the first 2 questions the same and then alternating the third verb to be the one that Peter used all along. This does not make sense then, because Peter got upset that he was asked the same question THREE times. But the Greek translation doesn't have Him asking the SAME question three times. Why would Peter get upset here?" – Paul Younan

A more in depth discussion of John 21:15-17, and how the Greek lost the true message is found in another article of this series, "Miscellaneous Proofs in the New Testament, Suggest Peshitta Primacy – Part 1". The gist of it is that Jesus used three different words for sheep, "lambs", "rams, and "ewes", meaning that all were to be taken care of. Men, women and children. Of course, this is only preserved in the Aramaic.

Now, as the Aramaic often uses a single word, translated as the two synonyms, agape and phileo, we would expect to see at least one example of a "synonym split word". We would expect to see different Greek texts, rendering the "Aramaic love" differently. Such examples are hard to come by, but they do exist. In John 11:5 for example, most Greek manuscripts say "hagapa" (agape), but Manuscript D (Western text) says "efilei" (phileo). This is significant, as many scholars believe that the heavily "Semitic" Western Text (aka Manuscript D aka Codex Bezae) is the "original Greek", meaning that all other versions (from where our mainstream English Bibles are translated) would be in error!

A similar situation occurs with the Old Latin (believed to be the precursor to the Latin Vulgate). Some Old Latin manuscripts (e a d) say "amabat" in John 11:5 instead of the usual "diligebat". And yet again, people come in proclaiming that "amabat" is a different type of love than "diligebat". This example may also lend some support to the growing belief that the Latin versions stem from the Aramaic and not the Greek.

5. Tithing, Torah, the Mosaic Law and the New Law

The Mosaic Law is something that various groups of Christians have been fighting over for centuries. Some say that the Mosaic law has passed, that we, under the new Covenant and new priesthood, also have a new (or changed) law. They backup their claims with Scripture. Others say that the Mosaic law remains and also backup their claims with Scripture! Greek Scripture that is.

Once again, the Aramaic sheds doctrinal light.

From the “pro Mosaic law verses”, perhaps the most important is the proclamation from Jesus:

Matthew 5:17-18

KJV: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”

NIV: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

Lamsa: “Do not suppose that I have come to weaken the law or the prophets; I have not come to weaken, but to fulfil. For truly I say to you, Until heaven and earth pass away, not even a yoth or a dash shall pass away from the law until all of it is fulfilled.”

Many say that this is a clear statement from the Lord that the Mosaic law is still for us. Some may say though, that it isn't the “Mosaic law” being referred to, but the Torah! Both main families of the Greek use the word νομον, “nomos/nomon”. This word has been often used for “law” but another meaning for this word is “Torah”.

The Peshitta confirms this. The word here for “law” in the Aramaic is “namusa”. And “namusa” can also mean Torah! This fits perfectly with the rest of the verse, as “Torah and Prophets” is one way of referring to the Old Testament, the Tanakh. While people may argue over whether the Mosaic Law is still for us, all can agree that ALL Scripture, even the OT, is useful for correction, for instruction. “Torah” of course, means “instruction”, not “law”. The Torah is not the Mosaic law. It is the first five books of the Bible.

Why do the main English translations from the Greek and Aramaic say “law” instead of “Torah”? They were probably just affected by a misunderstanding, that Torah means “law”, therefore thinking that “law” and “Torah” are equivalent. This has been taught for centuries, by groups such as “Rabbinical Jews”, while the truest, simplest meaning is of “instruction”. I don't think anyone will care to argue that the Bible is useful for instruction, no matter what their position on the Mosaic Law! One Bible version that does translate it as “Torah” in this verse, is the JNT.

Another oft-used “pro Mosaic law verse” is taken from Paul the Apostle.

Romans 3:31

Lamsa: “What, then? Do we nullify the law through faith? Far be it; on the contrary, we uphold the law.”

Again, most versions say “law”, while the word in the Aramaic is “namusa”. One could argue all day long that Paul is not referring to the old law, but to a new or changed law. But another possibility is that Paul is talking about the Torah, which is not nullified.

This is a massive topic, but the purpose of this article is not to teach in detail the true Biblical doctrines, it is to show how the Peshitta can affect the doctrines of today (whether true or false).

Tithing

One specific case where the Peshitta may clear up misconceptions about the law, is that of tithing. Tithing has been part of many “old covenants”, such as the Mosaic Law. Many say that Jesus also taught us to tithe:

Matthew 23:23

KJV: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

NIV: "'Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.'"

The crucial part is the end, where it says "not to leave the other undone" or "without neglecting the former". It is very easy to take this to mean that Jesus is teaching us that we still must tithe! The main translations of the Greek (KJV for the Byzantine and NIV for the Alexandrian) clearly refer to "the other" or "the former", which are some ways of interpreting the Greek which says "kakeinos". Kakeinos can refer to "the other", though to be fair to Zorba, it doesn't always have to. Kakeinos can also refer to "and them".

The Aramaic however is much clearer, leaving no room for ambiguity.

Lamsa: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you take tithes of mint, dill, and cummin, and you have overlooked the more important matters of the law, such as justice, mercy, and trustworthiness. These were necessary for you to have done, and these very things by no means to have left undone."

Yunan: "woe to you scribes and Pharisees hypocrites for tithes you mint and dill and cumin and you overlook the more important things of the law justice and mercy and faith these things and necessary were for you to have done and these things not you should have forgotten"

The crucial word here is **ܘܗܝܠܝܢ** (ohaleyn), meaning "and these". The Aramaic leaves no possibility (unlike the Greek) for "the former" or "the other", making it clear that Jesus was not reinforcing the tithing laws in this verse.

As a very interesting sidenote, once again the word translated as "law" is actually "namusa"! So while we are not taught here to obey the Mosaic law, or to obey the laws of tithing, we could very well be told that we should not overlook the "more important matters" of the Torah! From the Aramaic, it is clear that Jesus isn't teaching us to tithe. In fact, one could even take it from this situation, that tithing is no longer for us. That we should heed the weightier matters of the "namusa", such as justice, mercy and faith.

Now I'm not saying that we shouldn't give! As Believers, it is our duty to give and to help the less fortunate, even if we are ourselves very poor. But the question is; are we still under the Mosaic law and must we give by tithing according to the rules of the Mosaic law?

The new or changed law

Now that we have seen the Aramaic impact on "pro Mosaic law verses", let us take a look at an "anti Mosaic law verse", to keep things even and unbiased.

Hebrews 7:12

KJV: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."

NIV: "For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law."

To a Believer who thinks that the Mosaic law is no longer for us, such a verse is very useful in navigating through the “pro” and “anti” Mosaic law verses, all the while asking questions such as “which law is being referred to here?” and “is this OT or NT law?”. The message from this verse seems loud and clear. We have a new priesthood (Jesus), so we also have a new or changed law. Either way (new or changed) it is not the same as the Mosaic law. In the Greek, the word again is “nomos”, which can refer to “law” or “Torah”. With ambiguous words, one must always look at the context. Can the Torah change? No. But the law certainly can.

Is this the message we get from the Aramaic? Yes. Again, the Aramaic uses the word “namusa”.

Lamsa: “Since there was a change in the priesthood, so also there was a change in the law.”

Conclusion: Well that’s the last of the first batch of articles in the PPP (Peshitta primacy proof) series. Do not fret, the sequels are already being planned for the future, especially dealing with the “extraGospular” books. I hope that this information has brought you closer to the true Word of God. – Christopher Lancaster