

The Syriac versions of Old Testament quotations in Matthew

Author:

 Herrie F. van Rooy¹
Affiliation:
¹Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa

Correspondence to:

Herrie van Rooy

Email:

herrie.vanrooy@nwu.ac.za

Postal address:

Faculty of Theology, North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa

Dates:

Received: 17 Dec. 2014

Accepted: 21 May 2015

Published: 18 Dec. 2015

How to cite this article:

 Van Rooy, H.F., 2015, 'The Syriac versions of Old Testament quotations in Matthew', *In die Skriflig* 49(1), Art. #1916, 12 pages. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v49i1.1916>
Note:

This article deals with the Syriac versions of Old Testament quotations introduced by a formula containing the verb *πληροῦν* in the Gospel of Matthew. It is an important contribution to the study of these quotations, as the Syriac versions of this group of quotations have not yet received detailed attention. This work is based on the research supported by the National Research Foundation. Any opinion, finding and conclusion or recommendation expressed in this material is that of the author and the National Research Foundation does not accept any liability in this regard.

Read online:


Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

In the Gospel of Matthew 10 quotations from the Old Testament are introduced by a formula containing the verb *πληροῦν*. This article explores the rendering of 9 of these 10 quotations in 3 Syriac versions of the New Testament, namely the Peshitta and the 2 versions of the Old Syriac Gospels (*Sinaiticus* and *Curetonianus*). The question addressed is the relationship of the Syriac versions to one another, to the Peshitta of the Old Testament and to the Greek Gospel. For the quotations in Matthew, their relationship to the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament is very important. In the quotations discussed, the Greek New Testament did not make much use of the Septuagint as it is known today. The Old Testament Peshitta influenced the Old Syriac, but not to the same extent in all instances. This influence could have been through Tatian's Diatessaron. Tatian probably used the text of the Old Testament Peshitta for the quotations of the Old Testament in the gospels. In instances where the *Curetonianus* and the *Sinaiticus* differ, it could demonstrate attempts to bring the text closer to the Greek New Testament. The New Testament Peshitta normally started with a text close to the Old Syriac, but frequently adapted it to bring it closer to New Testament Greek.

Die Siriese weergawes van die Ou-Testamentiese aanhalings in Matteus. Die Evangelie van Matteus het 10 aanhalings uit die Ou Testament wat deur 'n formule met die werkwoord, *πληροῦν*, ingelei word. Hierdie artikel ondersoek die weergawe van 9 van die 10 aanhalings in drie Siriese weergawes van die Nuwe Testament, naamlik die Peshitta en die twee weergawes van die Ou Siriese Evangelies (*Sinaiticus* en *Curetonianus*). Die vraagstuk handel oor die verhouding van die drie Siriese weergawes tot mekaar, tot die Peshitta van die Ou Testament en die Griekse Evangelie. Vir die aanhalings in Matteus is hulle verhouding tot die Hebreeuse en Griekse Ou Testament baie belangrik. In die aanhalings wat bespreek word, maak die Griekse Nuwe Testament nie veel van die Septuagint gebruik soos dit vandag bekend is nie. Die Ou Testament Peshitta het die Oud Siriese Evangelies beïnvloed, maar nie tot dieselfde mate in al die voorbeelde nie. Hierdie invloed kon geskied het via Tatianus se Diatessaron. Tatianus het waarskynlik die teks van die Peshitta van die Ou Testament vir die Ou-Testamentiese aanhalings in die Evangelies gebruik. In die gevalle waar die *Curetonianus* en die *Sinaiticus* verskil, is die verskille waarskynlik te wyte aan pogings om die teks nader aan die Griekse Nuwe Testament te bring. Die Nuwe Testament Peshitta het waarskynlik met 'n teks naby aan die Oud Siriese begin, maar het dit dikwels aangepas om dit nader aan die Griekse Nuwe Testament te bring.

Introduction

In the Gospel of Matthew 10 quotations from the Old Testament are introduced by a formula containing the verb *πληροῦν*. This article will explore the rendering of these 10 quotations in 3 Syriac versions of the New Testament, namely the Peshitta and the 2 versions of the Old Syriac Gospels (*Sinaiticus* and *Curetonianus*). The question addressed is the relationship of the Syriac versions to the Peshitta of the Old Testament and the Greek Gospel. In the case of the Greek Gospel its relationship to the Hebrew and the Septuagint is also relevant. Matters that are important for this issue are word order, the choice of lexical items and the verbal forms employed. Not all examples will be presented in great detail. Matthew 2:23 will not be discussed, as the Old Testament reference is very brief, which makes it difficult to determine the exact passage to which it refers. The nine instances discussed below do not have parallels in the other Gospels, making them very suitable for such an investigation.

Background pertaining to the different texts

This article deals with biblical texts in Hebrew, Greek and Syriac, with the aim to trace the background of passages quoted from the Old Testament in the Old Syriac and Peshitta versions

Copyright: © 2015. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS OpenJournals. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

of Matthew. The form of the quotations in the Greek Matthew is related to the question of the sources used by Matthew for these quotations. The quotations could have been taken from an Old Testament text, but they could also have been abbreviated or adapted for the purpose of the evangelist. He could have used the quotations from a Hebrew text of the Old Testament or from the Greek (Septuagint). The 10 quotations under consideration come from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Zechariah and Psalms. Most of them are from Isaiah. The Hebrew text of the Old Testament had not been standardised at the time of the New Testament, so that one has to consider a different *Vorlage* when the quotation differs from the Hebrew text. In many instances, quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament agree with the Septuagint in cases where the Septuagint differs from the Masoretic text (which postdates the time of the New Testament). The Septuagint has its own history of translation and transmission, but the quotations in the New Testament should be considered prehexaplaric. One has to evaluate the text in the New Testament against this background of the history of the transmission of the Septuagint.

As far as the form of the quotations in the Syriac texts is concerned, the history of the different Syriac versions must also be taken into account. In this regard, the article by Brock (1992) gives a good summary of the relevant information. The Peshitta of the Old Testament was mainly translated in the first 2 centuries AD (1992:794). As the Syro-Hexapla is much younger than the New Testament Syriac versions discussed in this article, it can be ignored in this discussion. As far as the New Testament is concerned, the Diatessaron is the earliest translation into Syriac, dating from the 2nd century (1992:796). The Diatessaron was probably compiled in Syriac from the beginning (Joosten 2001:502). The first translation of the four individual Gospels is the Old Syriac translation from the 3rd century AD (cf. Brock 1992:796). Of the Old Syriac, there are two manuscripts of the Gospels, *Curetonianus* and *Sinaiticus*. They differ from one another, in some instances quite substantially.¹ *Sinaiticus* (*Codex Syriacus* 30 from St. Catherine's Monastery; Kiraz 1996) can be regarded as the best copy and the manuscript is a palimpsest, with the Gospel text dating from the late fourth or early 5th century. *Curetonianus* (British Library Add 14451; Kiraz 1996) was partly published by W. Cureton in 1858. The Peshitta of the New Testament is not a new translation, but a revision of the Old Syriac (or the Diatessaron) to bring it closer to the Greek. It probably dates from the early 5th century and the revision could have been done using an early Byzantine text of the New Testament in Greek (Brock 1992:796–797). The line of development of the Old Testament quotations started at the Hebrew Old Testament, then the Septuagint in some instances, the Greek New Testament, the Peshitta of the Old Testament (that could have been used in some instances by the New Testament in Syriac), the Diatessaron, the Old Syriac Gospels and finally the Peshitta of the New Testament. This line of development must be kept in mind when studying the

Old Testament quotations in the Syriac versions of the New Testament. However, it must not be regarded as a unilinear development.

An important question in this regard is to what extent did the translators of the Old Syriac Gospels and the New Testament Peshitta make use of Tatian's version of the quotations. Joosten (1990:55) points out that it has been known for quite some time that the quotations in the Old Syriac and the New Testament Peshitta are not a translation from the Greek Gospels, but rather originate in the Old Testament Peshitta. Brock (1977:96–98) was the first one who indicated this. In his study of all the Old Testament quotations in the gospels, Joosten (1990:58–59) summarised his findings in three points:

- Tatian consistently used the Old Testament Peshitta for the quotations, even in instances where the Old Testament Peshitta differs from the Greek.
- The Old Syriac Gospels and the New Testament Peshitta independently used the Diatessaron, including the Old Testament Peshitta versions of the quotations.
- The Syriac Gospels demonstrate an attempt to correct the Old Testament quotations on the basis of the Greek New Testament. This happens more in the New Testament Peshitta than in the Old Syriac Gospels.

Joosten does not discuss all the Old Testament quotations in the four Gospels, but gave special attention to those instances where the influence of the Old Testament Peshitta can be discerned.

In a later work, Joosten (1996) discusses the quotations again. He states that the two Old Syriac Gospels agree in most instances. Differences between them may be ascribed to corruption or correction in one or both of them (1996:7–10). They depend on a common Old Syriac text. He thinks that the original Old Syriac translator made use of the Diatessaron and tried to retain as much as possible of it (1996:11). He is also of the opinion that the translator of the Peshitta Matthew used an adapted version of the Diatessaron in his translation.

Shedinger (1999:267) says that Joosten did not take the complete quotations into consideration, but only the words or phrases that could indicate agreement with the Old Testament Peshitta. After discussing a number of examples, his conclusion is that Tatian's dependence on the Old Testament Peshitta is not on a very solid foundation. Joosten (2001) responded to Shedinger by discussing a number of examples where the reading of the Diatessaron is attested by different source, both East and West. His conclusion remains the same as in the other two publications mentioned above.

As we do not have a Syriac text of the Diatessaron, the precise relationship between it and the later Syriac Gospels cannot be defined. However, this group of examples can be discussed without considering the issue of harmonisation, as these quotations only appear in Matthew.

1. The texts of the *Curetonianus*, *Sinaiticus* and the New Testament Peshitta used in this article are all taken from the parallel edition of Kiraz (1996).

Old Testament quotations in Matthew

Matthew 1:22–23, quoting Isaiah 7:14

The use of the fulfilment quotation is unique to Matthew (Beaton 2005:64). The focus on these quotations because of the recurring introductory formula, is self-evident. The first one is found in Matthew 1:23.

Knowles (2006:72) distinguishes between texts that had an apocalyptic or messianic interpretation in the Judaism of the New Testament period and those in which such an interpretation has been unique to the church. Isaiah 7:14 was not interpreted messianically in Jewish exegesis (Beaton 2005:65–66). In the Christian church, however, the quotation of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:22–23 is probably one of the best-known quotations in which the text from the Old Testament is used to explain the virgin birth of Jesus:

New Testament Greek:² 22 Τοῦτο δὲ ὄλον γέγονεν ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος, 23 Ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένοσ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσουσιν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ.

NIV:²² All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:²³ 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel.'³

The first important point is to determine whether the New Testament quotes from the Hebrew or the Septuagint:

MT:⁴ הַנְּהַרְשֵׁתִי הַרְהוּרְיִי לְבָן וְקָרָאתִי שְׁמוֹ עִמָּנוּאֵל

NIV: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and she will call him Immanuel.

Septuagint:⁵ ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένοσ ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεισ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουήλ.

Menken:⁶ Behold, the virgin will be pregnant and will give birth to a son, and you will call his name Emmanuel.

Most scholars are of the opinion that the New Testament uses the text of the Septuagint as basis in this instance (cf. Hagner 1998:20; Knowles 2006:75). The only difference between the New Testament and the Septuagint is the third person form of the verb, *καλέω*. The Septuagint has a second person singular and the New Testament a third person plural (cf. Moyise 2001:40). Quite a number of witnesses to the Septuagint have this reading as well, mainly late manuscripts. Some New Testament witnesses have the reading of the Septuagint, starting with D (codex *Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, from the 5th century). These readings could have been attempts on both sides to harmonise the reading with the other tradition.

2.The text of the Greek New Testament is in all the examples taken from Aland *et al.* (2013).

3.In order to save space, the translation of the NIV will not be given for longer quotations from the Masoretic text and the New Testament Greek.

4.The Masoretic text is taken from Elliger and Rudolph (1984).

5.The text of the examples from Isaiah is taken from Ziegler (1967b).

6.Menken here refers to translations of passages from the Septuagint (Menken 2004).

The Hebrew has a third person feminine form here (cf. Wildberger 1991:308). The three verbs are all futures in the Greek, whilst the Hebrew has an adjective, a participle and a perfect with *waw* consecutive. The New Testament also follows the Septuagint with the translation of *παρθένοσ* for *הַרְהוּרְיִי* (cf. Hagner 1998:20). This example and many of the other quotations in Matthew are discussed in detail by Maarten Menken (2004). He does not accept the idea that Matthew used the text of the Septuagint and changed the person of the verb. He (2004:121–124) discusses the textual problems in the Septuagint in detail and is of the opinion that Matthew used a revised text of the Septuagint for this quotation and did not alter the text he had to fit into his context (2004:125). However, the possibility of a revised Septuagint text does not have implications for the Syriac translation of the quotation.

The Old Testament Peshitta is the oldest of the four Syriac versions under discussion:⁷

ܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܡܬܥܥܘܪܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ

h' btwlt' bṭn' wyld' br' wntqr' šmh 'mnw'l

Look, the virgin has conceived and will give birth to a son and his name will be called Immanuel.⁸

This Syriac translation follows the Hebrew word order closely, but has some interesting renderings. It could have used the cognate *ܠܝܡܬ'* (*lymt'*) for *הַרְהוּרְיִי*, but rather used *ܐܠܗܘܬܐ* (*btwlt'*). The reason is probably the influence of the Greek New Testament rendering of the Hebrew word with *ἡ παρθένοσ*. This could be an example of an influence from the side of the New Testament Greek on the Peshitta Old Testament. This rendering is then followed by the later Syriac renderings in the Old Syriac Gospels and the New Testament Peshitta. The Old Testament Peshitta is also not consistent in its rendering of the Hebrew verbs in this passage. It renders the Hebrew adjective at the beginning of Isaiah 4:17 with a participle, the Hebrew participle with a participle and the Hebrew perfect with *waw* consecutive with an imperfect. The only other difference is the use of a passive verb ('his name will be called Immanuel') at the end:

Curetonianus: ܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܡܬܥܥܘܪܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ

h' btwlt' bṭn wt'ld br' wntqr' šmh 'mnw'l

Look, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and his name will be called Immanuel.

Sinaiticus: ܐܠܗܘܬܐ ܡܬܥܥܘܪܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ ܕܘܢܐ

h' btwlt' bṭn wt'ld br' wnqrwn' šmh 'mnw'l

Look, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call his name Immanuel.

The two Old Syriac texts differ in one instance only and the influence of the Peshitta Old Testament is clear. They use the

7.The texts from the Old Testament Peshitta of Isaiah is taken from Brock (1987).

8.The English translations of the Syriac are the author's own.

vocabulary of the Peshitta Old Testament, but have two imperfections for the first two verbs, instead of the perfect and participle of the Old Testament Peshitta. They do not follow the Greek idiom of the Septuagint and New Testament Greek for being pregnant, but use the verb of the Peshitta Old Testament. *Sinaiticus* uses the same passive verb at the end of the quotation as the Peshitta Old Testament does, whilst the *Curetonianus* uses the third person plural active verb, as the New Testament Greek does. It is quite evident that these two Syriac witnesses started with the rendering close to that of the Old Testament Peshitta and adapted it to some extent to the New Testament Greek.

What is also interesting to note is that in the introductory formula before the quotation *Sinaiticus* has not only ‘through the prophet’, but rather ‘through Isaiah the prophet’ *Curetonianus* has ‘through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah’. In this they agree with the Greek manuscript D and the Itala:

Peshitta New Testament:
 ܕܗ' ܒܬܘܠܬ' ܬܒܝܢ ܘܬ' ܕܒܪ' ܘܢܩܪܘܢ' ܫܡܗ 'ܡܢܘܘܐܠ
 dh' btwlt' tbtm wt'ld br' wnqrwn' šmh 'mnw'al

Look, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call his name Immanuel.

The New Testament Peshitta agrees in every aspect with the *Sinaiticus*; thus, it probably did not change the Syriac basic text it used.

All the texts follow the word order of the Hebrew closely. As far as lexical items are concerned, the choice of *παρθένος* in the Septuagint is very important. This is followed by the New Testament, and by the Syriac versions with *ܒܬܘܠܬ'*. Other important issues are the rendering of ‘will become pregnant’, where the Hebrew uses an adjective, the Septuagint and New Testament use a Greek idiom (*ἐν γαστρὶ ἔξει*), the Old Testament Peshitta has a participle, and the three New Testament Syriac versions use an imperfect of the same Syriac verb as the Old Testament Peshitta. In the Hebrew, the verb used for naming the boy is active and third person feminine. The Septuagint has a second person form. The New Testament has the verb in the third person plural, whilst the Old Testament Peshitta has a passive. The New Testament Peshitta has a third person plural, like the New Testament Greek. *Curetonianus* follows the Old Testament Peshitta, and *Sinaiticus* agrees with the New Testament Greek in the one instance where they differ. The New Testament Peshitta follows the *Sinaiticus* and the New Testament Greek in this instance.

Matthew 2:15, quoting Hosea 11:1

This example is interesting because of the way in which the New Testament applies a historical statement in the Old Testament to an event in the life of Jesus (cf. Menken 2004:133; Moyise 2001:41–42):

New Testament: Ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου.

NIV: Out of Egypt I called my son.

MT: וּמִמִּצְרַיִם קָרָאתִי לְבִנִּי

NIV: And out of Egypt I called my son.

Septuagint (text from Ziegler 1967a): καὶ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου μετεκάλεσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ

And from Egypt I called his children.

A comparison of the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament and the New Testament makes it quite clear that the New Testament follows the Hebrew here and not the Septuagint (cf. Hagner 1998:37–38; Menken 2004:135 mentions the possibility of a revised text of the Septuagint that had been used). The different verbs used for ‘to call’ already point in this direction. The reference at the end of the quotation makes it quite clear. The New Testament follows the Hebrew in the rendering of ‘my son’, whilst the Septuagint has ‘his children’. The Masoretic text reads the singular of the noun with suffix first person singular (‘my son’), whilst the Septuagint probably rendered a Hebrew text with a plural form of the noun and the third person masculine singular suffix (‘his sons’, or ‘his children’). The difference in the unvocalised Hebrew would have been a *waw* at the end of the word. This could have been the result of dittography in the Hebrew, as the *yod* and *waw* looked quite the same in the time of the translation of the Septuagint:

Peshitta Old Testament (text from Gelston 1980):

ܕܡܢ ܡܫܪܝܢ ܩܪܝܬ ܒܪܝ

wmn mšryn qryth bry

And from Egypt I called my son.

The Old Testament Peshitta follows the Hebrew, with just the addition of a suffix to the verb, following the normal Syriac idiomatic style:

Curetonianus: ܕܡܢ ܡܫܪܝܢ ܩܪܝܬ ܒܪܝ

dmn mšryn qryt lbry

From Egypt I called my son.

Sinaiticus: ܕܡܢ ܡܫܪܝܢ ܩܪܝܬ ܒܪܝ

mn mšryn qryt lbry

From Egypt I called my son.

The only difference between these two texts is the *ܐ* at the beginning of the quotation, an inner-Syriac variant for indicating direct speech. Although the two texts use the same vocabulary as the Peshitta Old Testament, there are two differences, namely the omission of the suffix to the verb and the addition of the preposition, *ܕ*, before the object of the verb:

Peshitta New Testament: ܕܡܢ ܡܫܪܝܢ ܩܪܝܬ ܒܪܝ

dmn mšryn qryt lbry

From Egypt I called my son.

The Peshitta New Testament agrees with the *Curetonianus* in this instance, with the *ܐ* at the beginning of the quotation.

Matthew 2:18, quoting Jeremiah 31:15

The quotation of Jeremiah 31:15 in Matthew 2:18 is longer than the quotations in the two previous examples:

New Testament:

Φωνή ἐν Ῥαμὰ ἠκούσθη,
κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὄδυρμὸς πολὺς·
Ῥαχὴλ κλαίουσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς,
καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν παρακληθῆναι, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσίν.

NIV: A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.

MT: קוֹל בְּרָמָה נִשְׁמָע נְהִי בְּכִי תִמְרוּהֶיִם רָחֵל מְבַכָּה עַל-בְּנֵיהָ מְאַמְּרָה לְהַנְחֵם עַל-בְּנֵיהָ כִּי אֵין

NIV: A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.

Septuagint (text from Ziegler 1976): Φωνὴ ἐν Ραμα ἠκούσθη θρήνον καὶ κλαυθοῦ καὶ ὄδυροῦ. Ῥαχηλ ἀποκλαιομένη οὐκ ἤθελεν παύσασθαι ἐπὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς αὐτῆς, ὅτι οὐκ εἰσίν

Menken: A voice was heard in Ramah of wailing and weeping and lamentation: Rachel’s weeping would not cease for her sons, because they are no more.

The relationship between the quotation and the two Old Testament texts is not quite clear. The Masoretic text refers to the children of Rachel twice. The Septuagint has only the second reference. The Septuagint has *kai* before the second and third nouns, which refer to mourning; it has these three nouns in the genitive, connecting them to the *sound* at the beginning of the statement; and it follows the Hebrew word order. The use of the genitive is perhaps exegetical to describe the sound referred to at the beginning. This is a specific interpretation of the Hebrew. The Greek New Testament has only two nouns, which agree with the second and third nouns of the Septuagint. Some manuscripts have the three nouns, but it could be ascribed to an attempt to harmonise the quotation with the Septuagint Jeremiah. The *πολύς* added to the second noun might have been an attempt in a literal translation to render the final word of the three in the Hebrew; a word that occurs only three times in the Hebrew Old Testament (twice in Jeremiah). The Greek New Testament has the first reference to Rachel’s children but not the second. The New Testament renders the Hebrew *לְהַנְחִי* [‘to be comforted’] with *παρακληθῆναι* [‘to encourage’; ‘to console’], a better translation than the *παύσασθαι* [‘to cease’; ‘to stop’] of the Septuagint. Both the New Testament and the Septuagint have *οὐκ ἤθελεν* [‘not wanting’] for the Hebrew *מְאַמְּרָה* [‘to refuse’].

Menken (2000; 2004) discusses this text in detail. He makes it clear that the text in the Septuagint was transmitted in two different forms (Menken 2004:143–145). He is of the opinion that Matthew used a revised version of the Septuagint as his base text (2004:158–159). The revision entails a better translation of the Hebrew and an adaptation of Jeremiah to Genesis 37:35 (Menken 2000:125). It is also true that Matthew

ignores the original context of the text in Jeremiah in his use of the quotation (cf. Moyise 2001:42–43).

The Peshitta of the Old Testament has a few interesting readings:

ܩܠ ܒܪܡܝܬ ܩܠ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܕܒܟܝ ܕܐܝ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ ܕܠܡܬܒܝܘܿܡ ܡܝܠ ܕܠܝܬ ܢܘܘܢ
ܩܠ ܒܪܡܝܬ ܩܠ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܕܒܟܝ ܕܐܝ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ ܕܠܡܬܒܝܘܿܡ ܡܝܠ ܕܠܝܬ ܢܘܘܢ

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping over her children and she is not willing to be comforted because they are no more.

It adds ‘and’ between the first two nouns indicating mourning. However, it translates the third noun as an adjective with the second noun, ‘bitter weeping’. It uses a similar phrase as the Greek New Testament for the Hebrew of ‘to refuse’, namely *ܕܠܡ ܫܒܝ* (‘she was not willing’). Like the Greek, it has the first reference to Rachel’s children, but not the second. It is possible that this translation could have been influenced by the Greek New Testament’s version. The Septuagint has the second occurrence of ‘her children’, and not the first one. The Greek New Testament and the Old Testament Peshitta have the first one and not the second one.

The contents of the two witnesses to the Old Syriac New Testament are exactly the same, but there are minor differences in the Syriac idiom:

Curetonianus: ܩܠ ܒܪܡܝܬ ܩܠ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܕܒܟܝ ܕܐܝ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ ܕܠܡܬܒܝܘܿܡ ܡܝܠ ܕܠܝܬ ܢܘܘܢ
ܩܠ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܕܒܟܝ ܕܐܝ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ ܕܠܡܬܒܝܘܿܡ ܡܝܠ ܕܠܝܬ ܢܘܘܢ

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and weeping and much groaning, the voice of Rachel weeping over her children and she is not willing to be comforted because they are no more.

Sinaiticus: ܩܠ ܒܪܡܝܬ ܩܠ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܕܒܟܝ ܕܐܝ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ ܕܠܡܬܒܝܘܿܡ ܡܝܠ ܕܠܝܬ ܢܘܘܢ
ܩܠ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܕܒܟܝ ܕܐܝ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ ܕܠܡܬܒܝܘܿܡ ܡܝܠ ܕܠܝܬ ܢܘܘܢ

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and weeping and groaning, the voice of Rachel weeping over her children and she is not willing to be comforted because they are no more.

Sinaiticus adds ‘to be’ twice to participles. They have different constructions for the final phrase, namely *Sinaiticus* adds a suffix to the particle *ܕܠܡ* (*yl*) and *Curetonianus* uses the independent personal pronoun (*nwn*). However, they share a number of unique readings. Both of them have the first verb in the quotation as the second word in the sentence, not as the third word. They both have three nouns for the mourning, with ‘and’ before the second and third. They both add ‘great’ to the third noun, partly agreeing with the New Testament Greek and partly with the Old Testament Peshitta and the Hebrew. Both of them begin the second part of the quotation with *ܩܠ ܕܪܚܝܠ ܕܒܟܝ*; ‘The voice of Rachel that is

weeping’), repeating the word at the beginning of the quotation. Both of them only have the first reference to Rachel’s children. In the end, these two texts have a unique combination of features from three different sources.

The New Testament Peshitta is very interesting in this instance:

ܩܠ ܕܫܛܡܒܪܡܬ ܒܟܬ ܘܠܝܫܓܝ ܪܝܠ ܒܟܝ ܩܠ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ ܠܡܬܒܝܘܡܝܠ ܕܝܠܬ ܝܬܝܗܘܢ

ql’ ‘štm^c brmt’ bkt’ w’ly’ sgy’’ rhył bky’ ܩܠ ܒܢܝܗ ܘܠ ܫܒܝ’ lmtby’w mł dlyt ‘ytyhwn

A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great lamentation. Rachel is weeping over her children and she is not willing to be comforted because they are no more.

The New Testament Peshitta clearly starts with a text very similar to the *Curetonianus*, as can be seen from the word order at the beginning. However, it did edit that text to bring it closer to the Greek, as can be seen from the two nouns that refer to mourning and the adjective that is added to the second. It omits the repetition of ‘voice’ and the final phrase agrees with the *Sinaiticus*. In this instance, the New Testament Peshitta used the vocabulary of the Old Syriac as a starting point but revised it to come closer to the Greek.

Matthew 4:15–16, quoting Isaiah 8:23–9:1

This is again quite an extensive quotation, starting not with the beginning of the first sentence in the Masoretic text, but with the reference to the region of Zebulon and Naphtali, which is the main point of the quotation. The Masoretic text and the Septuagint show some important differences. Menken (2004:15–33) discusses this example in detail, concluding that Matthew used a revised version of the Septuagint as his base text. Knowles (2006:67–68) indicates that the quotation shares elements of the Hebrew and the Greek, but that it has a few unique features as well:

כי לא מופעה לאשר מוצק לה כעת הראשון הלה
ארצה זבלון וארצה נפתלי והאחרון הכבד
דרך הים עבר הנדרון גליל הגוים:
העם ההלכים בחשך ראו אור גדול
ישבי בארץ צלמנות אור נגה עליהם

NIV: Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honour Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

Septuagint: 8:23 Τοῦτο πρῶτον ποιεῖ, ταχὺ ποιεῖ, χώρα Ζαβουλων, ἡ γῆ Νεφθαλιμ ὁδὸν θαλάσσης καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ οἱ τὴν παραλίαν κατοικοῦντες καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, Γαλιλαία τῶν ἔθνων, τὰ μέρη τῆς Ἰουδαίας.

9:1 ὁ λαὸς ὁ πορευόμενος ἐν σκότει, ἴδετε φῶς μέγα· οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου, φῶς λάμπει ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς

Menken:

Do this first, do it fast, land of Zebulon, land of Naphtali, toward the sea and the rest who dwell at the seashore and beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, districts of Judah.

You people that walk in darkness, see, a great light, you who dwell in the region and the shadow of death, light will shine upon you.

In the section that the New Testament quotes from Isaiah 8:23, the Septuagint places the verb first, repeats it and makes the verbs imperatives directed at Zebulon and Naphtali, whilst the Hebrew talks about what the Lord did to them. The Septuagint translates the two occurrences of נִשְׁבַּח in the Hebrew in Isaiah 8:23 with different words. The Septuagint also has a reference to those living by the seashore and to the whole of Judah. In Isaiah 9:1, the Septuagint renders the verb ‘to see’ as an imperative, whereas the MT has a perfect. Since the Septuagint translated an unvocalised text, reading an imperative is possible. This reading is perhaps the reason for the reference to ‘you’ at the end of the verse, against the ‘them’ of the MT. It is interesting to note the translation of נִשְׁבַּח אֶרֶץ זְבֻלֹן in the Septuagint, namely οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου [‘those who live in the land and the shade of death’], where the one construct phrase of the Hebrew is rendered by two phrases.

The quotation reads as follows in Matthew 4:15 and 16:

Γῆ Ζαβουλὼν καὶ γῆ Νεφθαλίμ, ὁδὸν θαλάσσης, πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, Γαλιλαία τῶν ἔθνων, ὁ λαὸς ὁ καθήμενος ἐν σκότει φῶς εἶδεν μέγα, καὶ τοῖς καθημένοις ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου φῶς ἀνέτειλεν αὐτοῖς.

NIV: Land of Zebulon and land of Naphtali, the way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles – the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.

The quotation does not have a verb at the beginning, but for the rest it agrees with the Masoretic text and not the Septuagint in Isaiah 8:23. It also follows the MT in Isaiah 9:1. It agrees with the rendering of the Septuagint of צִלְמֹת צִלְמֹת, but agrees with the Hebrew regarding the form of the verbs. It does not translate ‘land’ differently in the first part of the quotation and it uses a different verb at the end of the quotation. In this instance, the New Testament does not quote directly from the Septuagint, but it has a combination of unique features.

The Peshitta Old Testament differs from the Hebrew only in two instances in Isaiah 8:23. Firstly, it reads ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ (w’whdn’) for ܗܘܕܢܐ. The Syriac could have been the result of reading a *daleth* for a *resh*, as both letters are similar in Hebrew and in Syriac. Secondly, it adds ܢܗܪܐ (nhr’ – ‘river’) to the Jordan. Isaiah 8:1 follows the Hebrew quite closely:

Peshitta Old Testament:

ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ
ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ
ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ
ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ ܘܠܗܘܕܢܐ

‘r’ dzbwlwn w’r’ dnptly w’whdn’ ‘šn ‘wrh’ dym’ ‘brwhy dyrdnn nhr’ glyl’ d’mm’ ‘m’ dmhlkyn bhšwk’ hzw nwhr’ rb’ wdytbyn b’r’ d’lly mwt’ nwhr’ dnh’ ‘lyhwn

Land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, and the dominion prevailed, the way of the Sea, beyond the River Jordan, Galilee of the nations —

The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
those living in the land of the shadows of death,
a light has risen upon them.

The two manuscripts of the Old Syriac have some minor differences, mainly related to the Syriac idiom, but also some important variants:

Curetonianus: ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܒܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ

'r' dzbwłwn w'r' dnptly 'wrh' dym' 'brwhy dyrdnn nhr' glyl' d'mm'
c'm' dytb hw' bhšwōk' hzw nwhr' rb' w'ylym dytbyn hwō
b'ill' dmwt' nwhr' rb' dnh 'lyhwn

Land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the Sea,
beyond the River Jordan, Galilee of the nations –

The people living in darkness
has seen a great light;
and those living in the shadows of death,
a great light has risen upon them.

Sinaiticus: ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܒܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ

'r' dzbwłwn w'r' dnptly 'wrh' dym' 'brwhy dyrdnn nhr' glyl' d'mm'
c'm' dytb bhšwōk' nwhr' hz' wdytbyn b'wnt' wbylly mwōt' nwhr'
dnh 'lyhwn

Land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the Sea,
beyond the River Jordan, Galilee of the nations –

The people living in darkness
has seen a light;
and those living in the place and the shadows of death,
a light has risen upon them.

The two Old Syriac texts follow the vocabulary of the Old Testament Peshitta in most cases, but adapt it in line with the Greek New Testament. They omit the phrase omitted in the Greek New Testament in verse 15. They follow the Old Testament Peshitta by adding “river” to the Jordan in verse 15.

In verse 15, *Curetonianus* has ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ (w'ylym dytbyn hwō b'ill' dmwt') and *Sinaiticus* ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ (wdytbyn b'wnt' wbylly mwōt'). The important difference here is the rendering of the Greek ἐν χώρᾳ καὶ σκιᾷ θανάτου. *Curetonianus* follows the Old Testament Peshitta, while *Sinaiticus* following the Greek says, ‘in the place and the shades of death’.

Curetonianus reads “a big light” twice in verse 16 and *Sinaiticus* only “a light” in both instances. *Sinaiticus* follows the Greek word order in the first instance by placing “a light” before the verb. *Curetonianus* adds the verb “to be” to the two participles in verse 16.

It is impossible to determine on the balance of evidence provided by this quotation alone whether *Sinaiticus* was revised to bring it in line with the Greek or whether *Curetonianus* was revised to bring it in line with the Peshitta Old Testament.

The Peshitta New Testament has the same text as *Curetonianus* in verse 15, except for the addition of “river” to the Jordan, where it follows the Greek. In verse 16, it follows the word order of *Sinaiticus* (and the Greek), but retains the “big light”. In the last part of the verse, it follows the rendering of the Greek, like *Sinaiticus*, but uses the word ܒܳܬܪܳܐ (b'tr') it is again clear that this text was edited to bring it closer to the Greek:

Peshitta New Testament: ܩܪܝܢܐ ܕܒܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ
ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܩܘܪܝܢܐ

'r' dzbwłwn w'r' dnptly 'wrh' dym' 'brwhy dyrdnn glyl' d'mm'
c'm' dytb bhšwōk' nwhr' rb' hz' w'ylym dytbyn b'tr' wbylly mwōt' nwhr'
dnh 'lyhwn

Land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the Sea,
beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations –

The people living in darkness
has seen a great light;
and those living in the place and the shadows of death,
a light has risen upon them.

Matthew 8:17, quoting Isaiah 53:4

This quotation is shorter than the previous one:

New Testament: Αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασεν.

NIV: He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.

Masoretic text: וְהוּא יָקַם עָלָינוּ אֶת־כָּל־עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְהוּא יִשְׂאֵל עָלֵינוּ אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֵׁר־נִשְׁחָקָנוּ

NIV: Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering.

Septuagint: οὗτος τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν ὀδυνᾷται

Menken: He took our sicknesses, and carried our diseases.

It is quite evident that the New Testament follows the Masoretic text in this instance. Beaton (2005:69) thinks the translation might have been Matthew's. Menken (2004:36) says that this New Testament quotation does not follow the more spiritualised version of the Septuagint, although he again tends to favour a revised base text of the Septuagint (2004:48). The translation does not render the object suffix to the second verb. The Septuagint has ‘sins’ for ‘sicknesses’ and it translates the next verse quite free, whilst the New Testament retains the noun as in the Masoretic text.

The Old Testament Peshitta follows the Masoretic text, except for the object suffix to the final Hebrew verb. It adds the personal pronoun, third person, masculine singular to the second phrase:

Peshitta Old Testament: ܘܫܝܒ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ

hšyn hw sybr wk'byn hw sbl

Our suffering He bore and our pain he carried.

The two witnesses to the Old Syriac differ only in one instance, namely ܟܘܒܝܢ (*k'byn*) against ܡܪܥܝܢ (*mr'yn*). The words are synonyms. Their translation is independent of the Old Testament Peshitta and they do not follow the word order of any of the older texts:

Curetonianus: ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ

dhw nsb k'byn wnšqwl kwrhryn

For he took our pain and he carried our diseases.

Sinaiticus: ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ

dhw nsb mr'yn wnšqwl kwrhryn

For he took our illnesses and he carried our diseases.

The Peshitta New Testament has the same first phrase as the Old Syriac, using the word for 'pain', like *Curetonianus*; however, it changes the word order of the second phrase and uses a different verb, but again a synonym:

ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ

dhw nsb k'byn wkwrhryn nt'fn

For he took our pain and he carried our diseases.

It is clear that the Peshitta New Testament used a text similar to *Curetonianus*, but revised it slightly to bring the word order closer to the New Testament Greek.

Matthew 12:18–21, quoting Isaiah 42:1–4

This is quite an extended quotation that cannot be discussed in detail here. Because of the length, the translations are not given:

New Testament:

¹⁸Ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ἠρέτισα, ὁ ἀγαπητός μου εἰς ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχὴ μου· θῆσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν, καὶ κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπαγγελεῖ.

¹⁹οὐκ ἐρίσει οὐδὲ κραυγάσει, οὐδὲ ἀκούσει τις ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις τῆν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ.

²⁰κάλαμον συντετριμμένον οὐ κατεάξει καὶ λίνον τυφόμενον οὐ σβέσει, ἕως ἂν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς νῆκος τὴν κρίσιν.

²¹καὶ τῷ ὀνόματι αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν.

MT:

¹ ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ
² ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ
³ ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ
⁴ ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ

Septuagint: ¹Ἰακωβ ὁ παῖς μου, ἀντιλήμψομαι αὐτοῦ· Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ἐκλεκτός μου, προσεδέξατο αὐτόν ἡ ψυχὴ μου· ἔδωκα τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν, κρίσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἐξοίσει. ²οὐ κεκράξεται οὐδὲ ἀνήσει,

οὐδὲ ἀκουσθήσεται ἔξω ἢ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ.† ³κάλαμον τεθλασμένον οὐ συντρίψει καὶ λίνον καπνίζόμενον οὐ σβέσει, ἀλλὰ εἰς ἀλήθειαν ἐξοίσει κρίσιν. ⁴ἀναλάμψει καὶ οὐ θραυσθήσεται, ἕως ἂν θῆ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς κρίσιν· καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ νόμῳ αὐτοῦ ἔθνη ἐλπιούσιν.

Menken:

¹Jacob my servant, I shall uphold him,
Israel my chosen, my soul has accepted him;
I have given my Spirit upon him,
He will bring forth justice to the gentiles.

²He will not shout or raise (his voice),
nor will his voice be heard outside.

³He will not break a shattered reed
And he will not quench a smoking wick,
But faithfully he will bring forth justice.

⁴He will flame up and not be shattered,
Until he sets justice on earth,
And in his name the gentiles will hope.

In the last line, Ziegler (1967b) has ἐπὶ τῷ νόμῳ in his text, with many witnesses supporting ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι (followed by Menken in his translation). This is clearly an inner-Greek variant, with the New Testament in Greek following many witnesses in reading 'name', and not 'law'. The reading with 'law' occurs in the Old Testament Peshitta, but all three the Syriac Gospels have 'name'.

Without going into every detail, it is quite evident that Matthew does not use the Septuagint in this instance. There are many differences between the texts (cf. Beaton 2005:70–72; Menken 2004:51). The translation could probably be his own from the Hebrew (cf. Hagner 1998:336). The New Testament, however, does not quote the whole of Isaiah 42:1–4, and reads 'nations' for 'islands' in the last quoted line.

The Peshitta Old Testament follows the Hebrew quite closely, although minor differences in vocabulary and word order occur:

Peshitta Old Testament:

¹ ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ
² ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ
³ ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ
⁴ ܘܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ ܗܘ ܫܒܝܢ
¹ h' l'bdy smkt wbgbyy šbt nřšy yhbt rwby 'lwhy dnřq dyn' l'mm'
² l' nq' wl' nryb wl' nřm' qlh břwq'
³ qny' r'y' l' ntbr wřrg' dmřřř l' nd'k bqwřt' nřq dyn'
⁴ l' nd'k wl' nřřřř 'dm' dnřm' dyn' b'r'c' wlnmwř gzrt' nsbryn

¹ Look at my servant whom I support, my chosen one, in whom my soul delights, I have given my spirit upon him who will bring justice to the nations.

²He will not shout and he will not cry out and not let his voice be heard on the street.

³A bruised reed he will not break and a flickering wick he will not quench. In faithfulness he will bring justice forth.

Septuagint (text from Rahlfs 1979): ἀνοίξω ἐν παραβολαῖς τὸ στόμα μου, φθέγγομαι προβλήματα ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.

Menken: I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter riddles from the beginning.

The Old Testament Peshitta (text from Walter 1980) has a *plus* at the beginning of the first part ('Look then') and it has the first noun in the plural (although that is just through the *seyame*). In the second part, it uses a generic verb ('to speak'). It is a good rendering of the Hebrew, following the Hebrew word order as well:

ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ

ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ

h' gyr 'pth pwmy bmtl' w'mr pl't' dmn qdm

Look then, I will open my mouth with parables, and I will speak proverbs from the beginning.

The two witnesses of the Old Syriac differ only with regard to the verb of the second part of the quotation, where *Curetonianus* uses the same verb as the Old Testament Peshitta, and *Sinaiticus* a synonym. They differ from the Old Testament Peshitta with ܠܗܘܢ (pl't') against ܠܗܘܢ (ksyt'). Their rendering of this word follows the Greek against the Hebrew and the Septuagint. The final phrase, however, agrees with the Hebrew Old Testament, the Septuagint and the Peshitta Old Testament, and does not follow the interpretation and addition of the Greek New Testament:

Curetonianus: ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ

'pth pwmy bmtl' w'mll ksy't' dmn qdym

I will open my mouth with parables, and I will speak hidden things from the beginning.

Sinaiticus: ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ

'pth pwmy bmtl' w'mr ksy't' dmn qdym

The reading of the New Testament Peshitta is very interesting in this instance:

ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ

'pth pwmy bmtl' w'b' ksy't' dmn qdm tmyth d'lm'

I will open my mouth with parables, and I will utter hidden things from before the creation of the world.

The first part agrees with the other three Syriac texts. At the beginning of the second part, it uses the verb ܘܢܘܨܘܢ (*w'b'*), the same verbal root as the Hebrew. Is it possible that the translator looked at the Hebrew as well? The object and prepositional phrase following the verb are almost the same as in the Old Syriac, just changing 'the beginning' to 'before'. It then adds a translation of the final part of the quotation in the Greek New Testament. The translator did not want to omit the final part of his Syriac source text, but wanted to retain the interpretation of the New Testament as well. The final part of the quotation in the Peshitta New Testament

reflects a complex rendering by the translator, quite unique in these quotations.

Matthew 21:5, quoting Isaiah 62:11; Zechariah 9:9

The quotation in the New Testament combines two texts from the Old Testament:

Εἶπατε τῇ θυγατρὶ Σιών Ἰδοὺ ὁ βασιλεὺς σου ἔρχεται σοὶ πραῖς καὶ ἐπιβεβηκὼς ἐπὶ ὄνον καὶ ἐπὶ πῶλον υἱὸν ὑποζυγίου.

NIV:

Say to Daughter Zion,

'See, your king comes to you,

gentle and riding on a donkey,

and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The first part of the quotation comes from Isaiah 62:11, and there is no difference in the rendering of all the texts discussed here. The MT has ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ; the Septuagint and the New Testament Greek have Εἶπατε τῇ θυγατρὶ Σιών; the Peshitta Old Testament, *Curetonianus* and the Peshitta New Testament all have ܠܗܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ('mrw lbrt shywon; 'say to the daughter of Zion').

The second part of the quotation is from Zechariah 9:9. The Masoretic Text reads:

גִּדְיִי וְנוֹשָׁעִי הוּא עָנִי וְרַקִּב עַל-הַמִּזְרֵחַ וְעַל-יְעִיר כְּרִי-תַנְנוּת

NIV:

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!

Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!

See, your king comes to you,

righteous and victorious,

lowly and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

The part of the verse quoted in the New Testament is as follows in the Septuagint (text from Ziegler 1967a):

ἰδοὺ ὁ βασιλεὺς σου ἔρχεται σοὶ, δίκαιος καὶ σφύζων αὐτὸς, πραῖς καὶ ἐπιβεβηκὼς ἐπὶ ὑποζύγιον καὶ πῶλον νέον.

Menken:

Behold, your king is coming to you,

Righteous and saving is he,

meek and riding on a beast of burden

And on a young colt.

The only interesting translation is the final phrase, with καὶ πῶλον νέον for ܘܢܘܨܘܢ ܘܢܘܨܘܢ. The Greek is a good rendering of the Hebrew, without being a word for word translation. The New Testament is close to the Septuagint, although

The New Testament Peshitta normally started with a text close or similar to the Old Syriac (probably the Diatessaron according to Joosten and others), but frequently adapted it to bring it closer to New Testament Greek (Mt 1:23; 2:18; 4:15–16; 12:18–21; 21:5). In Matthew 2:15 the Peshitta New Testament has the same reading as the Old Syriac. In Matthew 8:17 the Peshitta New Testament adapted the reading of the Old Syriac to the Greek New Testament. There is one example of possible influence of the Hebrew text (Mt 13:35) and a few examples that show a combination of influences from the Old Syriac and the New Testament Greek (Mt 13:35; 27:9–10). It is clear that the New Testament Peshitta adapted its text more to the Greek New Testament than the Old Syriac, but the many places of agreement with the Old Syriac points to some contact between the two versions. This is especially true of those instances where the Old Syriac and New Testament Peshitta agree, but differ from the Old Testament Peshitta. These examples raises the question whether Tatian used the Old Testament Peshitta in all the quotations from the Old Testament.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

References

- Aland, K., Aland, B., Karavidopoulos, J., Martini, C.M. & Metzger, B.M., 2013, *Novum Testamentum Graecum*, 28th edn., Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart.
- Beaton, R., 2005, 'Isaiah in Matthew's Gospel', in S. Moyise & M.J.J. Menken (eds.), *Isaiah in the New Testament*, pp. 63–78, Clark, London. (The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel).
- Brock, S.P., 1977, 'Vol. 1: The Syriac versions', in B.M. Metzger (ed.), *The early versions of the New Testament: Their origin, transmission, and limitations*, pp. 3–98, Clarendon, Oxford.
- Brock, S.P., 1987, *Isaiah*, Brill, Leiden. (The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta version, 3, 1).
- Brock, S.P., 1992, 'Syriac versions', *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, 6, 794–799.
- Elliger, K. & Rudolph, W., 1984, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart.
- Gelston, A., 1980, *Dodekapropheton*, Brill, Leiden. (The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta version, 3, 4).
- Hagner, D.A., 1998, *Matthew 1–13*, Word, Dallas. (Word Biblical Commentary, 33A).
- Joosten, J., 1990, 'The Old Testament quotations in the Old Syriac and Peshitta Gospels: A contribution to the study of the Diatessaron', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 15, 55–76. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3267905>
- Joosten, J., 1996, *The Syriac language of the Peshitta and Old Syriac versions of Matthew: Syntactic structure, inner-Syriac developments and translation technique*, Brill, Leiden. (Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics).
- Joosten, J., 2001, 'Tatian's Diatessaron and the Old Testament Peshitta', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120(3), 501–523.
- Kiraz, G.A., 1996, *Comparative edition of the Syriac Gospels aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus: Peshittā and Harclean versions*, vol. 1: *Matthew*, Brill, Leiden. (New Testament Tools and Studies, 21(1)).
- Knowles, M.P., 2006, 'Scripture, history, Messiah: Scriptural fulfilment and the fullness of time in Matthew's Gospel', in S.E. Porter (ed.), *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, pp. 59–82, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids.
- Menken, M.J.J., 2000, 'The quotation from Jeremiah 31(38).15 in Matthew 2:18: A study of Matthew's scriptural text', in S. Moyise (ed.), *The Old Testament in the New: Essays in honour of J.L. North*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield. (Journal for the study of the New Testament supplement series, 189).
- Menken, M.J.J., 2004, *Matthew's Bible: The Old Testament text of the evangelist*, Peeters, Leuven. (Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicum Lovaniensium, 173).
- Moyise, S., 2001, *The Old Testament in the New: An introduction*, Continuum, London.
- Rahlfs, A., 1979, *Psalmi cum Odis*, 3. Aufl., Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. (Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum 10).
- Shedinger, R., 1999, 'Did Tatian use the Old Testament Peshitta? A response to Jan Joosten', *Novum Testamentum* 41, 265–279. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/156853699323281298>
- Walter, D.M., 1980, *Psalms*, Brill, Leiden. (The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta version, 2, 3).
- Wildberger, H., 1991, *Isaiah 1–12*, Fortress, Minneapolis. (Continental commentary series).
- Ziegler, J., 1967a, *Duodecim prophetae*, 2. Aufl., Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. (Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum 13).
- Ziegler, J., 1967b, *Isaías*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. (Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum 14).
- Ziegler, J., 1976, *Jeremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Jeremiae*, 2. Aufl., Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen. (Septuaginta Vetus Testamentum Graecum 15).