

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

Notes on the "Lives of the Prophets."

BY PROF. ISAAC H. HALL, PH.D.

(Supplementary to a paper on "A Hagiologic MS.," &c., in the last Journal.)

It has long been known that the "Lives of the Prophets," of which certainly three Greek recensions are now known, is a work extant in Syriac. Only the lives of the "four greater prophets," Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, have been printed; viz., by Nestle in his Syriac Grammar and Chrestomathy, in the Petermann-Reuther series, "Porta Linguarum Orientalium," Karlsruhe and Leipzig, 1881. It is there to be found on pages 53-61 (of those numbered with Syriac numerals). Nestle derived his text "e tribus codicibus Musei Britannici," but he does not give the variant readings of the three codices. A comparison of Nestle's text with the Greek recension, which I published in the last Journal of this Society, shows that *this recension* and the Syriac are the same treatise, the Greek being a translation and the Syriac the original. Naturally there are some variants; and perhaps those of the codices mentioned above might help us in determining the true text. The rendering is quite close, although idiomatic. It should be stated that other Syriac manuscripts of the same composition are known to our American missionaries, as extant near Oroomiah, in Persia.

The following rough comparison is intended merely to show the coincidences and differences between the Greek text just mentioned and the Syriac text of Nestle.

Title: The same in both Syriac and Greek, except that the former adds "holy" as an epithet of the prophets, and for *καὶ ποῦ κείνται* has *ܘܟܘܢ ܘܡܘܬܘܗܘܢ*, "and how they died." The Syriac title commences with the ordinary *ܘܟܘܢ*, which, of course, would be neglected in Greek. After the title, also, the Syriac inserts "Of holy Epiphanius bishop of Cyprus."

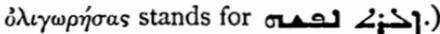
(For the rest of the comparison I shall refer to the Greek by its lines and pages as published in the Journal.)

Page 29, line 1. — Syriac *omits* *ὁ προφήτης*, and has "Jerusalem" for *Ἰερουσόλημ*.

Line 2. — Syr. *adds* "with a wood-saw" after *εἰς δύο*. — For *δρυός, ῥωγῆν* Syr. *ܘܟܘܢ ܘܟܘܢ ܘܟܘܢ*, "terebinth of Rogel"; as if the Greek had made a slip in copying from an older MS. *δρυὸς Ρωγῆλ*, the

probable correction, makes far better sense than the present reading, besides keeping exactly to the Syriac.

Lines 3, 4. — Syr. omits ὁ βασιλεύς.

(*Line 5.* ὀλυγορήσας stands for )

(*Page 30, line 1,* καὶ ἐπὶ stands for )

(*Line 6.* — καὶ seems omitted in the Syr., but only by a difference of idiom.)

Line 7. — For Ἡσαίας, ἄφνω, Syriac has “the Jews.”

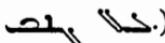
Line 8. — Syr. omits ἦλθον and ἐξήρχετο τὸ ὕδωρ.

Lines 9, 10. — Syr. omits κατὰ . . . Ἰουδαίους.

Line 11. — Syr. adds τὸ μυστήριον before γέγονεν.

Line 12. — Syr. has a pronoun in place of τοῦ Σιλβάμ.

Line 13. — For ὡσαύτως Syr. has “also after his death.”

(*Lines 14, 15,* ἐχόμενα τῆς ὁδοῦ stands for )

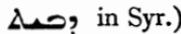
(*Lines 20, 21,* the Syriac uses an expanded phrase with two different words to express concealment: “unknown to the many of the people, but hidden from all the people,” in a style which the Greek could express but awkwardly by repeating ἀγνοούμενον.)

(*Line 22,* ἐξ Αἰθιοπίας is ) in Syr.)

Line 23. — Syr. omits τοῖς Βαβυλωνίοις.

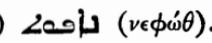
(*Line 26,* For ἄκαρπον, Syr. has “that he should not bear (fruit) sons.”)

Lines 26, 27, For ἡμέρας Syr. has ὥρας, and omits καὶ ἐπέκεινα.

(*Line 30,* τῆς Κήσεως is ) in Syr.)

Line 31. — Syr. has γὰρ after Ἡῤῥατο. — ὀλοθρεύουσαι αὐτοὺς seems to be omitted in the Syr., but may have its explanation in the next:

Line 32. — For ἀπέθανον Syr. has , “fled from them.”

Line 33. — For ἐφώθ Syr. has (more correctly) ) (νεφώθ).

— After κροκοδίλους, Syr. adds, “but the Syrians 

Line 35. — For ἀπίστων Syr. reads ἀσπίδων (as I conjectured the reading might be — see foot note), and adds “and crocodiles,” using the Syriac word just quoted, therefor.

Line 36. — After θεραπεύουσιν Syr. adds “And many of the crocodiles also he made flee from the waters.”

Page 31, line 4. — For περιβείς αὐτὰ ἐνδόξως κύκλω Syr. has “laid

them up with reverence" (or honor); but the difference might be made either by the change of a letter or two, or by the addition of a word. — Syr. *omits* οὕτως.

Line 5. — After ἐκείνης, Syr. *adds* "in which he was buried."

Line 6. — For ὅταν Syr. reads ὡσαύτως (making much better sense, and clearing up the obscurity).

Line 9. — For Ἄργους δεξιῶ Syr. has . Syr. also *omits* λέαν . . . ἀνατολικόν, and begins a new paragraph after the word just quoted.

Line 12. — Syr. *omits* διὰ Σωτήρος Θεοῦ κ.τ.λ. to the end of the sentence.

Line 14. — For Καὶ ἕως Syr. has Διὰ τοῦτο ἕως.

Lines 14, 15. — The Syr. makes both παρθένον and βρέφος objects of τιθέντες, but by a pronoun makes προσκυνοῦσιν refer to βρέφος alone.

Line 18. — For λαοῦ Syr. has  = ναοῦ; a much better reading. The error of the Greek is plain, and that of a copyist.

Line 20. — For ἐν Syr. has  = ἐκ, doubtless the correct reading.

Line 21. — Syr. *omits* νομοθετήσαι ἐν Σιών.

Line 25. — For ἱερέων προφήτων Syr. has "neither of the priests nor of the prophets." — For ἐκλεκτὸς Syr. has "servant"; but the mistake would be easy if the Syr. were carelessly written.

Lines 30, 31. — τοῦ προφήτου replaced in Syr. by a pronoun.

Line 32. — Syr. *omits* φωτεινῇ.

Line 36. — Syr. supplies φωτεινῇ in brackets after νεφέλη. — Syr. *omits* περὶ τὸν τόπον.

Page 32, line 2. — Syr. *omits* διὰ τοῦτο.

Line 4. — Syr. *omits* καὶ Ἁαρῶν.

Line 6. — Syr. *omits* οὗτος, and *adds* γῆς before Σαιρηά; also, for the last has Sarîda (.

(*Line 7, Syr. adds* καὶ before πολλὰ — idiomatically.)

Line 11. — For Σῆθ Syr. has Shem.

Lines 11-13. — Syr. transposes the last two clauses of the sentence that ends with Σάρας.

Line 14. — Syr. would put a stop after ἐπιπέδου, and begin the next sentence thus: ὑπερῶν γὰρ καὶ ἔστιν.

Line 15. — Syr. shows that κεκρυμμένον should be κεκράμενον; and

the preceding ἐν πέτρα should therefore probably be ἐπὶ πέτρα, or some similar expression.

Lines 15, 16. — For ὅτε . . . ἐρημώσεως Syr. has ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ; “that when it has failed they shall await the sickle of desolation.” The Greek evidently represents a somewhat different reading; apparently a mistake in reading one or two Syriac letters.

(*Line 18*, πλημμυρήσει of the MS. is ܘܡܥܘܢ in the Syr.)

Line 21. — The μίαν τάρωσιν of the MS. is ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ, “lest they should rebel”; affording the correction of the Greek to μὴ ἀνταρῶσιν (compare ἀνταρσις and cognates). Syr. also omits τοῖς Ἐβραίοις.

Lines 21, 22. — For ἀναίρεσιν, Syr. has “as if they would kill them.” Some particle or preposition appears to be omitted by the Greek copyist.

Line 22. — Syr. omits ὁ προφήτης.

Line 27. — For τοῖς Χαλδαίοις Syr. has ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ.

Line 29. — Syr. omits οὐρανόθεν, and puts τότε in the preceding sentence. For ἔλεγεν ὁ Ἰσραήλ, Syr. has ἔλεγον (3d pers. plur.).

Lines 30, 31. — For τῶν νεκρῶν Syr. has “dry.”

Line 32. — Syr. has αἰῶνος expressed before μέλλοντος; but the sense is the same.

Lines 33, 34. — For τὰ ἐν Ἱερουσαλήμ κ.τ.λ. to the end of the sentence, Syr. has “that which was to be wrought in Jerusalem and in the midst of the temple; he was snatched from thence and came to Jerusalem for the admonition of those that do not believe” (omitting θεῶ).

Line 35. — Syr. omits καὶ τὴν πύλην to the end of the sentence (on next page, τὰ ἔθνη), and has in their place, “As also Daniel said that it would be built.”

Page 33, line 5. — For τὰ κτήνη αὐτῶν πάντα, Syr. has ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ, i.e., “all their infants and their possessions” (or, flocks).

Line 10. — For οὗτος the Syr. has the name, “Daniel.”

Line 11. — Syr. omits ἐν τῇ αἰχμαλωσίᾳ.

(*Line 12.* — Syr. has ܘܢܐܘܠܘܢ for Βεθώρω.)

Lines 14, 15. — Syr. *omits* τὸν λαὸν καὶ ἐπὶ, and also omits Ἱερουσαλήμ.

Lines 15, 16. — For καὶ ἐν νήστείας κ.τ.λ. to end of sentence, Syr. has “and in fasting he made himself a Nazarite (ܢܘܙܪܝܬܝܢ) from all desirable food.”

Line 17. — For ξηρὸς . . . τὴν εἰδέαν Syr. has “small (or, spare) in body.”

(*Lines 20–24*, Syr. has much inversion of words, but nothing really different. For ἄλογον φιληδονίαν Syr. has “love of pleasures (or, lusts) of the body”; and for Βελίαρ, “Satan.”)

Line 25. — Syr. omits the whole line.

Lines 27–29. — Syr. seems to omit ἄρχοντες καὶ, to reverse exactly the position of the next three words, and to omit ἀσεβοῦντες . . . ἀπολαμβάνοντες.

(*Lines 29 ff.* — There is much minor change of structure, but always close rendering of the sense.)

Line 34. — For ἐπεγίνετο δὲ αὐτῷ, Syr. has “And he was in the likeness of behemoth.”

(*Line 35.* — For γλώσσα Syr. has “speech,” *omitting* τοῦ μὴ λαλεῖν.)

Line 36. — Syr. *omits* νεκρὸν.

Page 34, line 1. — Syr. supplies μόνος after Δανιὴλ.

Line 4. — For καὶ τότε ὄψομαι αὐτόν, Syr. has “And they did not believe him.”

Lines 5, 6. — Syr. *omits* προσευχόμενος . . . ὕψιστον.

Lines 7, 8. — Syr. would have a (slight) mark of punctuation after ἐτελέσθη, and none after αὐτῷ; for ἐξ it has ἐπτά; and would finish the sentence at ἔτη. Then it has ἐξ for πέντε, and no stop after μήνας.

Line 11. — For ἐξομολογούμενος τῷ Κυρίῳ Syr. has “in the time of his repentance.”

Line 15. — Syr. adds Δανιὴλ after ὁσῖος.

Line 16. — It appears that a full stop should follow ἀπεριτμήτων (the next sentence extending to ἔγραψα, in line 18).

Line 17. — Removes stop after βασιλεῦσιν, and *adds* “of Persia” at that place.

Lines 21–29. — There is some difference of order, and some omission. The Syriac reads (beginning after Βαβυλώνας) “But when it burns like fire, it is the end of all the earth. But if waters flow down from the south, the people will return to their land. But if blood flow down, there will be a murder of Satan in all the earth. And the holy Daniel slept in peace.”

The critical instinct sees without much difficulty that variants must exist in the Syriac sources which would explain some of the now-seeming superabundant matter of the Greek. It seems quite superfluous to enter into an argument to prove the truth of the position here taken, viz., that the Syriac is the original and the Greek a translation. That is obvious throughout — at least to one who takes the trouble to read them through and compare them.

Since preparing the above note I have been shown a “Beschreibung der syrischen Handschrift ‘Sachau 131’ auf der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin,” by Prof. Friedrich Baethgen (in *Zeitschrift f. d. alttest. Wiss.*, Jahrgang 6, 1886) of Kiel, in which is some portion of the “Prophetenleben von Epiphanius von Cypem.” That Sachau MS. appears, in sundry particulars, to have been derived from the same source as some of those newly acquired by the Union Theological Seminary, as may be seen by comparing my brief account of them, heretofore published, with Baethgen’s description. But the point here to be noted is that Baethgen assumes the Greek (he seems not to know of the different character of the recensions) to be the original, and the Syriac the translation. This would be the case, of course, were the Greek the production of Epiphanius of Cyprus. But the Greek appears to be one of the documents which Dorotheus of Tyre translated from the “Hebrew,” which, at that time, would be one of the Aramaic languages; and, as appears by the facts, the Syriac. (See the references to Migne, in my article on “A Hagiologic MS.,” &c.) Had Baethgen read the different texts in Migne, to say nothing of the Philadelphia text, he would perhaps have modified his statement (*ubi supra*, p. 199) “Von diesen [Greek] Texten, soweit sie mir bekannt sind, weicht die syrische Uebersetzung nicht unwesentlich ab.”

Still later — “The Book of the Bee,” just issued by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, contains a Syriac recension of a portion of the “Lives of the Prophets” different from that in Nestle. This new complication of the question I have no time to work out.

In the same “Beschreibung” Baethgen gives the Syriac text of the “Revelation of Ezra,” of which I published a translation in the Presbyterian Quarterly about a year ago. I have at present no copy of either the text or my translation, with which to compare Baethgen’s text and translation, but they are obviously the same thing, and, further, from the same source, and that not remotely.