

TRANSLATION OF THE ARAMAIC PESHITTA

PARALLEL EDITION

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The Peshitta Text

Light of the Word Ministry Translation

Translation from the Old Syriac

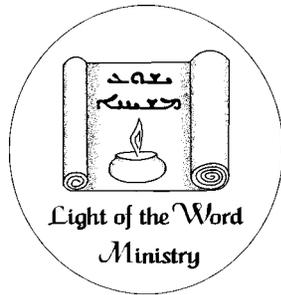
George M. Lamsa Translation

James Murdock Translation

J. W. Etheridge Translation

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Second Edition

INTRODUCTION

Parallel Edition

This Parallel Edition of the Aramaic Peshitta text combines new and out of print translations to bring to the student of the New Testament an unprecedented tool of study. It combines the actual Peshitta text in a very elegant Estrangelo font with a new translation by Light of the Word Ministry. It then includes four older translations. The first is a translation of the Sinaitic Palimpsest of the Old Syriac, known as The Siniaticus, done by Agnes Smith Lewis. The second of the older translations is by Dr. George M. Lamsa, and is taken from the edition of The Modern New Testament, published by The Aramaic Bible Society. The third translation is by James Murdock and is from his translation published in 1851. The last translation is by J.W. Etheridge, based upon the eastern version of the Peshitta.

This combination of translations gives an immediate method of comparison and enables the student of the Bible desiring to study the Biblical text from a variety of angles all in one place. The methods of translation vary from scholar to scholar, but with the ability to compare the verses, the student can check the variations in the choices of words, and then get an overall understanding of the passage.

The Peshitta Text

The text of the Aramaic is taken from *The Syriac New Testament and Psalms*, published by United Bible Societies, specifically the Bible Society in Turkey. In 1905 the British and Foreign Bible Society published an edition of the Gospels in Syriac, reprinted by permission from a revised text of the Peshitta Version which had been prepared by the late Rev. G.H. Gwilliam, B.D., with a Latin translation and critical apparatus, and issued by the Clarendon Press in 1901. This is a critical text of the Peshitta that was completed from a collation of manuscripts at the British Museum Library. It is known as a “western” text of the Peshitta and therefore varies to a small degree from other eastern versions of the Peshitta.

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The font used in this edition is an Estrangelo font developed and available from www.peshitta.org. The letters are clear and concise, but are also in the style of many of the older manuscripts. This font is available to download on the above website.

Light of the Word Ministry Translation (LWM)

Janet Magiera has been working on a database of the Aramaic text of the New Testament for the last 13 years and it is finally coming to fruition where portions of it can begin to be published. This translation is still considered to be in draft form and is in constant revision as more word studies are being accomplished as the work progresses. The purpose of this “new” translation is to present a modern English translation in readable format. It uses the accepted English proper names for people and locations. It endeavors to bring a very literal style together with an idiomatic translation of the Syriac. This translation will be used on the website as well as in future publications of Light of the Word Ministry at www.lightofword.org.

Old Syriac – Lewis

Agnes Smith Lewis published a translation of The Sinaitic Palimpsest that she and her sister discovered at the monastery of St. Catherine’s in the Sinai desert. This excerpt is taken from *Some Pages of The Four Gospels Re-transcribed from The Sinaitic Palimpsest with a Translation of the Whole Text*, published by C.J. Clay and Sons, London, in 1896. Several other scholars, notably Mr. J. Rendel Harris and Mr. F. C. Burkitt helped with the transcription from the photographs and several trips were made to the Sinai even after this work was published. There is now an accepted version of the Siniaticus, which is somewhat more complete than is indicated in this translation. The complete text can be studied in a work by The Syriac Computing Institute and published by E. J. Brill, entitled *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels*, edited by George Anton Kiraz. Unfortunately, Mrs. Lewis did not go back to revise her translation, once the text had been completely verified by 1910. Only the portions that she translated are included in this parallel edition.

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Lamsa Translation

Dr. George M. Lamsa was a native Assyrian who translated the whole Bible into English. His is probably the most well known translation, having been published by Harper Collins Publishers for many years. The version used in this parallel edition is *The Modern New Testament from the Aramaic*, copyright 1933 and reprinted by DeVorss & Company, Marina del Rey, California for the Aramaic Bible Society, Inc. Dr. Lamsa's translation follows the eastern text of the Peshitta, sometimes also known as Nestorian. This accounts for some of the variations with the other translations. But it also is very important to see these differences. Dr. Lamsa traveled extensively in the United States, lecturing and teaching Christians about the Peshitta text and helping Bible students to understand the Aramaic idioms. For more information about Lamsa and to purchase other references by him, please contact The Aramaic Bible Society.

Murdock Translation

James Murdock published *The New Testament, A Literal Translation from the Syriac Peshito Version*, in 1851. The publishers were Robert Carter & Brothers, New York. The preface of his volume contains a brief account regarding his reasons for producing an Aramaic translation. He began the translation in 1845 in order to extend his own knowledge of the Syriac language. He comments, "such exquisite pleasure the writer longed to have others share with him; but as few persons, even among the clergy, have either leisure or facilities for acquiring the Syriac language, he soon came to the conclusion, that he could do nothing better than first read the book carefully through, and then give a literal and exact translation of it." The style of the translation uses the solemn "thee's and thou's" as in the King James and translates Meshikha as the Messiah and not Christ. He endeavors to translate the idioms as fully as possible without sacrificing English grammar.

This edition has gratefully made use of work done by Gary Cernava in scanning and transcribing the editions of Murdock and Etheridge. The full introductions and his complete work are located on the Internet at www.peshito.com.

Etheridge Translation

At approximately the same time in the late 1840's, J. W. Etheridge also produced a translation that was very literal, using the eastern pronunciation of proper names and places. His work is entitled *A Literal Translation of the Four Gospels from the Peshito or Canon of Holy Scripture in Use Among the Oriental Christians from the Earliest*

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Times. Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, London published the complete volume of the translation in 1849. Etheridge was a Doctor in Philosophy of the University of Heidelberg and member of the Asiatic Society of Paris. Another peculiarity of this translation is the use of *Aloha* for the Aramaic word for God. The Etheridge translation was originally written in paragraph form and in order to use it for this parallel edition, it was made to conform to standard verse breaks. His paragraph breaks are indicated in this parallel edition by a small indent with capital letters.

Future books will be published in succession, as the work is complete. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Light of the Word Ministry.

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March, 2001