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## **THE TEXTUAL TRADITIONS AND ORIGIN OF THE SYRIAC APOCRYPHAL PSALM 152**

### *ABSTRACT*

*Hebrew versions of three of the five Syriac Apocryphal Psalms (151, 154 and 155) were found at Qumran as part of 11QPs<sup>a</sup>, but no such versions of Psalms 152 and 153. There is a difference of opinion regarding the origin of these two Psalms. Some scholars accept the possibility of a Hebrew Vorlage, while others reject this. In this paper a survey is given of the research on Psalm 152, followed by a retroversion of the Psalm in Hebrew. The origin of the Psalm is discussed. In the retroversion and the discussion special attention is given to the manuscript 12t4 and its relation to the other Syriac manuscripts containing this Psalm. A Hebrew Vorlage is possible for the original text underlying Psalm 152 in the manuscript 12t4. The other Syriac texts represent a subsequent edited version of the Psalm in the Syriac transmission of the text.*

### *1. INTRODUCTION*

Since the publication of the Psalms scroll of Qumran cave 11 (Sanders 1965) and the critical edition of the five Syriac apocryphal psalms by Baars (1972), the study of these apocryphal psalms has been given a new impetus. Hebrew texts of Psalms 151, 154 and 155 are now available, but not of 152 and 153. In 1930 Martin Noth published his edition of the Syriac apocryphal Psalms, with a discussion, translation and a retroversion in Hebrew of Psalms 152, 154 and 155. The success of his attempted retroversion is clear from a comparison of his retroversion with the two psalms now available in Hebrew. Hebrew texts of Psalms 152 and 153 are, however, not extant and it is indeed a question whether these Psalms do go back to Hebrew *Vorlagen*. In this article a survey of the research on Psalm 152 will be presented. This will be followed by an investigation of the Syriac manuscripts to determine whether different traditions can be distinguished in the transmission of this psalm. The information contained in the Syriac manuscript 12t4 is very important in this regard. Noth did not have this manuscript at his disposal when he published his study on the psalms. A retroversion of the psalm will be attempted, using the text in manuscript 12t4, as corrected, as a point of departure. Information gained by comparing this psalm with Psalms 151,

154 and 155 can aid us in this attempt. The information gathered from comparing the Syriac texts with the Hebrew texts from Qumran sheds light on the translation technique of the Syriac translator(s) and Noth's retroversion can be revised on the basis of this new information. Finally the question will be answered whether a Hebrew *Vorlage* could be postulated for this psalm.

## 2. SURVEY OF RESEARCH

There is a difference of opinion among scholars regarding the question whether Psalm 152 could be dependent on a Hebrew *Vorlage*. Noth (1930:11) held the view that the five Syriac apocryphal Psalms were not original Syriac compositions, because typical Syriac Christian poetry was of a totally different nature. He accepted that these Psalms had a close connection with the Old Testament Psalms on account of their form and thought patterns. They were, however, not literarily dependent on the Old Testament Psalter. As regards Psalm 152, Noth (1930:20) compared it to the individual laments of the Old Testament. On the basis of the parallelisms used in the psalm and the word 'dwny, as well as the ease with which this psalm can be retroverted in Hebrew, he accepted a Hebrew *Vorlage* for this psalm. He concedes that these are not conclusive arguments, but presents a Hebrew retroversion of this psalm. Noth (1930:21) regarded the connection with David in the heading as being secondary. He also regarded verse 3 as a later addition to the psalm. The link between this psalm and David (and especially to 1 Samuel 17:34-17) is most clear in this verse, while 1c and 6b and c do not fit the situation of a fight of David against animals. Noth is quite positive that Psalm 152 had a Hebrew *Vorlage*, but had his doubts about Psalm 153 (1930:20, 22-23).

Van der Woude (1974:33) is also convinced that Psalm 152 had a Hebrew *Vorlage*, on account of the contents, form and vocabulary of the Psalm. He stated that Psalms 152-155 are direct translations of the Hebrew *Vorlage* (1974:34) and that the *Vorlage* must have been part of the Hebrew manuscripts found near Jericho in about 786, according to the patriarch Timothy 1. Psalms 151-155 existed, according to him, as a separate unit and were translated as such into Syriac. Regarding Psalm 151, he mentions two possibilities, viz. that the A and B versions were translated into Syriac from the Hebrew, or that the translator used the well-known Greek tradition. Van der Woude (1974:35) also regards Psalm 152 as an individual lament, agreeing with Noth. He does not accept Noth's view that verse 3 must be regarded as a later addition and

regards the word 'dwnyhwy in verse 6 as evidence of a Hebrew *Vorlage* (1974:36).

Skehan (1976) is absolutely convinced that Psalm 152 and 153 did not have Hebrew *Vorlagen*, but that they were original Syriac compositions. His views can be summarized as follows (1976:147-155). He accepts that these two Psalms (152 and 153) were combined with Psalm 151 in the Syriac. An important argument in favour of his view is related to the headings given to these psalms in the manuscript 12t4. By way of the headings Psalm 152 and 153 are closely connected to Psalm 151, while this is not the case in the other Syriac manuscripts, where Psalms 152 and 153 follow on Psalms 154 and 155. The headings of Psalms 152 and 153 also connect these psalms very closely to the passage in 1 Samuel 17:34-37 on which these psalms most probably depend. According to Skehan the link between the headings and the Peshitta version of that passage in Samuel is closer than that between Samuel and the contents of these two psalms. In the heading of Psalm 152 the verb *šql* is used for the taking of the sheep, as is also the case in the Peshitta in 1 Samuel 17:34, while the psalm itself uses *kmmw* and *tbrw* in verse 3. The end of the heading of Psalm 153 corresponds with 1 Samuel 17:36 in the Peshitta. The reference to a wolf is for Skehan another argument in favour of a Syriac poet working in Syriac and using Syriac sources while combining Psalms 152 and 153 with 151. 1 Samuel speaks of a bear in the Hebrew and Skehan points out that the confusion between a wolf and a bear can only occur in the Syriac (1976:149-150).

In addition to this, Skehan (1976:151) regards the Hebrew colouration of these two psalms as artificial. In 152:2 'yl 'yl appears and in 152:6 'dwny(hwy). He points out that the former is the way in which the 'ly 'ly of Psalm 22:2 is quoted in the Peshitta gospels in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34. This is also the reading of the East-Syriac text of Psalm 22:19b (which agrees with the MT's verse 20b). He is also of the opinion that Psalm 152:1-2a is directly dependent on the Peshitta of Psalm 22:19b-21a. 'dwny does also appear frequently in the Syriac, *inter alia* in eleven headings to the Psalms in the West-Syriac tradition. In addition to this, he (1976:153-154) regards Psalm 152:4 as dependent on parts of the Peshitta Psalm 113. As regards Psalm 153, Skehan (1976:154) is also of the opinion that the Psalm did not have a Hebrew *Vorlage*. His conclusion is that both these Psalms are the work of a Syrian Christian who saw in the lion and the wolf types of death and in David a type of Christ (1976:155). He is also of the opinion that the origin of these two psalms must be dated close to the time of 12t4, because this manuscript had no marginal notes for these two psalms.

Charlesworth and Sanders (1985:615) consider a Hebrew original for Psalm 152 as a possibility. The general tone of the psalms is Jewish (but not rabbinical). They are of the opinion that the poet could have been a Palestinian Jew from the Hellenistic period. Psalm 153 could also have had a Hebrew background, but there is less evidence to support this hypothesis than is the case with Psalm 152 (1985:616).

Wacholder (1988:67) is convinced that Psalm 152 was also part of 11QPs<sup>a</sup> and that it could have been at the end of the damaged column 28 as a third strophe of Psalm 151. This could indeed be the case, but it is impossible to prove such a hypothesis.

In the following discussion, the variants in the Syriac Psalm 152 will be discussed to determine whether different traditions can be distinguished in the Psalm in Syriac. This will be followed by an attempt to supply a retroversion of the Syriac Psalm 152 in Hebrew as an aid to a discussion of the possibility of a Hebrew *Vorlage*. In this retroversion in Hebrew the heading will not be translated because it is evident that the headings of the Syriac psalms are secondary, as can be deduced from the lack of headings for Psalm 154 and 155 in the Qumran Psalm scroll.

### 3. THE SYRIAC TEXT IN THE DIFFERENT MANUSCRIPTS OF PSALM 152

For the fixing of a possible original Syriac text of this psalm, one correction must be made to the text of Baars, viz., that the reading *'dwny* must be preferred in verse 6a. For arguments in this regard, compare Van der Woude (1974:42n12). Charlesworth and Sanders (1985:616) regard the reading of 12t4 as the word *'dwn* with the suffix of the third person masculine singular, but the exact form of 12t4 can not be read as such. For a translation of the Psalm, compare Charlesworth and Sanders (1985:616), Noth (1930:10-11), Skehan (1976:150-151) and Van der Woude (1974:41-42).

The variants most important for this discussion are the variants where all the other manuscripts differ from 12t4. For a discussion of the ten manuscripts Baars used for his critical edition, compare Baars (1972:ii-vii). He chose manuscript 12t4, dating from the twelfth century, as the basic text for his edition (cf. Baars, 1972:iii-1v). This is the only Syriac Psalm manuscript containing the Syriac Apocryphal Psalms. This manuscript is regarded by Walters (1980:XXVII) as the most important Nestorian manuscript used in his preparation of the critical edition of the Syriac Psalter. In his text critical apparatus Baars (1972:5) has a total of 22 variants. Four of them appear in only one manuscript and can be disregarded in the process of looking for an answer to the question

whether different traditions can be distinguished in the transmission of the Syriac text. The following variants are included in this group:

- (i) *'lh'* in the place of the second *'yl* in verse 1 (only in 19E2).
- (ii) The addition of *hww* after *b'yn* in verse 3 (only in 17E1).
- (iii) The omission of *mn* in the corrupt reading in all the manuscripts except 12t4 in verse 4 (19E2\*(vid)).
- (iv) The reading *wpsh* instead of *wps'* in verse 4 (only in 17E2\*).

Fourteen of the other variants appear in all nine manuscripts except 12t4 and the other four in four or more of the other manuscripts. The variants appearing in all the other manuscripts are the following:

- (i) Two instances in the heading where all the other manuscripts add *hw'* to a participle.
- (ii) One instance in the heading where all the other manuscripts add *lh* before a word beginning with the preposition *l*.
- (iii) Two instances where all the manuscripts omit a *seyame*: one in the heading and another one in verse 1.
- (iv) One instance in verse 1 where all the manuscripts omit *w* before a verb.
- (v) In verse 2 all the other manuscripts replaced the second *'ry'* with *d'b'*. Charlesworth and Sanders (1985:616) think that 12t4 has an error in this instance. It is, however, also possible that if a Hebrew original is accepted, different Hebrew words may have been rendered by the same word in Syriac. The Syriac *'ry'* is used in Psalm 22:14 to translate ארריה and in Psalm 22:17 for ארי.
- (vi) One instance in verse 3 where all the manuscripts add *d'by* to *gzrh*. This can be regarded as part of an attempt to link this Psalm more explicitly with 1 Samuel 17, where David says in verse 34 that he worked as a shepherd for *'by* (my father) in the Peshitta (the MT has *'byw* [his father]).
- (vii) All the other manuscripts have *l* before *npšy* in verse 3.
- (viii) All the other manuscripts omit *'l gbyk* in verse 4.
- (ix) In verse 4 all the manuscripts have a clear scribal error in the place of the reading *nt'mn* of 12t4.
- (x) In verse 5 all the manuscripts have *d'b'* instead of *mwt'*. This can be regarded as an attempt to link this Psalm closer to 1 Samuel 17.

- (xi) All the manuscripts have an addition in verse 5, namely *wd'b' srwh'*, with the same aim as the other addition in this verse.
- (xii) In verse 5 all the manuscripts have *'ydyhyn* instead of *pwmhyn*.

The four variants appearing in four or more of the other manuscripts are the following:

- (i) In verse 6 all the other manuscripts except 19E2 have *'dwny* instead of 12t4's *'dwnyhwy*.
- (ii) In one instance in the heading a number of manuscripts have a verb in the singular (19d1, 14E1, 17E2 en 18E2) and also in one instance in verse 3 (14E1, 17E3\*, 18E2 en 19E2).
- (iii) In verse 6 six manuscripts omit *dsby'* (19d1, 17E1-3, 18E2 en 19E1).

The fourteen variants occurring in all the other manuscripts can serve as evidence that these manuscripts represent the same tradition, while 12t4 represents a different tradition, as is also the case with Psalm 154 and 155 (cf. Van Rooy 1993a and 1993b). Some of these variants are due to a difference in pointing (as the omission of the *seyame* in two instances), some are stylistic (as the addition of *lh* in the heading and the addition of the preposition *l* in verse 3) and some are not important on their own (as the omission of *w* in verse 1). Some are important for distinguishing the two traditions, but do not affect the meaning of the Psalms (e.g. the omission of *'l gbyk* in verse 4, the scribal error in verse 4 and the reading *'ydyhyn* instead of *pwmhyn* in verse 5). The variants occurring only in a number of manuscripts (in the heading and in verses 3 and 6) are not important for the difference in traditions.

This does, however, leave a number of variants indicating an adaptation of the Psalm to strengthen the link with 1 Samuel 17. These variants include the reading *d'b'* instead of the second *'ry'* in verse 3 and instead of *mwt'* in verse 5 and the addition of *wd'b' srwh'* in verse 5. If it is accepted that the heading must be dated later than the original Psalm, the changes could be dated to the same time as the heading or shortly afterwards. It is in any case clear that the variants are related to the transmission of the Psalm in Syriac, precisely on account of the link with 1 Samuel 17 in the Peshitta.

The next step is to attempt a retroversion of the Syriac text in Hebrew. The translation of Noth provided a good starting point, although

he did not have access to the important manuscript 12t4. His translation thus reflects the later Syriac tradition and not the original Syriac as in 12t4.

#### 4. A HEBREW TRANSLATION OF PSALM 152

This translation is based on the text of 12t4, with the one correction as indicated above.

אלי אלי בוא לאילותי	1a
עזרני והושיעני	1b
והצל נפשי מההרגים	1c
ארד לשאול בפי אריה	2a
או יבלע ארי אתי	2b
המעט ארבעם לצאן אבי	3a
וישברו שה מעדרו	3b
כי גם נפשי יבקשו להכרית	3c
חוס יהוה על בהירך	4a
והצל הסידך משחת	4b
ויאמן בתהלתך כל עתותי	4c
ויפאר שם גדלתך	4d
כי הושעתו מיד מות משחית	5a
וכי הצלת שביתי מפי היות	5b
מהר אדני שלא מלפניך מציל	6a
ודלני מן המצולה הפעורה	6b
ההפצה להסגירני במעמקיה	6c

This translation differs in some respects from that of Noth (1930:20-21), mainly because of the instances where 12t4 disagrees with the other Syriac manuscripts. In verse 1a Noth puts a part of his translation in brackets (בוא לאילי), taking it as a later addition, but without stating his reasons for this. In the retroversion above this section is retained and the metre does not present any problems. For אילותי instead of אילי, compare Psalm 22:20. The ׀ at the beginning of 1c reflects the difference between the two traditions. This is also the reason for the plural ההרגים at the end of 1c, ארי instead of הזאב in verse 2b, the omission of אבי in 3b, the addition of על בהירך in 4a and the resultant division into two lines, and the different translation in 5a, 5b and 6c. There is no clear reason for translating *mn* in the Syriac in 1c with מפני and the rendering with ׀ prefixed to ההרג results in a nice metre, although it is also possible to use מן. For the omission of the article before אריה in 2a,

compare Psalms 22:14 and 22. In 2b *'ryh* in the Syriac is regarded as a rendering of ארי. This word appears in 1 Samuel 17:34 in the Hebrew. If this is accepted, verse 2 can be regarded as a combination of Psalm 22:22 and 1 Samuel 17:34, but then from the Hebrew. In 3c an imperfect would be better in the Hebrew than a participle. For ו instead of למען in 4c, compare Psalm 155:10. For עת rather than יום in 4c, compare Psalm 154:17. For ויפאר in 4d, compare Psalm 154:3, 10 in 11QPs<sup>a</sup>. For מציל instead of מושיע in 6a, compare Psalm 154:17.

##### 5. THE SYRIAC TEXT AND A POSSIBLE HEBREW VORLAGE

Skehan uses a number of arguments to support his rejection of a Hebrew original for Psalm 152, as indicated above. He is of the opinion (1976:148), *inter alia*, that 12t4 represents a conscious effort to link Psalms 152 and 153 with 151. The headings of the two Psalms in 12t4 connect the two Psalms with each other and with 152 in his view. The reference to a wolf instead of a bear is for him also an important argument (1976:149-150). In addition to this he states that the other manuscripts added the wolf to verses 2 and 5 to strengthen this link. In a footnote (1976:148n20) he states, however, that the other manuscripts diminished the link between Psalm 151 and 152-153. This view conflicts with the idea of a deliberate alteration in these other manuscripts in verses 2 and 5. His statement that the headings of Psalms 152 and 153 link these Psalms closer to the precise language of 1 Samuel 17:34-37 in the Peshitta (1976:148-149) points to another possibility, namely that the basic contents of Psalm 152 could be related to a Hebrew *Vorlage*, but that the headings, which were added at a later stage, supported an interpretation of this Psalm linking it closely to 1 Samuel 17.

Skehan (1976:155) concludes his discussion of the Syriac origin of Psalm 152 (and 153) with a strange argument. He thinks that the marginal hand of 12t4 must be dated close to the source of Psalms 152 and 153. The manuscript 12t4 contains a number of marginal notes to Psalms 151, 154 and 155, but there is not a single marginal note to Psalms 152 and 153. From this Skehan concludes that the annotator and his immediate source knew at first hand who composed these psalms in Syriac. On the other hand, he wants to date these psalms shortly after the discovery of some form of the Qumran Psalter late in the eighth century. If 12t4 is dated in the twelfth century, it was impossible for the annotator to have known a Syriac poet from the eighth or ninth century.

The heading and the possibility of a deliberate alteration to the text to strengthen the link with the Peshitta of 1 Samuel 17:34-37 play an important part in Skehan's arguments. These matters need to be

evaluated in a discussion of this problem. There are, however, also other factors in the text that would support a hypothesis of a Hebrew original.

Van der Woude (1974:41) also accepts that the heading of Psalm 152 contains an allusion to 1 Samuel 17:34-37 with regard to David's struggle with the lion and the bear. With regard to the Syriac word *d'b'*, Van der Woude (1974:41) states that it could be used to refer to a wolf or a bear, although in the latter instance the word is usually written with a medial alaph. As indicated, Skehan regards the occurrence of *d'b'* instead of *db'* as an important argument in favour of a Syriac origin for this Psalm. Payne-Smith (1981:801) has the following spellings for wolf: *d'b'*, *d'yb'*, *dyb'* and *db'*. For bear the following occur: *d'b'* and *db'* (Payne-Smith 1981:805). Since the forms *d'b'* and *db'* can both be used for a wolf and a bear, confusion of these two animals in a written text is always possible. One needs to be careful not to try to deduce too much from the occurrence of these words in different forms.

Skehan (1976:151-152) argues that verse 1 does indeed contain a Hebrew colouration in verse 1 but that it is artificial. He argues that verses 1 and 2 are patterned on the Peshitta of Psalm 22:20b, 21a and 22a. His arguments are, however, not convincing, because they leave a number of important questions unanswered. In the MT of Psalm 22 the word אִלְרוּתִי occurs, a *hapax legomenon*, perhaps meaning strength or help (cf. Koehler & Baumgartner 1994:41). The meaning of the Hebrew word is problematic and it is thus understandable that the Peshitta did not translate it in Psalm 22:20, but rendered it with *'yl 'yl*. One can ask whether the Peshitta used a text agreeing with the MT or whether it had a different *Vorlage*. If one accepts that Psalm 152:1-2 alluded to Psalm 22 — as is very probable — the occurrence of the word *'yly* in the text of Psalm 152:1 may be an indication that the poet used a Hebrew text. This makes it more probable that the original was written in Hebrew. Skehan does point out that the other matters that could point to a Hebrew original have parallels in the Peshitta, but the number of examples in the first two verses of the Psalm may be an indication that a Hebrew original must at the very least be regarded as a strong possibility.

In v. 2b it is accepted with Noth that the verb *bl'* must be the original and that, through a scribal error, this was altered with the form *yblbl* as a result (1930:10; cf. also Philonenko 1959:45). Noth and Philonenko are both of the opinion that the confusion must have occurred during the Syriac transmission of the text. The Hebrew must have had a form of the verb בלע that was retained in the Syriac and was changed to *nblbl* during the Syriac transmission. Van der Woude (1974:41) does not agree with this view because *bl'* occurs very seldom in the Pael in Syriac and

because all the manuscripts have *nblbl*. He translates it with *beunruhigen*.

In verse 3b Van der Woude (1974:41) refers with regard to the last verb (*dnwbdown*) to Psalm 54:5, 86:14, and to 1QHIII.21. With regard to 4b Van der Woude (1974:41) states that *hbl'* is equal to the Hebrew שָׁהָה. In verse 4c the reading *nt'mn* of 12t4 must be regarded as the original Syriac text. All the other manuscripts contain a scribal error. Noth (1930:10) had already accepted that the reading *ntn' mn* in the manuscripts at his disposal had to be an error and that an Etpeel of *'mn* must be read, a proposal proven correct by 12t4 (cf. also Van der Woude 1974:42). Noth (1930:21) also translated it with a Niphal and referred to Psalm 78:37. The variant in the other Syriac manuscripts must be due to an error occurring during the transmission of the text in the Syriac.

As regards the use of *nt'mn* in the Syriac, the Etpeel of *'mn* can mean to persevere, to persist in, continue in, to be constant, steadfast (cf. Payne-Smith q.v.), while *hymn* means to believe, to be faithful and *'thymn* to be believed, to be found true. What is noteworthy is that *'t'mn* does not appear at all in the Peshitta Psalter. The Niphal of *'mn* is translated in the Syriac with *hymn* or *mhymn* (cf. Psalms 78:8; 37; 19:8; 89:29; 38; 93:5; 101:6). The fact that *nt'mn* is used here in Psalm 152 points to a literal translation of the Hebrew Niphal, and then in a way different from the normal translation in the Peshitta Psalter.

For the Piel of פָּעַר, compare Psalm 30:2. For the verb פָּעַר in verse 6, compare Psalm 119:131. In his Hebrew translation Noth (1930:21) used the passive participle of the verb פָּתַח, but it is improbable that a rare verb would be used in the Syriac to translate a common Hebrew word which has a cognate in the Syriac. The reading אֲדַנִּי in the translation instead of some rendering of 12t4's *'dwnywhy*, being a form of the verb *dyn*, is in agreement with Skehan's (1976:152n34) discussion of this variant (cf. also Charlesworth and Sanders 1985:616). Van der Woude states that *'dwnyhwy* is equal to "I will judge him" (*richten*), which does not fit the context. He thinks that the Hebraism was unclear to a copyist, who changed the word to a form of a verb that was clear to him (1974:42). If this is true, it constitutes another argument in favour of a Hebrew original.

Charlesworth and Sanders (1985:616) regard the Syriac *lyty* in verse 2 as a rendering of the *nota accusativi*, which, taken with the use of *'yl*, could point, in their view, to a Hebrew original. Skehan (1976:152), however, is of the opinion that this would result in unidiomatic Hebrew. He does not give reasons why the Hebrew would be unidiomatic. It is true that the *nota accusativi* does not appear frequently in the Psalms. In

the Hebrew retroversion above the order of the words is verb — subject — *nota accusativi*. The same order appears in Psalm 18:1. The construction with the *nota accusativi* is not common in the Psalms, but it does occur from time to time. Skehan (1976:152) regards verse 3 as discursive without any parallelism. In the translation above no significant difference between this verse and the rest of the Psalm can be discerned.

## 6. CONCLUSION

It seems possible that a Hebrew *Vorlage* could be postulated for the original text underlying Psalm 152 in the manuscript 12t4. The other Syriac texts represent a subsequent edited version of the Psalm in the Syriac transmission of the text. In the heading of this Psalm in 12t4 and in the later edited version clear indications exist that the later editorial work to this Psalm was part of an attempt in the Syriac tradition to strengthen the link between the Psalm and 1 Samuel 17:34-37.

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