

A second version of the Syriac Psalm 151¹

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ABSTRACT

All studies on the Syriac Psalm 151 up to the present accept that all the Syriac witnesses reflect the same basic tradition. This tradition can be traced back to the version of this Psalm in a longer version in Syriac of the commentary on the Psalms by Athanasius. This manuscript (6h22) dates from the late sixth century. This paper proposes that a second Syriac version can be identified in three Melkite manuscripts. The variants between the two versions are discussed. The majority of these variants can be regarded as major variants, pointing to the existence of a second translation of this Psalm in Syriac from the Greek.

A INTRODUCTION

In studies of the Syriac version of Psalm 151 it has generally been accepted that all occurrences of this Psalm in Syriac can be traced to the same original tradition. The oldest Syriac version of this Psalm occurs in a manuscript with a longer version of the Psalms' commentary of Athanasius (cf Thomson 1977a:188; 1977b:154; Baars 1972:[vii-vii]; Strugnell 1966:270-272). This version of the Psalm, with some minor variants, became the *textus receptus* in the Syro-Hexaplaric edition of the Psalter and can also be regarded as the origin of the version of this Psalm in the collection of five Apocryphal Psalms and in a number of Peshitta manuscripts. In this article the version of Psalm 151 in these three groups will be briefly discussed, followed by a comparison between this version and a different version of this Psalm that occurs in three manuscripts. In the discussion of the *textus receptus* the text of Psalm 151 in 9SH1² (the Ambrosian Syro-Hexapla) will be taken as basic text.

B THE *TEXTUS RECEPTUS* OF THE SYRIAC PSALM 151

The existence of five Apocryphal Psalms in Syriac has been known since the middle of the eighteenth century, when the well-known Assemani of Rome noted their

existence in a manuscript in the Vatican library (Assemanus & Assemanus 1759: 385-386). A text of these Psalms was published for the first time late in the nineteenth century (Wright 1887). Important landmarks in the study of Psalm 151 were the publication of a critical text of the five Syriac Apocryphal Psalms by Noth (1930), the publication of 11QPs^a in 1965, a Psalms scroll containing three of the Syriac Apocryphal Psalms in Hebrew (Sanders 1965), and the publication of a critical text of the five Syriac Apocryphal Psalms in the Leiden Peshitta (Baars 1972). In the study of Psalm 151 in Syriac the origin and character of the witnesses must also be taken into consideration. Strugnell (1966:259-261) demonstrated the importance of this, but he did not have all the evidence that is now available, especially since his important study appeared before the publication of the critical text by Baars.

The first important step in the study of this Psalm was Wright's publication of a text of Psalm 151 in conjunction with the other Apocryphal Psalms in 1887. The Psalm was already known in Syriac, from the polyglots, the first edition of Lee (cf Strugnell 1966:260 n 6), and in the Ambrosian Syro-Hexapla (cf Strugnell 1966: 259-260, also n 5). Wright used two manuscripts (17E1 and 18E2 according to Baars' notation) for his edition, in which he briefly described the two manuscripts, published a text of the Psalms, with text-critical notes, and translated the Psalms, adding just a few notes. Wright (1887:258-259) also notes the differences between his two manuscripts and the Ambrosian Syro-Hexapla.

In reaction to Wright's article, Spoer published a paper in 1908 in which he noted two Syriac manuscripts with Psalm 151. One manuscript he saw in a Syriac monastery which dated from 1472 AD, while the other manuscript was in his possession. The second manuscript had no date, but he was of the opinion that it was probably older than the other manuscript (Spoer 1908:65). The readings of the Psalm in the two manuscripts are identical, but the introductions differ. His two manuscripts agree with the Ambrosian Psalm 151, rather than with Wright's text (Spoer 1908:68).

Noth (1930) published the first real critical text of the five Syriac Apocryphal Psalms. He used Mingana 31 (14E1) as basic text, with notes containing variants from the other manuscripts at his disposal (17E1.2, 18E2 and 19E1). He regarded the Syriac Psalm 151 as essentially identical to the Septuagint Psalm 151, its *Vorlage* (Noth 1930:21).

The study of the Syriac Apocryphal Psalms received new attention after the publication of the Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11 by Sanders in 1965. Sanders

regards the Qumran Psalm 151A as a poetic midrash on 1 Samuel 16:1-13 (1965:65). The version of the Psalm in the LXX is not merely a translation of the Qumran Psalm 151. However, every phrase of the LXX version also appears in the Qumran version (Psalm 151A), except for verses 6 and 7 of the LXX. His conclusion is that the Qumran Psalm 151A contains the Hebrew underlying the LXX Psalm 151:1-5 and that the Qumran Psalm 151B contains the beginning of the origin of the LXX Psalm 151:6-7 (Sanders 1965:63-64). The two passages were later combined and in the process the artistic form of the first and possibly also of the second, was lost. The LXX Psalm 151 is a translation of the combination. The research on the Qumran Psalm 151 concentrated especially on the question of the relation of the Qumran Psalm 151A+B to the Greek and other versions and on the implications of 11QPs^a for the development of the canonical Psalter. Albeit interesting to note, these debates are not really relevant to the present study.

Strugnell published a very important article in 1966 which discussed the Syriac Apocryphal Psalms 151, 154 and 155, with reference to 11QPs^a and also to the LXX with regard to Psalm 151. This article appeared before the publication of Baars' critical text of the Syriac Apocryphal Psalms and is therefore incomplete in some respects. Strugnell discusses the Syriac, Greek and Hebrew versions of Psalm 151. He distinguishes four classes of manuscripts with regard to the Syriac version of Psalm 151 (Strugnell 1966:259-261). His class A consists of the manuscripts of the Syro-Hexapla and class B of many Peshitta manuscripts. He states that classes A and B represent the same text. Class C is represented by the text Mosul 1113 (12t4). Class D is represented by the five Apocryphal Syriac Psalms contained in copies of a work of Elias of Al-Anbar. Strugnell is of the opinion that all these Syriac witnesses represent the same basic text, and, after discussing all the variants in these manuscripts, concludes that all the copies of the work of Elias can probably be traced to the same manuscript. There are no readings in the Elias texts and in 12t4 that point to a different original text as the one contained in his classes A and B (Strugnell 1966:262). The Syriac Psalm 151 must be regarded as dependent on the LXX (Strugnell 1966:265). The version of this Psalm in the LXX is the result of a combination of the Qumran Psalm 151A and B, but it is uncertain whether this combination already existed in Hebrew or whether it was the result of the Greek translator's attempt to combine and abridge the two Hebrew Psalms (Strugnell 1966:269).

When one looks at all the material collected by Baars in his critical edition of

151:2.1

LXX

αἱ χεῖρές μου ἐποίησαν ὄργανον

9SH1

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

12t5

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

151:2.2

LXX

οἱ δάκτυλοί μου ἤρμωσαν ψαλτήριον

9SH1

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

12t5

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

151:3.1

LXX

καὶ τίς ἀναγγελεῖ τῷ κυρίῳ μου

9SH1

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

12t5

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

151:3.2

LXX

αὐτὸς κύριος

9SH1

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

12t5

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

151:3.3

LXX

αὐτὸς εἰσακούει

9SH1

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

12t5

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

151:4.1

LXX

αὐτὸς ἐξαπέστειλεν τὸν ἄγγελον αὐτοῦ

9SH1

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

12t5

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

151:4.2

LXX

καὶ ἤρην με ἐκ τῶν προβάτων τοῦ πατρός μου

9SH1

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

12t5

כִּתְרֵי חֲבִירִים

151:4.3

LXX

καὶ ἔχρισέν με ἐν τῷ ἐλαίῳ τῆς χρίσεως αὐτοῦ

9SH1

מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

151:5.1

LXX

οἱ ἀδελφοί μου καλοὶ καὶ μεγάλοι

9SH1

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

151:5.2

LXX

καὶ οὐκ εὐδόκησεν ἐν αὐτοῖς κύριος

9SH1

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

151:6.1

LXX

ἐξῆλθον εἰς συνάντησιν τῷ ἀλλοφύλῳ

9SH1

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

151:6.2

LXX

καὶ ἐπικατηράσατό με ἐν τοῖς εἰδώλοις αὐτοῦ

9SH1

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

151:7.1

LXX

ἐγὼ δὲ σπασάμενος τὴν παρ' αὐτοῦ μάχαιραν

9SH1

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

151:7.2

LXX

ἀπεκεφάλισα αὐτὸν

9SH1

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

151:7.3

LXX

καὶ ἦρα ὄνειδος ἐξ υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ

9SH1

יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

12t5

ܩܘܡܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

E DISCUSSION

1 The headings

One must be careful not to deduce too much from the different headings to Psalm 151. It is, however, clear that the heading of 9SH1 is close to that of the LXX, with only the addition regarding the fact that this Psalm is not found in the other manuscripts, this probably being a reference to the (older) manuscripts of the Peshitta. This reference is omitted in 12t2, which has, however, a subscript following on Psalm 150 to the effect that these Psalms are within the number, implying that Psalm 151, following on this subscript, is without the number. No Peshitta manuscript before the tenth century has this Psalm. 12t2 and 5 omit the reference to David's battle with Goliath. This also happens in a number of late manuscripts (16t1, 4 and 5). The Leningrad manuscript has a reference to Goliath, but in a unique form for Psalm 151 (albeit in a form corresponding to the headings of the canonical Psalms):

ܩܘܡܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

2 The body of the Psalm

12t2 and 5 differ only with regard to the punctuation of ܕܥܘܠܡܐ in verse 5, where 12t2 reads the verb as a perfect and 12t5 as a participle. The Leningrad manuscript differs only in verse 4, with ܕܥܘܠܡܐ instead of ܕܥܘܠܡܐ. In the presentation of the three versions of Psalm 151 above, the Psalm is divided into eighteen lines. The two Syriac texts are identical in only three lines, namely, in 3.2, 4.3 and 6.1.

Psalm 151 in 9SH1 consists of fifty-nine words and thirty-four of them appear also in the version in 12t5t. If all the differences, including the plusses in 12t5, are taken into consideration, twenty-seven variants between the two versions can be distinguished. To weigh these variants is not so easy. For the purposes of this paper, the system proposed by Koster (1977) will be used. He (1977:2-3) distinguishes ten kinds of variants, with a number of sub-groups as well. The first four groups of variants are more important and the last six groups less important for the

comparison of different manuscripts. The important variants are related to the transposition, omission, addition or alteration of a word and the less important variants to alterations in prepositions, pointing, endings of words, orthographic variants and the like. All these kinds of variants will not be discussed in detail, but the variants will be classified in this manner.

3 Major variants

In this discussion the text of 9SH1 will be taken as starting point for a presentation of the variants in 12t5.

Omission of words

1.1 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

3.3 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

5.2 ܕ at the beginning of the line (cf the discussion of the additions in 5.1 below)

7.1 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

7.3 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

Addition of one or more words

1.3 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

5.1 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ / ܕܥܘܠܡܐ. The addition or omission of ܕ and alterations regarding prepositions are usually regarded as minor variants, but in this case the two variants in 5.1 coupled with the omission of ܕ in 5.2 make one sentence of the two in 9SH1.

7.1 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

7.2 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

Alteration of a word

1.2 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ / ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

2.1 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ / ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

2.2 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ / ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

2.2 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ / ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

3.3 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ / ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

4.1 ܕܥܘܠܡܐ / ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

- 4.2 ܢܐܘܢܝܢ / ܢܘܢܝܢ
- 4.2 ܐܘܢܐ / ܥܢܐ
- 6.2 ܢܠܝܢ / ܢܫܝܢ
- 7.1 ܫܦܫܐ / ܫܘܫܐ
- 7.2 ܦܫܫܐ / ܦܫܘܐ
- 7.3 ܢܐܘܢܝܢ / ܢܐܘܢܝܢ

4 Minor variants

Orthographic variants

- 2.1 ܡܚܩܝܢ / ܡܚܩܝܢ

Variants related to ܢ and ܢ

- 2.2 adds ܢ at the beginning.
- 3.1 omits ܢ at the beginning.

Alterations in endings of words

- 3.1 omits suffix to ܡܚܩܝܢ

Difference related to verbal forms

- 3.1 ܡܚܩܝܢ / ܡܚܩܝܢ
- 5.2 ܡܚܩܝܢ / ܡܚܩܝܢ

Of the twenty-seven variants listed, twenty-one can be regarded as major variants according to the system used by Koster. They include five omissions, four additions and twelve alterations of words. Eleven of these last-mentioned twelve are related to the use of synonyms for the same Greek word. One addition and one omission must be considered together, namely, in 5.1 and 2, where together they caused a change of syntax. Two sentences in 9SH1 became one in 12t5. In 7.1 and 2 an omission and an addition taken together changed a subordinate sentence structure into a coordinate structure. Of the six minor variants, one is an orthographic variant, one the omission and one the addition of ܢ at the beginning of lines, one the omission of a suffix to a noun and two are related to verbal forms.

The words that agree in the two versions are frequently the common words, like to be, small, large, father, house, shepherd, hands, as well as the eight words in the three identical lines. As far as the common words are concerned, it is as one would expect when practically the same text is translated by different people.

Examples related to a possible different *Vorlage* merit special attention. The insertion of 'the house of' in 1.3 is unique to these three manuscripts, with also no parallel in the Greek manuscripts - it is perhaps owing to the similar reading in the previous line. The translation of the musical instruments in verse 2 is also peculiar to these three manuscripts. In the first case a Greek loan-word is used, different from the one used in the other manuscripts. The one in the other manuscripts is borrowed directly from the Greek of Psalm 151. In the second case the words used are found in the Aramaic of Daniel 3:5, 7, 10 and 15. The same words are used in Daniel 3 in the Peshitta, where ܡܫܘܒܐܢܐ also occurs. These words probably reflect a different translation of the Greek, using terms from the Peshitta of Daniel.

The omission of 'children' at the end of verse 7 is also unique, with no similar reading in any Greek manuscript. The variant at the end of verse 3 is especially important. The large majority of the other Syriac manuscripts all differ from the Septuagint in this instance. The Septuagint has the verb 'to listen', which disappeared from the Syriac (cf Strugnell 1966:264-265 for a possible explanation of the origin of this variant in the Syriac). The only Syriac manuscripts which have this verb besides 12t2.5 and the Leningrad manuscript are 14SH1 and 16t1. These three manuscripts do, however, contain a reading different from the Greek. The whole verse in Greek reads as follows: 'And who will make known to my Lord: He is the Lord, He listens.' The majority of Syriac manuscripts have: 'And who will make known to my Lord: He is the Lord, He is my God.' These three manuscripts have: 'Who will make known to the Lord: he is the Lord God who listens.' The Greek has a number of variants, but none comparable to the reading of these three manuscripts.

The number and character of the differences are such that they raise the question whether one has merely a recension of the same translation as in the other witnesses (as Baars 1972:[ix] thought), or perhaps a new translation from the Greek.

This version may also reflect variants in the Septuagint in a number of cases. The addition of 'and' at the beginning of 2.2 occurs in a number of Syriac and Greek witnesses (Lucianic manuscripts and 55). The omission at the beginning of verse 3 occurs in 16t1 as well as in the E manuscripts. In the Greek it was also omitted by a number of Lucianic manuscripts, as well as the Sahidic. Some of these differences can perhaps be related to translation technique. This includes the omission of ܡܫܘܒܐܢܐ in 1.1, the sentence structures in 5 and 7, the finite verb in 3.1 and the verb in the Peal in 5.2.

