

The New English Annotated Translation of the Syriac Bible
Peshitta Institute, Leiden, 4–5 February 1999.

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- [1] In July 1998 the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) authorized the Peshitta Institute Leiden to prepare an edition of a new and annotated translation of the Syriac Bible into English. The aim of this edition is to facilitate the use of the Peshitta and access to the Syriac theological literature, especially that of the commentaries on the Bible and of liturgy. Three general editors were appointed: K.D. Jenner (Peshitta Institute, Leiden), J. Joosten (University of Strasbourg), and A. Salvesen (Oriental Institute, Oxford).
- [2] In order to start preparations for this edition officially a seminar at the Peshitta Institute Leiden was held on 4 and 5 February 1999. The invited participants had a two-fold aim:
1. The formulation of a set of basic rules that may underlay the editorial philosophy and policy as well as the official sample.
 2. The evaluation of some preliminary samples prepared by specialists in the field of Peshitta research.
- [3] Thanks to the chairmanship of D.J. Lane (Leeds University) the above two aims were completely realized. Consequently, a common opinion was reached, on the basis of which A. Salvesen will prepare the draft of the official sample(s).
- [4] The following is a very brief report of the issues discussed. On February, the 4th, four papers were read and discussed first:
- K.D. Jenner and A. van der Kooij gave a general introduction to the seminar. They sketched the preparations of the project, prior to the authorization by IOSOT, and evaluated the editorial policy of the annotated English (Toronto) and French (Paris) translation of the Septuagint.
 - M. Zipor argued, on the base of texts from Leviticus 19 and 21, the “why” and “how” of the annotated English translation. Scholars lacking in knowledge of Hebrew, Aramaic and classical Syriac should get access to the Peshitta because of:
 1. its homiletic nature;
 2. its slavish translation from the Hebrew.

- In cases where the Peshitta differed from the Massoretic Text (=MT), the translators either had a homiletic goal, or had used a Hebrew text different from MT or did not have a correct understanding of their Hebrew original. His opponent, D.J. Lane, did not dispute that the Peshitta was closely related to the MT, but he had quite a different opinion as to the conclusions that could be drawn from this relationship. He drew much attention to the fact that the translation of the Hebrew text had been much more complicated than one would expect from the biblical Peshitta MSS. Lane's main thesis was that biblical and classical Syriac in some respects is essentially different from Hebrew. Moreover, classical Syriac had quite a few linguistic possibilities to avoid apparent ambiguities in Hebrew. Thus, as Lane concluded, one should make a fresh translation from the Syriac and not make use of Modern English translations of the Old Testament. The Peshitta, he objected to Zipor, though being a translation, should be evaluated on its own merits, its own audience and social as well as cultural environment.
- A. Salvesen made a brief sketch of the aspects of translation techniques. With the help of passages from the books of Samuel she highlighted some features in this field. She emphasized that one should consider the Syriac of the Peshitta from two different points of view: on the one hand as a target language with its special problems against the source language; on the other hand as a source language for a new target language of a different nature. One should opt for a translation that is in balance with both viewpoints and that meets the needs of the modern audience or reader. These two conditions would require that the English translation be as close as possible to the Syriac, but not be a slavish one. The referent, J.W. Dyk, supported the conclusions of Salvesen. She emphasized that to meet Salvesen's conditions it was necessary to have a much better insight into the macrosyntactical structures of biblical and classical Syriac.
- J. Joosten sketched a typology for the language of the Old Testament Peshitta. He emphasized that the language of the Old Testament Peshitta was but a relative unity, because of its linguistic diversity, due to the several phases in the development of the Syriac language. He presented a tentative

framework for solving problems to be expected in the translation of the Old Testament Peshitta into English. He drew special attention to the quality of idiom and the use of Greek words in the Peshitta as compared with that found in other Syriac sources. Another issue he gave much attention was that of traces of early Syriac and of Aramaic elements in the Peshitta of the Old Testament. His referent, T. Muraoka, emphasized that a better linguistic knowledge of the Syriac language was still a desideratum. In his opinion the following three parameters would need much more attention: the idiomatic nature, the problem of continuity and discontinuity, and the problem of orthography.

- D. Phillips read a report in respect with his experiences and practical problems in translating and annotating the books of Chronicles: "Englishing the Peshitta to Chronicles." He formulated four major categories of problems he had met: the style of English to be used, how and to what extent divergences from the Massoretic text should be indicated, the comparison with the parallel texts and the other versions, and the structure of the notes. P.S.F. van Keulen, as his opponent, made some critical remarks and suggestions about the structure of the notes as well as to use of the parallel texts and other versions.

[5] At the end of the day D.J. Lane presented a balanced survey of a number of general and important issues that arose during the discussions and required resolution. The broad discussion of these issues was closed on February, the 5th, and resulted in a common opinion with reference to the basic rules for the editorial policy. With the help of these rules the large samples on Leviticus, Job, Kings, and Chronicles were evaluated.

ARAM Fourteenth Conference
Antioch and Edessa
Rhodes House, University of Oxford, 12–14 July 1999

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- [1] ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian studies held its fourteenth conference at Oxford University on 12–14 July 1999. The convener was Dr. Shafiq AbouZayd, who must be congratulated on the great success of this conference. He succeeded not only in securing a magnificent venue, Rhodes House, but also in gathering a diverse and interesting group of scholars at a moment that other important conferences (the American Syriac Symposium and the Oxford Patristic Conference) were likely to take the wind out of his sails. I am sure that I speak for all participants if I say that this was a truly wonderful occasion.
- [2] The conference started with a paper by Dr. Daphna V. Arbel entitled “Junction of Tradition in Edessa: Possible Interaction between Mesopotamian Mythological and Jewish Mystical Traditions in the First Centuries CE.” This fascinating theme was followed by a paper on Antioch in South Arabian Tradition by Dr. Serguei A. Frantsouzoff, read in his absence by Dr. Nikolaj Serikoff. After the coffee break, Dr. Hans Erbes showed us how variants in the Peshitta tradition could be presented in relation to the readings of the Syro-Hexapla and other versions, using examples from the first five chapters of the book of Joshua. In the following paper, Prof. Catherine Saliou brought us back to Antioch; she discussed the myths and stories regarding its foundation.
- [3] The last session of 12 July was devoted to results of archeological work: Dr. Grégoire Poccardi and Mr. Jacques Leblanc reported on the retrieval of the location of the Olympic stadium of Daphne, and Mr. Alain Desreumaux presented a number of unpublished inscriptions that were found by a Turkish-French expedition to sites on the Euphrates near the Syrian border. One of them, a cave-tomb inscription from Apamea (opposite Zeugma), should be considered the westernmost inscription in Old Syriac found so far. It is dated 503 (of the Seleucid era; 191 CE) [Drijvers-Healey Add 1]. Next to this inscription a more recent text refers to the restoration of the tomb. Its date, 155, is ambiguous, Desreumaux explained: should we read this as (1)155 of the