

The First Book of Maccabees in Syriac: Dating and Context

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Abstract

Syriac literature exhibits interest in narratives associated with the Maccabees by the fourth century. Seventh-century manuscripts preserve two different Syriac translations of 1 Maccabees. The translation of this book into Syriac is not part of the Peshitta Old Testament translated from the Hebrew Bible in the second century CE. Its dating and the possible context for its production have not yet been the topic of scholarly investigation. This article examines quotations of and allusions to 1 Maccabees in Aphrahat, Ephrem, and the *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbāʿē*. The last of these texts, likely produced in the early fifth century, offers the earliest evidence for a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees. The production of a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees in the fourth or perhaps early fifth century reflects efforts of Christian communities around this time to appropriate the Maccabean narrative for their own interests.

Keywords

1 Maccabees – Syriac – Peshitta – Aphrahat – Ephrem – Persian Martyr Acts

1 Introduction¹

The translation of the Bible into Syriac known as the Peshitta (i.e., ‘simple’ or ‘common’ version) stands as an important witness to the state of the biblical text in the early centuries CE.² The Hebrew Bible served as the basis for the translation of most of the books of the Peshitta Old Testament, and scholars have therefore assumed that Jewish communities carried out—or at the very least supported—these efforts. Distinctive translations and evidence for the development of the Syriac language suggest that the city of Edessa (modern-day Şanlıurfa, Turkey) or the surrounding region served as the location for the translation. A date of the mid- to late second century for most of these books seems secure based on external evidence.³ But the four books of Maccabees stand apart from these efforts as they were based on Greek texts.⁴ Their dating has never been the topic of an extended scholarly investigation.

- 1 The research for this project was funded by the Leibniz-Project ‘Polyphony of Late Antique Christianity’ and the BMBF-Project ‘Cultural Exchange from Syria to Ethiopia’. A version of this article was presented at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. I am grateful to Jamey Walters and Ignacio Carbajosa for providing me with articles in advance and to the anonymous peer reviewers for their advice in revising the article. For the text of the Septuagint, I follow the editions of the Göttingen Septuaginta-Unternehmen. For the text of the Peshitta Old Testament, I have used the editions of The Peshitta Institute Amsterdam (formerly Leiden). The text of 3 Maccabees has not yet appeared, and I have thus relied on the text in P. de Lagarde, *Libri Veteris Testamenti apocryphi syriace* (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1861) pp. 255–273. The works of the Peshitta New Testament cited here have not been yet been edited by the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung. I have therefore used *The New Testament in Syriac* (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1905–1920).
- 2 For a recent evaluation of the evidence, see I. Carbajosa, ‘Peshitta’, in A. Lange and E. Tov (eds.), *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, vol. 1A, *Overview Articles* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) pp. 262–278 (276): ‘The Peshitta must be used with prudence in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, bearing in mind that this version is more concerned with clarifying exegesis than with carefully reflecting all the details of the source text. Nevertheless, it is a good witness to a proto-Masoretic Hebrew text from the middle of the second century C.E., which may preserve original readings or variants worthy of study’.
- 3 For overviews of the study of the Peshitta, see M.P. Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament* (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, 56, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); B. ter Haar Romeny and C.E. Morrison, ‘Peshitta’, in S.P. Brock, A.M. Butts, G.A. Kiraz, and L. Van Rompay (eds.), *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2011) pp. 326–331; Carbajosa, ‘Peshitta’; J. Loopstra, ‘The Syriac Bible and Its Interpretation’, in D. King (ed.), *The Syriac World* (The Routledge Worlds, London: Routledge, 2019) pp. 293–308 (273–276). Especially important is the series *Monographs of the Peshitta Institute Leiden*, which now includes twenty-two volumes.
- 4 In regard to 1 Maccabees, this is most thoroughly demonstrated by G. Schmidt, ‘Die beiden syrischen Übersetzungen des 1. Maccabäerbuches’, *ZAW* 17 (1897), pp. 1–47, 233–262. Schmidt had

This essay focuses on 1 Maccabees and argues that the early fifth century is the *terminus ante quem* for a translation of this work into Syriac. To defend this thesis, I examine the three earliest Syriac works to contain references to 1 Maccabees. The second and third sections examine the writings of Aphrahat (fl. 336/7–345) and Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306–373) who were familiar with the contents of 1 Maccabees. Their works, however, do not preserve any direct citations that evidence knowledge of a known Syriac translation. It remains possible that they knew the Maccabean narrative either in Greek or through other sources. The fourth section turns to the *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbāʿē* which was most likely produced in the early fifth century. This work contains quotations from 1 Maccabees that closely parallel known Syriac translations. Specific vocabulary choices provide even more convincing evidence that the author was working from a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees rather than from the Greek text. The dating of this translation bears implications both for the textual history of 1 Maccabees and for the reasons why this literature was brought into the Syriac tradition at this time, as explored in the fifth section.

Two preliminary remarks on the Syriac text of 1 Maccabees are necessary. First, two different Syriac translations of the First Book of Maccabees appear in early manuscripts. Three manuscripts dating to the seventh century form the earliest witnesses to the Syriac translation of this book. Two of them (7h1 and 7h7) preserve a text that matches the Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees found in every other manuscript.⁵ This translation has been labelled Syr-1. But a

published the first half of this article in a short monograph as his inaugural dissertation the previous year: G. Schmidt, *Über die beiden syrischen Übersetzungen des 1. Maccabäerbuches* (Leipzig, 1896).

- 5 In the text, I provide the sigla developed for the manuscripts as found in The Peshitta Institute Leiden, *List of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts (Preliminary Issue)* (Leiden: Brill, 1961) and in the seven supplements published in *VT*. Manuscript 7h1 is contained in several different collections: Birmingham, University of Birmingham Special Collections, Mingana syr. 629; Cambridge, Westminster College Library, WGL 1/17–18 (*olim* Nestle Library G. ii.4; photographs of Sinai manuscript); Milan, Ambrosian Library, A. 296, Fragment 27; Mount Sinai, Saint Catherine's Monastery, Syr. 279 (*olim* 37) and Syr. sp. 8. See P. Géhin, *Les manuscrits syriaques de parchemin du Sinai et leurs membra disiecta* (CSCO, 665, Subsidia, 136, Leuven: Peeters, 2017) pp. 123–124. For descriptions of this manuscript in the corresponding collections, see A. Mingana, *Catalogue of the Mingana Collection of Manuscripts* (3 vols., Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1933–1939) vol. 3, pp. 74–75; The Peshitta Institute Leiden, *List*, p. 7; J.-B. Chabot, 'Inventaire des fragments de mss. syriaques conservés à la Bibliothèque Ambrosienne à Milan', *Le Muséon* 49 (1936), pp. 37–54 (39); M. Kamil, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts in the Monastery of St. Catharine on Mount Sinai* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1970) p. 152. Manuscript 7h7 is London, British Library, Add. 14446, which is described in W. Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since the Year 1838* (3 vols., London, 1870–1872) vol. 1, p. 98 (no. 155).

manuscript that has proven particularly influential for the study of the Peshitta, known as the Codex Ambrosianus (7a1), contains a different translation of 1 Maccabees 1:1–14:25.⁶ The remainder of 1 Maccabees in this manuscript, from 14:26 to 16:24, matches the common translation Syr-1. The distinctive translation found in the Codex Ambrosianus is labelled Syr-2.⁷

The relationship between these translations was the subject of scholarly investigation in the nineteenth century.⁸ The traditional explanation holds that Syr-2 reflects efforts to revise Syr-1 with reference to the Greek text.⁹ Ignacio Carbajosa has recently called this relationship into question and argued that Syr-2 should be seen as an independent translation.¹⁰ Although the more literal

6 Manuscript 7a1 is Milan, Ambrosian Library, B. 21 inf. For descriptions of this manuscript, see 'B. 21 Inf.', Biblioteca Pinacoteca Accademia Ambrosiana, <http://ambrosiana.comperio.it/opac/detail/view/ambro:catalog:28063> (accessed 26 October 2019); A.M. Ceriani (ed.), *Translatio syra pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex Codice Ambrosiano* (London, 1876–1883) pp. 7–8; P.M. Forness, 'Narrating History Through the Bible in Late Antiquity: A Reading Community for the Syriac Peshitta Old Testament Manuscript in Milan (Ambrosian Library, B. 21 inf.)', *Le Muséon* 127.1–2 (2014), pp. 41–76; L.I. Lied, '2 Baruch and the Syriac Codex Ambrosianus (7a1): Studying Old Testament Pseudepigrapha in Their Manuscript Context', *JSP* 26.2 (2016), pp. 67–107 (73–83).

7 A translation of 1 Maccabees 1:1–11:14 based on the Clementine Vulgate appears in a single nineteenth-century manuscript: Thrissur, Chaldean Syriac Church, 69, fol. 98^r–124^v (R. Mustatǎ, 'APSTCH THRI 00069', Virtual Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, <https://w3id.org/vhmmml/readingRoom/view/138286> [accessed 26 October 2019]; Mar Aprem, *Assyrian Manuscripts in India* [Thrissur: Mar Narsai Press, 2011] p. 31). This translation is not taken into consideration in the present article.

8 On the earlier study, see Schmidt, 'Die beiden syrischen Übersetzungen'. The two versions were analysed in relation to the translations of Greek proper names in A. Penna, 'I nomi propri dei primi due libri dei Maccabei nella Peshitta', *RSO* 40.1 (1965), pp. 13–41.

9 Shortly after the publication of the photolithographic reproduction of 7a1, T. Nöldeke, 'Review of A.M. Ceriani (ed.), *Translatio syra pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex Codice Ambrosiano*, vol. 2.2 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1883)', *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* 34.17 (1883), pp. 569–571 (570), wrote 'that one [version] must necessarily be dependent on the other' (*daß die eine nothwendig von der anderen abhängig sein muß*). This was analysed to a greater extent in Schmidt, 'Die beiden syrischen Übersetzungen', pp. 233–238. This claim has been repeated in the editions of the Greek and Syriac versions of 1 Maccabees and in an introduction to the Peshitta: W. Kappler (ed.), *Maccabaeorum liber 1* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum auctoritate Societatis Literarum Göttingensis editum, 9.1, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1936) pp. 18–19; A. Penna, K.D. Jenner, and D. Bakker (eds.), '1–2 Maccabees', in *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshitta Version*, vol. 4.4 (Leiden: Brill, 2013) p. v; Weitzman, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament*, p. 279. The same argument appears in the very recent article on 1 Maccabees in the *Textual History of the Bible*: S. Ruzer, '1 Maccabees: Syriac', in E. Tov (ed.), *Textual History of the Bible*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2452-4107_thb_COM_0210010300 (accessed 25 March 2020).

10 Ignacio Carbajosa presented this thesis at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical

translation style of Syr-2 may suggest that it dates from the fifth or sixth century, its dating has not yet been settled. I will therefore compare the quotations of 1 Maccabees in early Syriac works to both Syriac versions of 1 Maccabees.

Second, the Syriac translation of the books of Maccabees reflects a recension of the Greek that seems to have emerged around the beginning of the fourth century.¹¹ The Greek recension has traditionally been associated with Lucian of Antioch who died in 312.¹² Some scholars who are skeptical of Lucian's involve-

Literature 2018: 'Two Ancient Syriac Peshitta Versions of 1 Maccabees: Which One Is the True Peshitta? What Is the Other One?' I am grateful to Ignacio Carbajosa for providing me with a copy of his presentation for consultation. See now Carbajosa's article in this volume: 'What is the Relationship between the Two Ancient Syriac Peshitta Versions of 1 Maccabees? A New Proposal that Challenges the Classical Explanation'.

- 11 The relationship between the Syriac Peshitta and 1–3 Maccabees is discussed in the introduction to the Greek critical editions: Kappler, *Maccabaeorum liber I*, p. 29; W. Kappler and R. Hanhart (eds.), *Maccabaeorum liber II* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum auctoritate Societatis Literarum Gottingensis editum, 9.2, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959) pp. 29–31; R. Hanhart (ed.), *Maccabaeorum liber III* (Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum auctoritate Societatis Literarum Gottingensis editum, 9.3, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) p. 9. The critical edition of 4 Maccabees remains in preparation, although collations of three chapters have appeared: R.J.V. Hiebert, 'Preparing a Critical Edition of 4 Maccabees: The Syriac Translation and Passio Sanctorum Machabaeorum as Witnesses to the Original Greek', in F. García Martínez and M. Vervenne (eds.), *Interpreting Translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of Johan Lust* (BETL, 192, Leuven: Peeters, 2005) pp. 193–216 (4 Macc. 1); idem, 'Establishing the Textual History of Greek 4 Maccabees', in W. Kraus and M. Karrer (eds.), *Die Septuaginta—Texte, Theologien, Einflüsse: 2. Internationale Fachtagung veranstaltet von Septuaginta Deutsch (LXX.D), Wuppertal 23.–27.7.2008* (WUNT, 252, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) pp. 117–139 (4 Macc. 5); idem, 'Exercising Λογισμός: The Delineation of Recensional Activity in Greek 4 Maccabees', in A.B. Perrin, K.S. Baek, and Daniel K. Falk (eds.), *Reading the Bible in Ancient Traditions and Modern Editions: Studies in Memory of Peter W. Flint* (Early Judaism and Its Literature, 47, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2017) pp. 219–243 (4 Macc. 14). The relationship of the Syriac version of 4 Maccabees to the Lucianic readings requires further investigation: see idem, 'Makkabaion IV / Das vierte Buch der Makkabäer', in S. Kreuzer (ed.), *Einleitung in die Septuaginta* (Handbuch zur Septuaginta (LXX.H), 1, Gütersloher: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2016) pp. 322–329 (326)): 'The Syriac translation is relatively free. It is therefore often difficult to trace [it] back to a specific textual form of the Greek Vorlage' (*Die syrische Übersetzung ist relativ frei, daher ist es manchmal schwierig, auf eine bestimmte Textform der griechischen Vorlage zurückzuschließen*).
- 12 On Lucian, see B.M. Metzger, *Chapters in the History of New Testament Textual Criticism* (NTTS, 4, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963) pp. 1–41. On the Lucianic recension, see K.H. Jobes and M. Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000) pp. 53–55; E. Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 3rd rev. ed., 2011) pp. 146–147; S. Kreuzer and M. Sigismund (eds.), *Der Antiochenische Text der Septuaginta in seiner Bezeugung und seiner Bedeutung* (De Septuaginta Investigationes, 4, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); P. Gentry, 'Pre-Hexaplaric Transla-

ment have dated this recension to around the year 300 in Antioch,¹³ while others have pushed the date even earlier.¹⁴ In regard to the first book of Maccabees, Syr-1 depends on the Lucianic recension in a great number of cases. Far fewer Lucianic readings appear in Syr-2, and it does not present a clear relationship to a specific part of the Greek manuscript tradition.¹⁵ I proceed here with the beginning of the fourth century as a *terminus post quem* for both Syr-1 and Syr-2, acknowledging that the Lucianic recension of 1 Maccabees needs further attention. The remainder of this article will seek to define the *terminus ante quem* for a translation of 1 Maccabees into Syriac.

2 Aphrahat

Narratives related to the Maccabees were known in the Syriac tradition in the fourth century. The earliest evidence appears in a corpus of writings called the *Demonstrations* (*taḥwyātā* ܬܗܘܝܬܐ) and traditionally ascribed to Aphrahat. A forthcoming study critically analyses both the authorship and composition of the *Demonstrations* by examining it as an edited compilation.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the corpus provides internal comments on its dating between the years 336/7 to 345.¹⁷ It serves as a starting point for analysing when a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees was made. While I will primarily investigate references to 1 Maccabees, the overlap in content with 2 Maccabees and the circulation of these works almost exclusively as a pair in Syriac manuscripts will warrant some reference to 2 Maccabees.¹⁸ As we will see, Aphrahat's writings do

tions, Hexapla, Post-Hexaplaric Translations' in A. Lange and E. Tov (eds.), *Textual History of the Bible: The Hebrew Bible*, vol. 1A, *Overview Articles* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) pp. 211–235 (234–235).

13 Jobs and Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, p. 54.

14 For a history of the debate along with case studies, see the contributions in Kreuzer and Sigismund, *Der Antiochenische Text*.

15 Kappler, *Maccabaeorum liber 1*, p. 29.

16 J.E. Walters, 'Reconsidering the Compositional Unity of Aphrahat's *Demonstrations*', in A.M. Butts and R.D. Young (eds.), *Syriac Christian Culture: Beginnings to Renaissance* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming). J.E. Walters kindly provided me with a pre-publication copy of the essay.

17 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 22.25, 23.69 (J. Parisot, *Aphraatis sapientis Persae Demonstrationes* [Patrologia Syriaca, 1.1–2, Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1894–1907] Patrologia Syriaca, 1.1, col. 1044, 11–20; Patrologia Syriaca, 1.2, col. 149, 1–8). Citations that refer to smaller segments of the *Demonstrations* than the chapters are indicated with line numbers separated from the page numbers by commas.

18 The discussion of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in both texts forms a major point of inter-

not demonstrate knowledge of known Syriac translations of 1–2 Maccabees. He must have either encountered the works through other texts, or had access to the Greek text, whether in a mediated form or not.

Aphrahat's frequent citations of the biblical text have garnered much interest in the early state of the Peshitta.¹⁹ Although he quotes the biblical text rather freely, he certainly had knowledge of the Peshitta version of a number of biblical books.²⁰ He references the narrative of the Maccabees in several of the *Demonstrations*.²¹ But section twenty of the fifth *Demonstration*, entitled 'The Demonstration on Wars' (*tahwiṭā da-qrābē* ܬܗܘܝܬܐ ܕܩܪܒܐ),

section. Only three of the thirty manuscripts that preserve either work as catalogued by the Peshitta Institute contain only one of these works (11/1091; 13k1; 17a5); one (13k1) is fragmentary. For a list of all manuscripts, see The Peshitta Institute Leiden, *List*, pp. 109–110; idem, 'Peshitta Institute Communications VII: Fourth Supplement to the *List of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts (Preliminary Issue)*', VT 18.1 (1968), pp. 128–143 (143); idem, 'Peshitta Institute Communications XIV: Fifth Supplement to the *List of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts (Preliminary Issue)*', VT 27.4 (1977), pp. 508–511 (511).

- 19 Aphrahat's use of scripture is addressed briefly in the modern edition and translations of his corpus: Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, pp. xli–xlix; M.-J. Pierre (trans.), *Aphraate le sage persan: Les exposés* (SC, 349, 359, Paris: Cerf, 1988) SC, 349, pp. 131–143; P. Bruns (trans.), *Aphrahat: Unterweisungen* (Fontes Christiani, 5.1–2, Freiburg: Herder, 1991) vol. 1, pp. 47–50; A. Lehto (trans.), *The Demonstrations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage* (Gorgias Eastern Christian Studies, 27, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010) pp. 29–32; G. Lenzi (trans.), *Afraate: Le esposizione* (2 vols., Testi del Vicino Oriente antico, 7, Letteratura della Siria cristiana, 3.1–2, Brescia: Paideia Editrice, 2012) vol. 1, pp. 39–43.
- 20 M.D. Koster, 'Aphrahat's Use of His Old Testament', in B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *The Peshitta: Its Use in Literature and Liturgy: Papers Read at the Third Peshitta Symposium* (MPIL, 15, Leiden: Brill, 2006) pp. 131–141 (133–140); J.A. Lund, 'A Non-Peshitta Jeremiah Citation by Aphrahat', AS 5.1 (2007), pp. 133–140; C.E. Morrison, 'The Reception of the Book of Daniel in Aphrahat's Fifth Demonstration, "On Wars"', *Hugoye* 7.1 (2003), pp. 55–82; R.J. Owens, *The Genesis and Exodus Citations of Aphrahat, the Persian Sage* (MPIL, 3, Leiden: Brill, 1983); idem, 'Aphrahat as a Witness to the Early Syriac Text of Leviticus', in P.B. Dirksen and M.J. Mulder (eds.), *The Peshitta: Its Early Text and History: Papers Read at the Peshitta Symposium Held at Leiden, 30–31 August 1985* (MPIL, 4, Leiden: Brill, 1988) pp. 1–48; idem, 'The Book of Proverbs in Aphrahat's Demonstrations', in B. ter Haar Romeny (ed.), *The Peshitta: Its Use in Literature and Liturgy: Papers Read at the Third Peshitta Symposium* (MPIL, 15, Leiden: Brill, 2006) pp. 223–241; W. Strothmann, 'Jesus-Sirach-Zitate bei Aphrahat, Ephraem und im Liber Graduum', in R.H. Fischer (ed.), *A Tribute to Arthur Vööbus: Studies in Early Christian Literature and Its Environment, Primarily in the Syrian East* (Chicago: The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, 1977) pp. 153–158 (154–155).
- 21 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 13.12 paraphrases 1 Macc. 2:29–44 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 568, 17–26); 21.22 mentions Judas Maccabaeus and his brothers along with the deaths of the priest Eleazar, the mother, and her seven sons from 2 Macc. 6:18–7:42 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 988, 5–11); and 23.55 names Mattathias, Judas, Simon, and his brothers (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.2, col. 113, 11–14).

This section of the fifth *Demonstration* also includes a number of quotations that directly parallel the Peshitta. Aphrahat's twenty-eight word quotation of Psalm 79:1–3 differs only in regard to the lack of a single object suffix.²⁹ A twelve-word citation of Daniel 7:25 shows merely two deviations from the Peshitta,³⁰ while a separate ten-word quotation of Daniel 7:26 matches the Peshitta exactly.³¹ Aphrahat takes care to introduce these direct quotations with formulas: 'David said' (*d-ʿemar dāwīd* ܕܐܝܬܝܢ ܕܐܕܡ); 'Therefore, he [i.e., Daniel] said concerning him' (*meṭṭulhānā ʿemar ʿlaw[hy]* ܡܬܬܘܠܗܢܐ ܐܝܬܝܢ ܕܐܕܡ ܕܐܕܡ); and 'Again, he [i.e., Daniel] said' (*ʿemar tub* ܐܝܬܝܢ ܕܐܕܡ).³² These citations reveal that Aphrahat knew the Peshitta translation of Daniel and Psalms for these verses.

The direct citations from Daniel and Psalms that parallel the Peshitta form a striking contrast to Aphrahat's references to 1–2 Maccabees. First, he does not use any verbal cues to indicate that he is citing the books of Maccabees, even though he is drawing on the content explicitly. Second, when he does refer to the Maccabean narratives, his references display obvious differences from the Peshitta text. Two examples from the text will show his tendencies.

First, he describes Antiochus's destructive efforts as follows: 'He nullified the covenant of Abraham, broke the Sabbath of rest, for he commanded the Jews not to circumcise'.³³ Each of the three actions attributed to Antiochus relates to a passage from 1 Maccabees, but deviates from the two Syriac translations of 1 Maccabees. The first of the three clauses—'He nullified the covenant of Abraham' (ܐܚܬܝܢ ܡܨܚܬܐ ܕܥܒܪܗܡ)—has no parallels in 1 Maccabees, but is likely an interpretation of Antiochus's actions in 1 Maccabees 1:44 'to follow customs foreign to the land' (Syr-1: ܠܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܬܪܝܢܐ ܕܬܠܡܐ ܕܬܪܝܢܐ; Syr-2 ܠܕܝܢܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܬܠܡܐ ܕܬܪܝܢܐ). The second—'broke the Sab-

the quotation of Dan. 7:25 noted in Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 221 n. 1, as it only shares three words with the biblical text.

29 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 5.20 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 221, 9–15). The Peshitta text has the verb ܡܬܬܬܝܬܐ. Aphrahat omits the object ending ܡܬܬܝܬܐ.

[illegible]

31 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 5.20 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 224, 7–9).

32 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 5.20 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 221, 9; 224, 1; 224, 6–7).

33 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 5.20 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, Patrologia Syriaca, I.1, col. 221, 25–224, 1):
 ܐܪܡܝܐ ܕܠܐ ܬܠܝܬܐ ܗܝ ܢܚܝܬܐ ܕܥܡܐ ܕܩܪܝܬܐ ܕܟܨܝܢܐ ܕܫܡܝܐ ܕܥܡܐ ܕܩܪܝܬܐ
 ܕܫܡܝܐ.

bath of rest' (ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ)—relates to 1 Maccabees 1:45 'to profane Sabbaths and festivals' (Syr-1/Syr-2: ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ). The third—'for he commanded the Jews not to circumcise' (ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ)—refers to 1 Maccabees 1:48 where Antiochus commands them 'to leave their sons uncircumcised' (Syr-1: ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ; Syr-2: ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ). Although Aphrahat knows very specific details of the story, there seems to be no attempt here to imitate the language of one of the Syriac translations of 1 Maccabees.

In fact, only one reference to 1 or 2 Maccabees contains close verbal echoes of the text. A literal translation of the Syriac translation of 2 Maccabees 9:10 reads: 'No one was able to approach him because of his putrid smell' (ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ). The fifth *Demonstration* includes a reference to this passage: 'On account of his smell that was putrid, no one was approaching him' (ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ ܠܬܝܒܬܐ ܕܢܚܠܐ).³⁴ The phrases contain similar content, but the wording is different. The verbal phrase 'was able to' (ܠܬܝܒܬܐ) in 2 Maccabees 9:10 does not appear in Aphrahat. He adds, on the other hand, 'on account of' (ܠܬܝܒܬܐ). Aphrahat knew the content of the account of Antiochus's death in 2 Maccabees, yet he does not directly cite it.

Studies on Aphrahat's use of the biblical text have demonstrated his rather free citation practices. This short study of *Demonstration* 5.20 has revealed a major difference in the way that he treats Psalms, Daniel, and 1–2 Maccabees. While he freely adapts Daniel at points, he also directly cites this work and the Psalms. He seems to have good knowledge of 1–2 Maccabees. But Aphrahat never uses formulas to introduce his quotations of 1–2 Maccabees, as he does for Daniel and Psalms discussed above and as attested even for 3 Corinthians.³⁵ More research would be necessary to determine if this lack of introductory formulas results from his regarding 1–2 Maccabees as different from other books in the Bible. In any case, there are no quotations that betray his direct knowledge of the Syriac translation of either work. In short, there is no evidence that Aphrahat in the first half of the fourth century had access to a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees.

34 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 5.20 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 224, 11–12).

35 On the potential interpretive significance of such formulas, see J.E. Walters, 'Evidence for Citations of 3 Corinthians and Their Influence in the Demonstrations of Aphrahat', *vc* 67.3 (2013), pp. 248–262 (250–251, 253, 256).

3 Ephrem

The second set of references to 1 Maccabees comes from the works of Ephrem the Syrian. The dating of Ephrem's works likewise presents great challenges, but he was active in the second half of the fourth century and died by 373.³⁶ No extended discussion of the narratives from the books of Maccabees appear in the works of Ephrem the Syrian. There is, however, evidence that he was familiar with the stories of both 1 and 2 Maccabees. I will examine his knowledge of both books, given the dearth of references to 1 Maccabees in his works. As Aphrahat, he seems to have known the stories of the Maccabees. But his writings do not exhibit knowledge of a known Syriac translation of these works.³⁷

Two of Ephrem's works demonstrate his familiarity with the content of 1 and 2 Maccabees. In the *Hymns on Unleavened Bread*, he states: 'The kings of the earth gave purple robes / To Maccabaeus and Simon, the chief priest'.³⁸ Both Syriac versions of 1 Maccabees include several references to the 'purple robes' ('argāwnē ܐܪܓܐܘܢܐ) given to the Maccabean leaders (10:20, 62; 11:58; 14:43–44).³⁹ Ephrem's *Hymns on Paradise* show his acquaintance with the deaths of a

36 B. Hartung, 'The Authorship and Dating of the Syriac Corpus attributed to Ephrem of Nisibis: A Reassessment', *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 22.2 (2018), pp. 296–321.

37 Recent studies of Ephrem's knowledge of the Peshitta have mostly focused on Genesis: A. Peral Torres, *Los problemas de la Pešitta en sus fuentes manuscritas (Estudio de las Citas Bíblicas de S. Efrén en el Comentario al Génesis)* (Tesis doctoral, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1975) (*non vidi*); A. van der Kooij, 'Peshitta Genesis 6: "Sons of God"—Angels or Judges', *JNSL* 23.1 (1997), pp. 43–51 (44–45); A.G.P. Janson, *De Abrahamcyclis in de Genesis-commentaar van Efreem de Syriër* (Zoetermeer: Ribberink van der Gang, 1998); J.A. Lund, 'Observations on Some Biblical Citations in Ephrem's Commentary on Genesis', *AS* 4.2 (2006), pp. 207–220. But see also Strothmann, 'Jesus-Sirach-Zitate', p. 155. Several studies on Ephrem's biblical text appeared in the eighteenth century that are more comprehensive in nature but often rely on misattributed works: G.W. Kirsch (ed.), *Pentateuchus syriace ex polyglottis Anglicanis* (Leipzig, 1787) pp. i–xvii; G.L. Spohn, *Collatio versionis Syriacae quam Peshito vocant cum fragmentis in commentariis Ephraemi Syri obviis* (Leipzig, 1785–1794); G.L. Spohn, *De ratione textus biblici in Ephraemi Syri commentariis obviis eiusque usu critico* (Leipzig, 1786).

38 Ephr., *Hymns on Unleavened Bread* 5.10 (E. Beck [ed. and trans.], *Des heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Paschahymnen (De azymis, De crucifixione, De resurrectione)* [CSCO, 248–249, *Scriptores Syri*, 108–109, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1964] CSCO, 248, *Scriptores Syri*, 108, p. 11):

ܐܪܓܐܘܢܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ
ܐܪܓܐܘܢܐ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ ܕܡܠܚܝܡ

39 All these references refer to Jonathan and Simon receiving purple robes. But the name 'Maccabaeus' is only applied to Judas not to Jonathan in the text: 1 Macc. 2.4, 66; 3.1; 5:24, 34; 8:20. The identification of 'Maccabaeus' here remains puzzling.

mother and her seven sons as reported in 2 Maccabees 7:1–42 and expanded in 4 Maccabees: ‘... The seven sons of the light whose mother shone among them, / Who scorned by their deaths the anger of the wicked one.’⁴⁰ Ephrem knew the narratives contained in 1 and 2 Maccabees, but these hymns do not contain significant parallels that suggest knowledge of a Syriac translation of either book.

A number of works attributed to Ephrem exhibit further knowledge of the books of Maccabees.⁴¹ Most are inauthentic, yet Gerard Rouwhorst’s recent investigation of one of these works, the *Hymns on Epiphany*, has shown that this hymn cycle preserves a core that likely goes back to Ephrem himself.⁴² One of the hymns that probably comes from Ephrem includes the retelling of a short narrative from 2 Maccabees 1:19–23. This section of the text describes the efforts of priests just before their exile to Babylon to hide fire from the altar in a well. Upon their return from exile, their descendants go back to the well and find a thick liquid, which Nehemiah then orders them to place on the altar. The sun shines on the liquid, and it blazes. The fourth *Hymn on Epiphany* retells this story, relating it to Christian baptism as follows:

But the captive priests within the well
Buried [and] hid the fire of the holy place:

40 Ephr., *Hymns on Paradise* 7.19 (E. Beck [ed. and trans.], *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Paradiso und Contra Julianum* [CSCO, 174–175, Scriptores Syri, 78–79, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1957] CSCO, 174, Scriptores Syri, 78, p. 30):

ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ
ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܬܐ

41 For an overview of Ephrem’s work including issues of their authenticity, see S.P. Brock, ‘In Search of Saint Ephrem’, *Khristianskij Vostok* 6 (xii) (2013), pp. 13–77. Pseudo-Ephremic works that refer to the Maccabees include: *Homilies on Holy Week* 6.1251–1252 (E. Beck [ed. and trans.], *Ephraem Syrus: Sermones in Hebdomadam Sanctam* [CSCO, 412–413, Scriptores Syri, 181–182, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1979] CSCO, 412, Scriptores Syri, 181, p. 64); *Hymns on the Confessors* 9.7; 13 (E. Beck [ed. and trans.], *Nachträge zu Ephraem Syrus* [CSCO, 363–364, Scriptores Syri, 159–160, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1975] CSCO, 363, Scriptores Syri, 159, pp. 4, 15–19); *Testament* 397–400 (E. Beck [ed. and trans.], *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermones I–IV* [CSCO, 305–306, 311–312, 320–321, 334–335, Scriptores Syri, 130–131, 134–135, 138–139, 148–149, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1970–1973] CSCO, 334, Scriptores Syri, 148, p. 55). I have excluded these works from this study due to uncertainty regarding their dating. None of them exhibits knowledge of the text of either Syriac version of 1 Maccabees.

42 G. Rouwhorst, ‘Le noyau le plus ancien des hymnes de la collection “Sur l’Épiphanie” et la questions leur authenticité’, *VC* 66.2 (2012), pp. 139–159. Rouwhorst considers *Hymns on Epiphany* 8.1–21 very ancient and suggests that this section may come from Ephrem.

A symbol of that glorious fire
 Which the chief priest mixed into baptism.
 The priests took the mud [*ṭinā* ܬܝܢܐ] and sprinkled it on the altar,
 For the fire of that well was mixed in the mud [*b-ṭinā* ܒܬܝܢܐ].
 A symbol of our body which in the waters
 Was mixed with fire and the Holy Spirit.⁴³

Following Rouwhorst in assuming the authenticity of this section, it seems that Ephrem had clear knowledge of this specific story preserved in 2 Maccabees.⁴⁴ Yet a word choice suggests that Ephrem is not dependent here on one of the known Syriac translations. The Greek text of 2 Maccabees 1:21 describes the substance the descendants of the priests find as ‘thick water’ (ὑδωρ παχύ). The Syriac text has a peculiar translation of this phrase: ‘turbid water’ (*mayyā dliḥē* ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ). Ephrem by way of contrast has ‘mud’ (*ṭinā* ܬܝܢܐ) and does not reflect knowledge of the Syriac translation of 2 Maccabees.⁴⁵

- 43 Ephr., *Hymns on Epiphany* 8.4 (E. Beck [ed. and trans.], *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)* [CSCO, 186–187, Scriptores Syri, 82–83, Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1959] CSCO, 186, Scriptores Syri, 82, p. 169):

ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ
 ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ

I follow Beck in reading the final verb ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ as ܡܝܝܐ ܕܠܝܚܐ.

- 44 On this story, see J.A. Goldstein, *2 Maccabees* (AB, 41A, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983) pp. 166, 182–183; D.R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008) pp. 133–134. A similar story appears in the tenth-century Hebrew work known as the *Josippon*. See *Josippon* 7 (D. Börner-Klein and B. Zuber [eds.], *Josippon: Jüdische Geschichte vom Anfang der Welt bis zum Ende des ersten Aufstands gegen Rom* [Wiesbaden: Marixverlag, 2010] pp. 115–121). The story in the *Josippon* does not necessarily have the text of 2 Maccabees as its basis, which indicates a wider circulation of this narrative. See L. Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (2 vols., JPS Classic Reissues, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2003 [original version published from 1909–1938]), vol. 1, p. 1121.
- 45 An interpretation of this passage appears in a florilegium preserved in a manuscript that dates to 874: London, British Library, Add. 17193, fol. 3^r. On the manuscript and collection, see Wright, *Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, pp. 989–1002 (no. 861). This excerpt uses a synonym related to the word found in Ephrem: *syānā* ܣܝܢܐ. It testifies to the circulation of this story in Syriac communities outside of the book of 2 Maccabees. Ephrem could have had access to another account of the legend.

Ephrem the Syrian's corpus exhibits his familiarity with the narratives of the Maccabees. The evidence for 2 Maccabees is especially strong, as he knows details regarding the rare account of hiding the fire found in this book. Yet even if he knew these stories via Greek or a Syriac translation, his works betray no evidence that he knew a Syriac translation of either 1 or 2 Maccabees. We must look yet later to find evidence that a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees was in circulation.

4 The Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbā'ē

A number of works in Syriac are dedicated to a martyr from the Sasanian Empire in Persia named Simeon bar Šabbā'ē, who reportedly died in the year 339 CE under King Shapur II (r. 309–379).⁴⁶ The historical veracity of reports of a large scale persecution under Shapur II as well as the dates of composition of the corpus of Persian martyr acts have recently come under scrutiny. In short, there is very little evidence that points to a large persecution under Shapur. Most of the written accounts date far later than the events they describe.⁴⁷ Yet Kyle Smith has recently dated one of these, the *Martyrdom of*

46 Five are listed in J.-N.M. Saint-Laurent, 'Simeon Bar Sabba'e—ܣܝܡܝܘܢ ܒܪ ܫܒܒܐܝܬ', in J.-N.M. Saint-Laurent and D.A. Michelson (eds.), *Qadishe: A Guide to the Syriac Saints* (The Syriac Biographical Dictionary, 1, Syriaca.org, 2016), <http://syriaca.org/person/9> (accessed October 26, 2019). See also entries 1117 and 1119 in P. Peeters (ed.), *Bibliotheca hagiographica orientalis* (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1910) pp. 244–245. On works related to Simeon, see especially P. Devos, 'Sozomène et les actes syriaques de S. Syméon bar Šabbā'ē', *Analecta Bollandiana* 84 (1966), pp. 443–456; G. Wiessner, *Zur Märtyrerüberlieferung aus der Christenverfolgung Schapurs II* (Untersuchungen zur syrischen Literaturgeschichte, 1, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Folge 3, 67, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967) pp. 40–94; R.W. Burgess, 'The Dates of the Martyrdom of Simeon Bar Simeon Bar Sabba'e and the "Great Massacre"', *Analecta Bollandiana* 117 (1999), pp. 9–66; K. Smith, *The Martyrdom and History of Blessed Simeon Bar Šabba'e* (Persian Martyr Acts in Syriac, 3, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014) pp. xvii–l; Smith, *Constantine and the Captive Christians of Persia*, pp. 109–124.

47 For analyses of some of the Persian martyr acts that directly address their historical reliability, see J.T. Walker, *The Legend of Mar Qardagh: Narrative and Christian Heroism in Late Antique Iraq* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 40, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); R.E. Payne, *A State of Mixture: Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian Political Culture in Late Antiquity* (Transformation of the Classical Heritage, 56, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015); Smith, *Constantine and the Captive Christians of Persia*. The series Persian Martyr Acts in Syriac offers facing-page translations and critical introductions to these sources. Seven volumes have appeared to date.

Simeon bar Šabbā'ē,⁴⁸ to between 363 and 443 CE and very likely to the early fifth century.⁴⁹ As Smith notes, Simeon already appeared in a list of the martyrs from Persia preserved in a manuscript dated in its original colophon to 411 CE.⁵⁰ In an earlier article, Smith explored the use of Judas Maccabaeus as a model for Simeon, which may be a unique feature of this martyrdom and is certainly a very rare usage of this text.⁵¹ The references to 1 Maccabees in this text provide, as I will argue, a *terminus ante quem* for a Syriac translation of this work.

The *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbāʿē* regularly references and quotes the biblical text but does so in a way that accommodates the narrative. Before turning to the text of 1 Maccabees, it will be helpful to examine two scriptural citations from other works. Just before turning to the narrative from 1 Maccabees, the *Martyrdom* quotes the prophet Balaam's words in Numbers 24:23–24. The Peshitta text reads: 'Woe! Who shall live when God decrees these things? And legions go out from the land of Kittim'.⁵² The corresponding text in the *Martyrdom* has (with parallel wording in red): 'In his speech, Balaam said, "Woe! Who shall live in those days when God decrees these things? Because, behold!, legions go out from the place of Kittim and destroy the land"'.⁵³ Aside from the replacement of the word 'place' for 'land', the text of the *Martyrdom* reproduces the biblical text in full and precisely. The final phrase in the *Martyrdom*—'and destroy the land'—summarises three separate clauses in the Peshitta version:

48 *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Sabbā'ē* (M. Kmosko [ed.], *S. Simeon bar Sabb'ē* [Patrologia Syriaca, 1.2, Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907] Patrologia Syriaca, 1.2, col. 715–778). An annotated English translation has recently appeared: Smith, *The Martyrdom and History*, pp. 6–58.

49 Smith, *The Martyrdom and History*, pp. xxix–xxxiii.

50 London, British Library, Add. 12150, fol. 253^v. Simeon's name appears in the edition and translation of this list in F. Nau (ed. and trans.), *Un Martyrologe et douze Ménologies syriacques* (PO 10.1 [46], Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1915) p. 24. On this manuscript, see Wright, *Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum*, vol. 2, pp. 631–633 (no. 726).

51 K. Smith, 'Constantine and Judah the Maccabee: History and Memory in the Acts of the Persian Martyrs', *Journal for the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 12 (2012), pp. 16–33.

52 ܐܢܝ ܡܬܬܬܐܢܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܬܐܢܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܬܐܢܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܬܐܢܬܐ ܕܡܬܬܬܐܢܬܐ.
53 I have adapted the English translation of this work by Kyle Smith and modified it when
necessary to show more clearly the relationship between the *Martyrdom* and the Syriac
translations of 1 Maccabees. *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbāʿē* 1 (Kmosko, S. Simeon, *Patro-*
logia Syriaca, 1.2, col. 715, 7–11; Smith, *The Martyrdom and History*, pp. 6, 7):

[illegible]

TABLE 1 Comparison of the text of 1Macc. 2:37

[illegible]

a *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbā'ē* 1 (Kmosko, *S. Simeon*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.2, col. 718, 20–23; Smith, *The Martyrdom and History*, pp. 8, 9).

Syr-2 with the *Martyrdom*, I have only marked in red the corresponding parts in the biblical citations (see Table 2).⁵⁸ As demonstrated in this table, eighteen of the twenty-three words in the quotation from the *Martyrdom* parallel the text of Syr-1, while twenty match that of Syr-2. These two examples seem to show a familiarity with a Syriac rendering of 1 Maccabees. However, on their own, they do not suffice for presenting a convincing case that the author of the *Martyrdom* knew a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees.

In two passages, distinctive wording that directly parallels the Peshitta text forms supplemental and stronger evidence. The first passage appears in a section that paraphrases the text of 1 Maccabees 2:23–25 but draws verbatim on the language of the Syriac text from 2:24. The *Martyrdom* reads: ‘When [Matthias] saw one of his people acting iniquitously and denying his God, he took courage and **burned with zeal, his kidneys quaked, he brought up his anger as a**

58 The corresponding text of 1 Macc. 1:25–28 in the Septuagint is: καὶ ἐγένετο πένθος μέγα ἐπὶ Ἰσραὴλ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ αὐτῶν. καὶ ἐστένανξαν ἄρχοντες καὶ πρεσβύτεροι, παρθένοι καὶ νεανίσκοι ἡσθένησαν, καὶ τὸ κάλλος τῶν γυναικῶν ἡλλοιώθη. πᾶς νυμφίος ἀνέλαβεν θρήνον, καὶ καθημένη ἐν παστῶ ἐπένθει. καὶ ἐσεισθή ἡ γῆ ἐπὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας αὐτήν, καὶ πᾶς ὁ οἶκος Ἰακωβ ἐνεδύσατο ἀσχύνην.

Judge, and he sacrificed him because he had impurely sacrificed'.⁵⁹ The Syriac text for the portion marked in red contains seven words and directly parallels the Syr-1 text aside from the reordering of one word.⁶⁰ The final word in the phrase marked in red—'judge' (*dayyānā* ܕܝܝܢܐ)—parallels the text in Syr-1 but not that in Syr-2. Both Syr-1 and Syr-2 have the same consonantal text (ܕܝܢܐ) but they have different diacritical points. Syr-1 and the *Martyrdom* have a diacritical point above the word (ܕܝܢܐ), which results in reading this word as 'judge' (*dayy-ānā*) and the final phrase as 'as a judge' ('a[y]k dayyānā').⁶¹ Syr-2 has a diacritical point below the word (ܕܝܢܐ), which leads to rendering this word as 'judgement' (*dinā*) and the final phrase as 'according to the judgement' ('a[y]k dinā).⁶² The reading in Syr-2 represents a calque on the Greek text which reads 'according to the judgement' (κατὰ τὸ κρίμα), a rare phrase that seems to be found only in the Septuagint.⁶³ It seems likely that both Syr-1 and Syr-2 originally had the same reading and that the diacritical point was switched from below the word to above the word in Syr-1 at a later point. The Syriac translation of the phrase ܕܝܢܐ ܕܝܢܐ in either of its variations does not appear elsewhere in the Peshitta as a translation of κατὰ τὸ κρίμα.⁶⁴ The recurrence of this rare phrase in the

59 *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbā'ē* 3 (Kmosko, *S. Simeon*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.2, col. 719, 21–25; Smith, *The Martyrdom and History*, pp. 8, 9):

[illegible]

60 **ሥራ ሆኖ ተጽዕኖ ይመስልኛል**. **ቢያንስ** ከፊት. The word **ቢያንስ** is moved to the beginning of the clause. I disregard here the **-r** added to **ከፊት**, as this is an optional ending.

61 I have consulted two of the three manuscripts that preserve this portion of the *Martyrdom*. Each of them contains this diacritical dot: Rome, Vatican Library, Sir. 160, fol. 8r; Rome, Vatican Library, Sir. 161, fol. 19v. I have not been able to consult London, British Library, Add. 14645. On the manuscripts that preserve this *Martyrdom*, see Kmosko, *S. Simeon*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.2, pp. 713–714; Smith, *The Martyrdom and History*, p. li.

62 When the diacritical dot is above the word, this often indicates the vowel *a* (*zqāpā*), hence the reading *dayyānā*. A dot below would indicate the reading *dinā*. On this use of the diacritical dot, see J.B. Segal, *The Diacritical Point and the Accents in Syriac* (London Oriental Series, 2, London: Oxford University Press, 1953) pp. 21–22; G.A. Kiraz, *The Syriac Dot: A Short History* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press) pp. 31–47.

63 This Greek phrase occurs fourteen times in the Septuagint, usually followed by a genitive pronoun or noun: LXX 4 Kgdms 11:14; 17:33, 34; 2 Chron. 4:7, 20; 30:16; 1 Esd. 9:4; 2 Esd. 18:18; Ps. 118:132, 149, 156; Pss. Sol. 2:13; Jer. 37:18. The *New English Translation of the Septuagint* translates the phrase variously according to the context. In 1 Macc. 2:24, it is translated as 'in judgment'. This translation is not used for any of the other instances, which emphasises the peculiarity of this phrase even in Greek. A textual search of the entire *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* corpus reveals only twenty-eight instances of this Greek phrase in the corpus. Half of them are from the Septuagint, and the other half are quotations of the Septuagint.

64 The Peshitta New Testament does not preserve this pair of words. The pair ܬܬܝܬܝܢ ܬܬܝܬܝܢ

TABLE 3 Comparison of the text of 1 Macc. 1:63

<i>Martyrdom</i> ^a	Syr-1	Syr-2	LXX
... and they did not break the holy covenant.	... [n]or will they break the holy covenant.	... nor will they break the holy covenant.	... and not defile the holy coven- ant.
ܠܡܥܠ ܕܝܥ ܠܕܐ ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ	ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ ܕܥܝܪܐܝܬ ܠܕܥܝܪܐܝܬ ܠܕܥܝܪܐܝܬ	ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ	καὶ μὴ βεβηλώ- σωσιν διαθήκην ἁγίαν

a *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbā'ē* 1 (Kmosko, *S. Simeon*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.2, col. 719, 1–2; Smith, *The Martyrdom and History*, pp. 8, 9).

Martyrdom forms an argument for the familiarity of its author with a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees 2:24.

The second example of parallel phrasing appears in a paraphrase of 1 Maccabees 1:62–63. A brief four-word phrase in 1:63 seems to demonstrate knowledge of the translation choices of the Syriac translation. The three versions with the Septuagint text are found in Table 3. The text of the *Martyrdom* more closely parallels Syr-2 here. But more decisive is the translation of the Greek word ‘defile’ βεβηλώσωσιν with ‘break’ (šraw ܝܥ).⁶⁵

The meaning of ‘breaking a covenant’ falls within the semantic range of the Syriac root š-r-’ (ܝܥ). But this word is rarely the translation of the Greek verb βεβηλόυν in early Syriac translations.⁶⁶ This Greek verb occurs fifteen times in

does appear in six other places in the Peshitta Old Testament that was translated from Hebrew: Exod. 21:31; 2 Kgs 17:34; 1 Chron. 15:13; Isa. 26:9; Ezek. 7:27; 11:12. But none of these six instances has the meaning of ‘justly’ as is required in 1 Macc. 1:63. Correspondingly, the Septuagint does not translate the Hebrew in any of these instances as κατὰ τὸ κρίμα.

65 The phrase ‘break a covenant’ drawing on the same Syriac roots appears in 2 Macc. 13:25 (ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ ܕܥܝܪܐܝܬ), but here the corresponding Greek words come from different roots (ἀθετεῖν τὰς διαστάσεις). I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing this to my attention.

66 The Syriac translation of one of Severos of Antioch’s letters offers an example of the translation of this word from a later period. Here the adjective βέβηλον is translated by ܠܥܝܪܐܝܬ. For the Greek fragment, see F. Petit (ed. and trans.), *Sévère d’Antioche: Fragments grecs tirés des chaînes sur les derniers livres de l’Octateuque et sur les Règnes* (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 14, Leuven: Peeters, 2006) p. 102. For the translation of this word into Syriac, see L. Van Rompay, ‘Les versions syriaques’, in F. Petit (ed. and trans.), *Sévère d’Antioche: Frag-*

TABLE 4 Translation of verbal forms of βεβηλοῦν

	Syr-1	Syr-2	Others
Total	10	10	5
√ܠܐ	3	3	—
√ܐܝܐ	1	—	1
√ܠܐܐܐ	—	3	—
√ܠܐܐܐܐ	—	3	—
√ܐܐܐܐ	4	—	4
√ܠܐܐܐܐ	1	1	—
√ܐܐܐܐܐ + √ܠܐܐܐܐ	1	—	—

the biblical books translated from Greek that are included in the edition of the Peshitta. Ten of these are in 1 Maccabees; two in 2 Maccabees; and one each in 3 Maccabees, Matthew, and Acts.⁶⁷ The related verbal adjective ‘defiled’ (βεβηλος) occurs ten times: four times in 3 Maccabees, three times in 1 Timothy, and once each in 2 Maccabees, 2 Timothy, and Hebrews.⁶⁸ A summary of the translations of verbal forms of βεβηλοῦν as well as the related adjective βεβηλος in Syr-1, Syr-2, and other books demonstrate that early Syriac translations from Greek—as evidenced by the Peshitta—rarely translate the Greek root βεβηλ- with the Syriac root š-r-’ (ܠܐܐ) (see Tables 4 and 5).

Indeed, the translation of the verb βεβηλοῦν in Syr-1 and Syr-2 with the root š-r-’ (ܠܐܐ) is the only example in the Peshitta text where this Greek root is translated alone in this way.⁶⁹ One instance in Syr-1 translates a verbal form of the Greek root with two Syriac verbs, one of which is from the root š-r-’ (ܠܐܐ). The *Martyrdom* seems to reflect knowledge of this rare translation of βεβηλοῦν.

The author of the *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbā’ē* was familiar with the narrative of the first two chapters of 1 Maccabees. Its expansion and contraction

ments grecs tirés des chaînes sur les derniers livres de l’Octateuque et sur les Règnes (Traditio Exegetica Graeca, 14, Leuven: Peeters, 2006) pp. 213–314 (230).

67 1 Macc. 1:43, 45, 48, 63; 2:12, 34; 3:51; 4:38, 44, 54; 2 Macc. 8:2; 10:5; 3 Macc. 2:17; Mt. 12:5; Acts 24:6.

68 2 Macc. 5:16; 3 Macc. 2:2, 14; 4:16; 7:15; 1 Tim. 1:9; 4:7; 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:16; Heb. 12:16.

69 Mention might be made of a few instances in the Old Testament where the Septuagint renders a Hebrew word with the root βεβηλ- and the Syriac translates the same Hebrew word with the root š-r-’ (ܠܐܐ): Lev. 21:9; 1 Sam. 21:5, 6. But these are not translations directly from the Greek. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for bringing these passages to my attention.

TABLE 5 Translation of βέβηλος

	3 Macc.	1 Tim.	Others
Total	4	4	3
√ܐܒܕܐ	—	1	—
√ܐܒܕܐ	—	—	—
√ܡܕܐ	3	—	1
√ܡܕܐ	—	2	1
√ܡܕܐ	—	1	—
√ܐܒܕܐ	—	—	1
√ܐܒܕܐ + √ܡܕܐ	1	—	—

of biblical passages in general present some challenges in evaluating precisely which Syriac translation may have been available. Yet I have demonstrated that verbal parallels in several extended quotations, the verbatim recording of short phrases, and at least two vocabulary choices suggest knowledge of a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees. While it is not possible here to evaluate the state of the Peshitta text of 1 Maccabees at this point—whether it was closer to Syr-1 or Syr-2 or if perhaps both versions were known—the author of this work seems to have been familiar with a Syriac translation of the book of 1 Maccabees that closely resembles the text they reproduce. This means that by the early fifth century, a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees was in circulation.

5 The Context of Translation

The preceding sections have demonstrated that a Syriac translation of 1 Maccabees was produced sometime between the early fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century. The location where the translation was produced remains unknown. But the time period may suggest a connection to the growing veneration of the Maccabees among Christian communities in the fourth century.

The figures of Eleazar as well as the mother and her seven sons from 2 and 4 Maccabees became venerated figures in both the Jewish and the Christian traditions.⁷⁰ Homilies by Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329–c. 390), John Chrysostom

70 For a broad historical overview with further bibliography, see A. Berger, ‘The Cult of the

(c. 350–407), and Augustine of Hippo (c. 354–430) indicate that a festal celebration for the Maccabees emerged as early as the fourth century.⁷¹ It remains possible that the commemoration of the Maccabees among Christians ultimately has its roots in Jewish practices. But this remains a debated topic, and no consensus has emerged.⁷²

Some literary evidence suggests that the Maccabees had become venerated figures in the Syriac tradition at this time as well. First, as examined above, Aphrahat names the mother of the seven sons from 2 and 4 Maccabees Shamuni.⁷³ This became her traditional name in the Syriac tradition and may indicate that the appropriation of this narrative was already underway in the first half of the fourth century in Syriac circles. Second, the Syriac manuscript that dates to 411 CE and lists Simeon bar Šabbā'ē as a saint also includes the Maccabees in a martyrology: 'the confessors who were among those interred in Antioch, namely, in Kerateion,⁷⁴ who were the sons of Shamuni, those recor-

Maccabees in the Eastern Orthodox Church', in G. Signori (ed.), *Dying for the Faith, Killing for the Faith: Old-Testament Faith-Warriors (1 and 2 Maccabees) in Historical Perspective* (Brill's Studies in Intellectual History, 206, Leiden: Brill, 2012) pp. 105–123; 'Maccabees', in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 17 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019) pp. 301–323; 'Maccabees, First Book of', in *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception*, vol. 17 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019) pp. 324–332.

71 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 15 (PG, 35, col. 912–933); John Chrysostom, *Homily on Eleazar and the Seven Boys* (PG, 63, col. 523–530), *Homilies 1–2 on the Maccabees* (PG, 50, col. 617–626); Augustine of Hippo *Sermons* 300–301 (PL 38, col. 1376–1385), 301A (Germain Morin [ed.], *Miscellanea agostiniana*, vol. 1, *Sancti Augustini sermones post Maurinos reperti* [Rome: Tipografia poliglotta vaticana, 1930] pp. 81–89). For examinations of some of these homilies, see M. Vinson, 'Gregory Nazianzen's Homily 15 and the Genesis of the Christian Cult of the Maccabean Martyrs', *Byzantion* 64.1 (1994) pp. 166–192; R. Ziadé, *Les martyrs Maccabées de l'histoire juive au culte chrétien: Les homélies de Grégoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome* (Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, 80, Leiden: Brill, 2007).

72 For some aspects of this debate, see G. Rouwhorst, 'The Cult of the Seven Maccabean Brothers and Their Mother in Christian Tradition', in J. Schwartz and M. Poorthuis (eds.), *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives, 7, Leiden: Brill, 2004) pp. 183–204; G. Rouwhorst, 'The Emergence of the Cult of the Maccabean Martyrs in Late Antique Christianity', in Johan Leemans (ed.), *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity* (Annua Nuntia Lovaniensia, 51, Leuven: Peeters, 2005) pp. 81–96; L. Triebel, 'Die angebliche Synagoge der makkabäischen Märtyrer in Antiochia am Orontes', *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 9, no. 3 (2006), pp. 464–495; Ziadé, *Les martyrs Maccabées*; C.C. Shepardson, *Controlling Contested Places: Late Antique Antioch and the Spatial Politics of Religious Controversy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) pp. 114–115.

73 Aphr., *Demonstrations* 5.20 (Parisot, *Aphraatis*, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 1.1, col. 221, 17).

74 On the sources that indicate that the Maccabees were venerated in Kerateion, see K.-P. Todt and B.A. Vest, *Syria: Syria Prôtē, Syria Deutera, Syria Euphratēsia* (Österrei-

The evidence cited here for the veneration of the Maccabees relates almost exclusively to the narrative of martyrdom from 2 and 4 Maccabees. The martyrology's mention of 'the [books of the] Maccabees' forms perhaps the one exception. Nevertheless, 1–2 Maccabees almost always circulate as a set in Syriac manuscripts, often with either 3 or 4 Maccabees.⁸¹ All four of the earliest manuscripts to contain either 1 or 2 Maccabees have both works, and they date to the seventh or eighth century.⁸² The strong association between these works justifies, in my view, understanding the incorporation of the Maccabees into the Christian cult of saints in the fourth and fifth centuries as a context for the translation of 1 Maccabees at this time.

6 Conclusion

This article has argued for a more precise date for the translation of 1 Maccabees into Syriac and has suggested a possible context in which this translation may have been undertaken. The presence of Lucianic readings in both early Syriac translations of 1 Maccabees provides a *terminus post quem* of the early fourth century. Allusions to the books of the Maccabees in the works of Aphrahat and Ephrem do not seem to reflect knowledge of either of the early Syriac translations of 1 Maccabees. But strong parallels between sections of the *Martyrdom of Simeon bar Šabbā'ē* and each of the Syriac translations of 1 Maccabees provides a *terminus ante quem* for the translation of this work into Syriac. Discoveries of new texts or efforts to date other early Syriac writings will hopefully expand the corpus on which future studies of the early text of 1 Maccabees can be based. The production of such a translation in the fourth century or perhaps early fifth century is not insignificant. It reflects broader attempts by Christian communities to incorporate the Maccabees into the cult of the saints and appropriate these narratives for their own purposes.

81 An updated list of the known Syriac manuscripts to contain the books of the Maccabees will appear in P.M. Forness, trans., *1 Maccabees According to the Syriac Peshiṭta Version with English Translation* (The Antioch Bible, Piscataway: Gorgias Press, forthcoming). For now, the most comprehensive list appears in The Peshiṭta Institute Leiden, p. 109; idem, 'Fourth Supplement', p. 143; idem, 'Fifth Supplement', p. 511.

82 These are manuscripts 7a1, 7h1, 7h7, and 8a1, using the abbreviations developed by The Peshiṭta Institute.