

## JACOB OF EDESSA'S VERSION OF SCRIPTURE IN RELATION TO HIS EXEGETICAL INTERESTS

## JACOB OF EDESSA'S LIFE

Jacob of Edessa was a prominent scholar and bishop of the Syrian Orthodox Church in the late seventh century. According to the biographical accounts of Jacob's life that are preserved in the chronicles of Michael the Syrian and Barhebraeus, Jacob spent nine years towards the end of his life producing a revision of the Old Testament<sup>1</sup>. Neither historian provides any further detail about the version beyond this brief statement. However, they also fail to mention Jacob's other exegetical work, even though this was highly influential in Syrian Orthodox circles, judging by its wide dissemination in extant manuscripts. The very similar accounts of Michael and Barhebraeus focus on Jacob's expertise in Greek, his teaching of it — apparently not always popular with his peers — the length of time he spent in each monastery, and his abrupt resignation from the see of Edessa over the clergy's non-observance of the canons.

The five surviving manuscripts of Jacob's version of the Old Testament cover the Pentateuch<sup>2</sup>, Isaiah<sup>3</sup>, Ezekiel<sup>4</sup>, Daniel (and Susanna)<sup>5</sup>, and 1–2 Samuel/Kingdoms<sup>6</sup>. (A later fragment of Wisdom has also turned up<sup>7</sup>.) From the colophons, the five manuscripts all appear to have been written within twelve years of Jacob's death in 708, perhaps with the aid of his former students. There are lectionary markings in the manuscripts and in the case of Samuel a lectionary table survives at the beginning. However, it seems doubtful that liturgical use was the primary reason for Jacob's textual work, as we shall see.

Scholars published short excerpts from these manuscripts in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The availability of critical texts of the LXX and Peshitta assisted a fuller analysis of Jacob's text in the later twentieth century. Thus now the books of Samuel have been both edited and studied in depth by Richard Saley and myself, and Bradley Marsh has published some findings on the Pentateuch<sup>8</sup>. These recent studies have established that, at least for the Pentateuch and Samuel, the basis for Jacob's revision was the Peshitta text. Jacob then used material from the Greek tradition in its LXX or Syrohexaplaric form to supplement or "correct" the Peshitta.

Scholarship evidently suited Jacob much more naturally than episcopal duties, though his career as a teacher was almost as dramatic as his time as a bishop, since his biography states that he was driven out the monastery of Eusebona after eleven years of teaching Greek there. Apparently the

<sup>1</sup> MICHAEL THE SYRIAN (d. 1199), *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche (1166–1199)*, ed. J.-B. CHABOT, Brussels, Culture et Civilisation, 1963, vol. 4, 445–446 (Syriac.); vol. 2, 471–472 (French translation). The version of Barhebraeus (1226–1286) is very similar but shorter: see *Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum*, eds. J.B. ABBELOOS and T.J. LAMY, Louvain, Peeters, 1872, vol. 1, pp. 289–94.

<sup>2</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Syr. 26 (see A.I. SYLVESTRE DE SACY, *Notice d'un Manuscrit syriaque, contenant les livres de Moïse*, in *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, vol. IV, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1798–99, pp. 648–68, and H. ZOTENBERG, *Manuscrits orientaux. Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques et sabéens (mandaites) de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris, Jules Antoine Taschereau, 1874, 10 §26.

<sup>3</sup> British Library Add. MS 14,441. See W. WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum acquired since the year 1838*, London, British Museum. Dept. of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, 1870, vol. I, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> MS Vat. sir. 5. See S.E. and J.S. ASSEMANI, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codicum Manuscriptorum Catalogus*, Paris, 1926, 1.II, pp. 1013.

<sup>5</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Syr. 27. See ZOTENBERG, *Manuscrits orientaux. Catalogues des manuscrits syriaques*, 11 §27, and C. BUGATI, *Daniel secundum editionem LXX interpretum ex tetraplis desumptum*, Milan, Biblioteca ambrosiana, 1788.

<sup>6</sup> British Library Add. MS 14,429: WRIGHT, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts*, vol. I, pp. 38–39. The Samuel manuscript is in a better state of preservation than those for the Pentateuch, Isaiah and Ezekiel.

<sup>7</sup> Wisd. 2:12–24, MS Mardin, Syr. Orth. Bishopric, 2/47, of 1569 CE. See W. BAARS, *Ein neugefundenes Bruchstück aus der syrischen Bibelrevision des Jacob von Edessa*, «Vetus Testamentum» XVIII, 1968, pp. 548–54.

<sup>8</sup> A.G. SALVESEN, *I-II Samuel in the Syriac Version of Jacob of Edessa*, MPIL 10, Leiden, Brill, 1999; R.J. SALEY, *The Samuel Manuscript of Jacob of Edessa: A Study in Its Underlying Textual Traditions*, MPIL 9, Leiden, Brill, 1998; B.J. MARSH, *Jacob of Edessa's Greek Manuscripts. The case from his revision of the book of Numbers*, «Journal for Septuagint and Cognate Studies» XLIV, 2011, pp. 5–25.

monks' hatred of "the Greeks" extended beyond animosity toward Chalcedonians to Jacob's promotion of the Greek language for the study of Scripture. Jacob moved on to Tell 'Adda which evidently proved to be a congenial setting for his scholarly work. It was here that he produced his revision of the Old Testament.

It is possible that Jacob created his version of the Old Testament precisely in reaction to his experience at Eusebona, in order to demonstrate that knowledge of Greek was of great importance for the study of Scripture. By marrying the Peshitta and LXX biblical traditions in Syriac form he could bridge the two forms of Scripture that were influential in the Syrian Orthodox Church and show how the Greek tradition of Scripture (LXX and/or Syrohexapla) could be used to solve certain problems in the Peshitta text.

Jacob's work was a logical extension of that of Philoxenus for the New Testament (there is no incontrovertible evidence of the existence of an extensive Philoxenian version of the Old Testament), but it was also marked off against the Syrohexapla and Harklean texts which were Syriac only in form rather than origin or tradition.

In a brief note, Goshen-Gottstein argued that the composite biblical texts in Jacob's scholia represent a stage in the development of Jacob's Old Testament text [henceforth JOT]<sup>9</sup>. More recently Andreas Juckel has carried out a comparison of Jacob's version of Isaiah with his Isaiah citations in Jacob's revision of the Syriac *Hymns* of Severus of Antioch<sup>10</sup>. Juckel tried to show that they reflected "a developed and consistent principle of revision" from the citations in the Severus manuscript to Jacob's full version of Isaiah<sup>11</sup>. However, both Bas Romeny and I have disputed such a progression, since Jacob's biblical citations in his last work, the *Hexaameron*, do not conform to the text of JOT where the latter survives, nor do they reflect a steady process of development where we have no corresponding material in JOT<sup>12</sup>.

It is important to note that Jacob had been carrying out this sort of textual combining for at least twenty years before he embarked on his version of the Old Testament. Responding to correspondents' queries about difficulties in the text of Scripture, and in his scholia in the margins of his revisions of Severus of Antioch's *Hymns* and *Homilies*<sup>13</sup>, Jacob often uses forms of citation that combine the Peshitta wording with Greek elements translated into Syriac. It is rare that he tells the reader explicitly that he is doing so. This practice of interweaving the two biblical traditions continues after he had finished his Old Testament version by around 705. Thus in his *Hexaameron*, the climax of his life's work, he employs "mixed" citations of Scripture in a similar way. Where these can be compared with what survives of JOT, they are rarely identical, but appear to be created ad hoc, for the purpose in hand.

Jacob's motivation in creating his version does not seem to be theological in the way that Philoxenus' New Testament text was: there is no overarching christological tendency that can be identified. I have suggested elsewhere that JOT with its apparently haphazard methodology, its frequent marginal alternative readings (the Peshitta for LXX and vice versa), and its occasional scholia, was in fact intended as a teaching aid<sup>14</sup>. JOT may have been meant to introduce students to the utility of Greek Scripture as an exegetical aid, and not as a "new" text to replace the Peshitta or Syrohexapla, since both of these versions were well established in the Syrian Orthodox Church (the Syrohexapla itself having been produced by the Syrian Orthodox scholar Paul of Tella). However, it should be remembered that the manuscripts that we have of Jacob's version, though very early, are not the autographs, and we cannot be certain that what we have resembles exactly what Jacob himself had created.

---

<sup>9</sup> M. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *Neue Syrohexaplafragmente*, «Biblica» XXXVII, 1956, p. 164 n.3.

<sup>10</sup> In British Library Add. MS 17,134.

<sup>11</sup> A. JUCKEL, *Approximation of the 'Traditions' in Jacob of Edessa's Revision of Isaiah* in G.A. KIRAZ (ed), *Malphono w-Rabo d'Malphone. Studies in honour of Sebastian P. Brock*, Piscataway, NJ, Gorgias Press, 2008. pp. 227-282, and id. *Septuaginta and Peshitta. Jacob of Edessa quoting the Old Testament in MS BL Add 17134*, «Hugoye» VIII.2, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> R.B. TER HAAR ROMENY, *Jacob of Edessa's Quotations and Revision of Isaiah*, in M.N. VAN DER MEER, P. VAN KEULEN, W. VAN PEURSEN, R.B. TER HAAR ROMENY (edd.), *Isaiah in Context: studies in honour of Arie van der Kooij on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, Leiden, Brill, 2010, pp. 387-406, esp. 390; A. SALVESEN, *The Authorial Spirit? Biblical Citations in Jacob of Edessa's Hexaameron*, «Aramaic Studies» VI, 2008, pp. 207-25, esp. 225.

<sup>13</sup> SEVERUS OF ANTIOCH, *Les Homiliae cathedrales de Sévère d'Antioche*, ed. (with French translation) M. Briere et al., «Patrologia Orientalis» XXIX.1, XXXVIII.2, Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1960, 1976. Jacob completed the revision in 701 CE according to the colophon to Vat. syr. 141 fol. 215r. J. LOOPSTRA, *Patristic Selections in the 'Masoretic' Handbooks of the Qarqapta Tradition*, PhD dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2009, p. 102, notes that Jacob is often said to have 'edited' [ܥܘܢܐ] existing translations (for instance, of the works of Severus of Antioch).

<sup>14</sup> A. SALVESEN, *Scholarship on the Margins: Biblical and Secular Learning in the Work of Jacob of Edessa*, in Kyle SMITH (ed.), *Syriac Encounters* (forthcoming).



... \* \* \* \* \*  
... \* \* \* \* \*

JHex (ed. CHABOT, p. 69 col.b)

... \* \* \* \* \*

Peshitta Gen. 1:2 (Leiden edn.)

\* \* \* \* \*

Syrohexapla (= Syh, ed. BAARS)

\* \* \* \* \*

LXX Gen 1:2 (ed. WEVERS)

2 ἢ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος, καὶ σκότος ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου, καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος.

In the scholion Jacob describes the state of the earth before Creation. Rather than use the Peshitta’s transliteration of the Hebrew expression *והו ובהו* which itself required explanation, Jacob prefers the LXX expression, as rendered by the Syrohexapla, “invisible and unformed”. He then develops this idea further in order to emphasise the earth’s total lack of ability to sustain life. In line with Syriac thought elsewhere since the fifth century, the Holy Spirit is placed in the masculine gender grammatically, and the form of the citation follows Syh, not Peshitta.

Jacob’s own version of Genesis, though not easily legible at this point, retains the Peshitta’s rendering *מאחא מאחא*. However, for the same verse as cited in his *Hexaemeron* he uses the words “invisible and unformed” twice, the first time to explain the Peshitta’s expression. The Spirit of God is masculine, as expected at this period.

Interestingly, shortly afterwards in the *Hexaemeron*, Jacob attacks the interpretation of the “Chaldeans” of Genesis ch. 1, namely that darkness and waters were pre-existent before any gods or men, and that a spirit (feminine) hovered over waters and acted as a (feminine) Creator. Such a view Jacob describes as «a semblance of the word of Truth»<sup>20</sup>.

2) JACOB OF EDESSA ON EXODUS 3:13 AND THE DIVINE NAME

Jacob’s Scholion (BL Add. ms 14,483, fols. 5a—5b)<sup>21</sup>

... \* \* \* \* \*

Durbecq, 1928.

<sup>20</sup> Ed. CHABOT, p. 70 col. b.

<sup>21</sup> The number of the scholion and its beginning are lost.



14 ܠܥܠܡܝܢ ܡܝܢܥ ܡܝܢܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 14  
 ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 15  
 \*ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ

Peshitta Exodus 6:2-3

ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 2  
 ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 3

LXX Exodus 3:13-15 (ed. WEVERS)

13 και εἶπεν Μωϋσῆς πρὸς τὸν θεόν Ἴδού ἐγὼ ἐλεύσομαι πρὸς τοὺς υἱοὺς Ἰσραὴλ και ἐρῶ πρὸς αὐτούς Ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς, ἐρωτήσουσίν με Τί ὄνομα αὐτῶ; τί ἐρῶ πρὸς αὐτούς;  
 14 και εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωϋσῆν Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ὢν· και εἶπεν Οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ Ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.  
 15 και εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πάλιν πρὸς Μωϋσῆν Οὕτως ἐρεῖς τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ Κύριος ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν, θεὸς Ἀβραάμ και θεὸς Ἰσαὰκ και θεὸς Ἰακώβ, ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς· τοῦτό μου ἐστίν ὄνομα αἰώνιον και μνημόσυνον γενεῶν γενεαῖς.

LXX Exodus 6:3

2 Ἐλάλησεν δὲ ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωϋσῆν και εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν Ἐγὼ κύριος·  
 3 και ὤφθην πρὸς Ἀβραάμ και Ἰσαὰκ και Ἰακώβ, θεὸς ὢν αὐτῶν, και τὸ ὄνομά μου κύριος οὐκ ἐδήλωσα αὐτοῖς·

Syh Exodus 3:13-15 (ed. DE LAGARDE)

ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 13  
 ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 14  
 ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 15  
 ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ

Syh Exodus 6:2-3

ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 2  
 ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ ܠܝܫܘܥ ܡܝܢ ܝܫܘܥ 3

The subject of the Divine Name was something of an obsession with Jacob. The very lengthy scholion attached to his revision of the Syriac of Severus of Antioch’s *Cathedral Homilies* was published and translated first by Nestle into German, and then by Brière into French as part of his edition of the *Homilies* in Syriac. The scholion occurs between Homilies 123 and 124<sup>22</sup>. In it Jacob attacks the use of the form “Pipi” in mss of the Syrohexapla as a Satanic invention. (In fact we possess Syh manuscripts that contain this strange name, usually in the margin.)

Only a short extract from this long scholion from the Severus manuscript is included above. But the long extract preceding it is taken from one of Jacob’s unpublished biblical scholia in BL Add. MS 14,483 in which he discusses the episode where Moses asks God to tell him his name.

Jacob’s treatment in the biblical scholion stresses the honour that God is paying Moses. The wording that Jacob has taken from the Greek tradition (Syh/LXX) is evidently the influential text for him in this matter, since it is found in both scholia and his own version of Exodus ch. 3. Jacob’s

<sup>22</sup> For editions and translations, see E. NESTLE, *Jakob von Edessa über den Schem hammephorasch und andere Gottesnamen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Tetragrammaton*, «ZDMG» XXXII, 1878, pp. 465–508 [esp. 490]; 735–736; M. BRIÈRE, *Scolie (au sujet du nom honorable et secret)*, in M. BRIÈRE (ed.), *Les Homiliae Cathedrales de Sévère d’Antioche. Traduction syriaque de Jacques d’Édesse* «Patrologia Orientalis» 29; 1960, pp. 190–207 [BL Add. MS 12,159].





.כמלכא מילף מלכו .מעצתו דלכו כעאז קמו 13  
 .אצא יאמא איתוק קמו .אחיל אצמונא קמונא קמיו ד איהא יוק קמלו 14  
 .אמאמו איהו :קמי קמונא ערל א  
 :מילף קמו מלכו :מילף קעאז מלכו 15  
 \* ממי מילף ד כמלכא ממואע קמו 16

דעם margin [דעם 13

Peshitta Exod 24:12–16 (ed. Leiden)

קמואזא קמואזא .קמלכא קמיל אד דחיקא .קמי ,אמו מילף ,חיל מו .קעאז קמו יוקא 12  
 .אוק אכלל אכחא  
 .כמלכא מילף קעאז מלכו .מעצתו דעמו קעאז קמו 13  
 .אצא יאמא איתוק קמו . אחיל אצמונא קמונא קמיו ד איהא . יוק קמלו 14  
 .אמאמו איהו קמל מל חוקא קמי  
 .קמו מלכו מילף קעאז מלכו 15  
 . ממי מילף ד קמונא ממואע קמו 16

5b1 מילף חיל [מילף ,חיל 12

5b1 דעם [דעמו 13

5b1 קמל [אצמונא 1114 ד [ד 14

5b1 מילף קמו [קמו 16

LXX Exod 24:12-16 (ed. WEVERS)

12 και εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν Ἐνάβηθι πρὸς με εἰς τὸ ὄρος και ἴσθι ἐκεῖ· και δώσω σοι τὰ πυξία τὰ λίθινα, τὸν νόμον και τὰς ἐντολάς, ἃς ἔγραψα νομοθετῆσαι αὐτοῖς.  
 13 και ἀναστὰς Μωυσῆς και Ἰησοῦς ὁ παρεστηκὼς αὐτῷ ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ὄρος τοῦ θεοῦ·  
 14 και τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις εἶπαν Ἐσυχάζετε αὐτοῦ, ἕως ἀναστρέψωμεν πρὸς ὑμᾶς· και ἰδοὺ Ααρων και Ωρ μεθ' ὑμῶν· ἐάν τιμι συμβῆ κρίσις, προσπορευέσθωσαν αὐτοῖς.  
 15 και ἀνέβη Μωυσῆς και Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὸ ὄρος, και ἐκάλυψεν ἡ νεφέλη τὸ ὄρος.  
 16 και κατέβη ἡ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος τὸ Σινα...

15 και Ἰησοῦς] > in many MSS

Syh Exod 24:12-16

קמואזא \ אק\* קמלכא קמיל אד דחיקא .קמי ,אמו מילף ,חיל מו .קעאז חיל קמו יוקא 12  
 \* אוק קמואזא קמלל אכחא אוק קמואזא  
 .כמלכא מילף מלכו .מעצתו דעמו קעאז קמו 13  
 .אצא יאמא איתוק קמו .אחיל אצמונא קמונא קמיו אד יוק קמלו 14  
 .אוק אצמונא :קמי ערל א  
 :מילף קמו מלכו :מילף קעאז מלכו 15  
 \* ממי מילף ד כמלכא ממואע קמו 16

The last example of Jacob’s exegesis as exhibited in his scholia follows on immediately after the previous one in BL Add. MS 14,483. The biblical text cited is marked by marginal signs in the manuscript.

There are two difficulties for readers and hearers of Scripture that Jacob investigates in his scholion. The first concerns “Hoshea” (the former name of Joshua) and whether he fasted for all the forty days that they were praying on the mountain or whether he took provisions with him to eat there. The second problem concerns Hur, Miriam’s husband, whom Moses appointed along with Aaron to be a judge in his absence, and the question of his fate, since he is not mentioned subsequently in

Scripture. (Ephrem also states that Hur is Miriam's husband in his *Exodus Commentary*, XVII.2).

Jacob explains that Scripture does not say anything about the first issue, that of Hoshea's fasting, and he does not try to answer it himself. On the second matter, Jacob says that "apocryphal tales" (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ) transmitted among the Hebrews state that the assembly of Israelites stoned Hur to death because of his opposition to the worship of the Golden Calf. Jacob's treatment of this issue is in fact also very similar to the story found in Ephrem's *Exodus Commentary* XXXII.2, where Ephrem states that when Moses went up the mountain he commanded the elders to bring their lawsuits before Hur: «But after Moses descended his fate (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ) is nowhere mentioned. So people say (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ) that Hur was stoned to death by the people for opposing their worship of the Calf.<sup>27</sup>» Both Ephrem and Jacob derive their information ultimately from oral Jewish sources (though Ephrem does not state this). Although Jacob is often more than willing explicitly to use Jewish apocryphal accounts such as Jubilees, in this case the added authority of Ephrem probably encouraged Jacob to follow this tradition.

The few differences from the Peshitta text in Jacob's Scholion text are due to the need for clarification of the Peshitta's Syriac, especially in order to explain the phrase in the Peshitta of v. 14c, "whoever has a word/matter", ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ. The Greek takes this to refer to a lawsuit (ἐάν τι συμβῆ κρίσις). So Jacob combines the Peshitta and Greek sense in the phrase ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ, but he replaces the verb used in Syh ܩܘܪܝܢܐ "happen" with the verb "to be" (ܩܘܪܝܢܐ). However, in his own version of Exodus Jacob moves close to the LXX, though again he avoids ܩܘܪܝܢܐ of Syh.

For Jacob, as for Syh and Peshitta, only Moses goes up the mountain in v.15: in an older strand of LXX, both Moses and Joshua ascend<sup>28</sup>. Adopting this reading would have solved the problem of whether Joshua/Hoshea fasted for forty days too, since Joshua would presumably fast along with Moses. However, it is likely that Jacob did not know this probably pre-Hexaplaric Greek reading.

Some distinctive Peshitta readings are retained by Jacob in both his Scholion text (JSch) and his version of Exodus (JExod):

- a) In both JSch and JExod of v. 12, Jacob retains the Peshitta's verb "teach" ܩܘܪܝܢܐ, against LXX "legislate" νομοθετῆσαι (Syh ܩܘܪܝܢܐ ܩܘܪܝܢܐ).
- b) In v. 15 in JSch and JExod, it is likely that the idea of the cloud covering the mountain (rather than covering Moses himself) is derived from LXX. However, this reading also occurs in Peshitta MS 5b1, so it was not unknown in Syriac tradition.

## CONCLUSION

These examples further illustrate that it is impossible to demonstrate reliably that there was some kind of progression in Jacob's earlier exegetical works towards a supposed "final" form in his version of the Old Testament, which he then relied on as a "standard" text for his citations in later works.

Jacob does not regard the two forms of Scripture, Syriac and Greek, to be in opposition to each other but complementary. Therefore it would presumably be impossible to come up with a single final form. For Jacob, exegetical problems can be resolved by consulting both the Greek and Syriac traditions of the biblical text, along with the authorities of the past, both Syriac and Greek.

We should not regard Jacob's work on the biblical text as inconsistent because his actual attitude to the interpretation of Scripture is in fact fully consistent: namely, to bring the most appropriate texts and exegesis from Syriac and Greek tradition in order to explain the difficulties.

---

<sup>27</sup> Ed. R.M. TONNEAU, *Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum Commentarii*, CSCO 72, Louvain, Peeters, 1955, pp. 152–53.

<sup>28</sup> The omission of Joshua's name in many LXX MSS and in Syh is due to revision towards the emerging Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) which lacks the name of Joshua at this point. The Peshitta text, translated around the end of the second century CE, also reflects the text of MT here.