

Peshitta Primacy Considerations

A reply to:

<http://aramaicnt.org/articles/problems-with-peshitta-primacy/>
by Steve Caruso 2012?

Steve Caruso's article attempts to discount the idea that the Peshitta is the best version of the New Covenant that we have. He claims that all Peshitta Primacy supporters believe that "the Syriac Peshitta is the original text of the New Testament." But we do not all believe this. There is no dispute that Jesus and his disciples spoke Galilean Aramaic, even he agrees with this, and some of them could also read and write it. The Galilean was their own Aramaic dialect, which the Jewish captives developed from the Aramaic they were required to use when they were taken to Babylon and its territories by the Assyrians, and is why Aramaic is used in parts of the Old Covenant books of Daniel and Ezra.

There is no evidence that Christ or the apostles spoke or wrote Greek, though Paul likely learned Greek during his missions to Greek-speaking countries. The Peshitta are among the oldest known manuscripts of the New Covenant, but even they do not go directly back to the Apostles. Yes, we would love to have the real, original manuscripts actually hand-written by the apostles themselves. But we don't, and really, that is not surprising. They would have been worn-out long ago. However, we believe that the Peshitta is the next best thing, as it was carefully copied from the Galilean dialect of Aramaic to the Old Syriac dialect of Aramaic, which also slowly morphed into classical Syriac. As there are only subtle and trivial differences between these dialects, this transfer would have been as close to perfect as possible, with the main apparent change being from the Hebrew-style square font to the more flowing Syriac font. But remember, this is just a change in

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fonts, somewhat like copying an English article in Times Roman *into cursive script*. This care is reflected in the near absence of differences in the various Peshitta manuscripts, and is consistent with Matthew 5:18, where Jeshua says, “*Truly, I say to you, that until heaven and earth pass away, not even one Yohtd or one stroke will pass from the Instructions until everything has happened.*” In contrast, there are many differences among the Greek manuscripts, resulting in four main groups, the Byzantine, Alexandrian, Western, and Caesarean. This is to be expected, as translating from Aramaic into Greek is far more prone to error, as it requires a conversion into a totally different language, and almost every aspect of the two languages is different, so every translator would make different choices and errors. So which manuscripts are almost certainly the closest, perhaps even virtually identical, to those Galilean Aramaic originals? The Aramaic Peshitta of course.

So the truth is that we do not claim the Peshitta is the original NC itself, but rather that it is the closest to the original that still exists, and the Greek manuscripts are merely translations made from it. And contrary to the ‘problems’ article, though there are several places where the Peshitta incorporates Greek ‘loan-words’ such as Pentecost and Christian, there are several hundred places where the Greek can be reasonably shown to have been transcribed or translated from the Aramaic. For evidence of this, read Glenn Bauscher’s *The Peshitta Aramaic-English New Testament, An Interlinear Translation* and his *Divine Contact* and Andrew Roth’s *Aramaic English New Testament*.

Now let us look at Steve’s “Mistaken Information” example: *Gavrā* and the Genealogy of Matthew. He begins by claiming the Matthew genealogy goes back to Adam. That is wrong. It only goes back to Abraham. It is the Luke genealogy that goes back to Adam.

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He also claims that *Gavrā* ܓܘܪܐ which is used in Matthew 1:16 to describe the relationship of that Joseph to Mary, can only mean husband in Aramaic. His claim is at best deceptive. Husband in Aramaic is *ba`la* ܒܥܠܐ as in John 4:17 and it is used as husband in over 50 places in the NC Peshitta. *Gavrā* is used only this one time, and contrary to Steve's claims, the Biblical context proves that it does mean guardian. In their culture, the woman's guardian is of course the husband of a married woman, but it is the father or the closest, oldest male relative of an unmarried woman if her father is dead. Such was the relationship between Ester and Mordecai in Ester 2:7. And as we shall see, the Bible confirms this is so for Mary. In Luke 3:23, we are told that Mary's husband Joseph is the son of Heli, while the Joseph in Matthew 1:16, her guardian before she was married, is in fact the son of *Jacob*, NOT *Heli*. If you carefully compare the genealogies in Matthew and Luke, also listed side by side in the following table, you will discover that they are the same from Abraham to King David (Set 1 in Steve's article, from Mat 1:17). However, the Matthew genealogy then lists King Solomon next and follows him with a totally different list of ancestors to the Luke list, which begins with David's son Nathan. Restated, both Sets 2 and 3 from Matthew are completely different for the same time-frame list given in Luke. Where the Luke list is different, it is highlighted in yellow in the table. You will also see that Mary's husband Joseph's ancestors usually had their children much younger than Mary's ancestors, resulting in many more generations. Though I doubt that I have matched the corresponding ancestors correctly, it does give each list in the correct order.

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Matthew Genealogy			Luke Genealogy	
Set	Verse	Born to:	Born to:	Verse
3:14	1:16	Jeshua	—[Jeshua]—	3:23
3:13		Mary	Joseph	
3:12		Joseph	Heli	
3:11	1:15	Jacob	Matthat	3:24
			Levi	
3:10		Matthan	Melchi	
			Jannai	
3:9		Eliazar	Joseph	
			Matta	
3:8	1:14	Eliud	Amos	3:25
			Nahum	
3:7		Achin	Khasli	
			Naggai	
3:6		Zadok	Maath	
			Mattath	
3:5	1:13	Azor	Shamei	3:26
			Joseph	
3:4		Eliakim	Judah	
			Johannan	
3:3	Abiud	Rasa	3:27	
		Zerobabel		

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Matthew Genealogy			Luke Genealogy	
Set	Verse	Born to:	Born to:	Verse
3:2	1:12	Zerubabel	Silathiel	3:28
			Neri	
3:1		Shealatiel	Malchi	
			Addi	
2:14	1:11	Jeconia	Qusam	
			Almodad	
2:13	1:10	Josaiah	Ayir	3:29
			Jose	
2:12		Amon	Eliazar	
			Joram	
2:11		Manasheh	Matitha	
2:10		1:9	Hezekiah	
	Ahaz		Simeon	
	Jotham		Judah	
2:7	1:8	Uzziah	Joseph	3:30
		Joram	Jonam	
		Jehoshaphat	Eliakim	
2:4	1:7	Asa	Malia	3:31
		2:3	Abiyah	
Rehoboam			Mattha	
2:2	1:6	Solomon	Nathan	
1:14		David	David	

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Matthew Genealogy			Luke Genealogy	
Set	Verse	Born to:	Born to:	Verse
1:13	1:5	Jesse	Aishai ¹	3:32
1:12		Obed	Obed	
1:11		Boaz	Boaz	
1:10	1:4	Salmon	Salmon	
1:9		Nahshon	Nahshon	
1:8		Amminadab	Amminadab	
1:7	1:3	Aram	Aram	3:33
1:6		Hezron	Khetzron	
1:5		Pharez	Parets	
1:4	1:2	Judah	Judah	3:34
1:3		Jacob	Jacob	
1:2		Issac	Issac	
1:1		Abraham	Abraham	
			Terah	
			Nahor	
			Serug	3:35
			Arau	
			Peleg	
			Eber	
			Shalah	
			Cainan	3:36

¹ Alternative names for Jesse, Hezron and Pharez.

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Matthew Genealogy			Luke Genealogy	
Set	Verse	Born to:	Born to:	Verse
			Arphakshar	
			Shem	
			Noah	
			Lamech	
			Methuselah	3:37
			Enoch	
			Jared	
			Mahalaliel	
			Cainan	
			Enosh	3:38
			Seth	3:39
			Adam	
	3:17	Jehovah God	Jehovah God	

The only believable conclusion is that these are two different genealogies because they are listing the ancestors of two different Josephs. We are also told that the Joseph in the Luke list is only ‘supposed’ to be Jesus’ father, for in the previous verse and elsewhere we are told that Jehovah God is truly Jesus’ father. Luke 3:22-23 & 1:30-35. This Joseph in Luke can only be Mary’s husband, who some ‘supposed’ was Christ’s father because they refused to believe that Mary was a virgin when Christ was born and therefore that Jesus (Jeshua) was truly God’s Son. Mat 1:30-23. And if the Matthew Joseph, who was Mary’s guardian, is in fact Mary’s father, that does indeed solve the missing generation

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problem, as Mary is herself that ‘missing’ generation, as the above Table shows. It also makes Jesus Christ a **true** descendant of Abraham, Isaac, both King David and King Solomon and many of the kings of Judah through his mother Mary, fulfilling many prophecies 1 Kings 2:1-4 & 2:45. In summary, this conclusion makes the two genealogies consistent, and is a powerful example of why the Peshitta is so important. It is hard to believe that Steve was not aware of these two different genealogies, and knew that they totally destroy his claims about *gavrā* always meaning husband. Yet he says not a single word about it.

There are many other puzzling aspects and passages in the Greek manuscripts that the Peshitta clarifies, as one would expect if it is the more accurate rendition of the originals. Two examples are these: The extensive inclusion of MarJah, meaning Lord Jah, which is shorthand for Lord Jehovah in the Aramaic Peshitta, verifies it as God’s Word, while the Greek NC has been altered and God’s Name has been entirely removed from it. Also, in Rev 20:4, the Peshitta states that all those who are cut off (killed) for their witness to Christ will be in the First Resurrection, while the Greek claims that only those who have been beheaded will be included, which is an oddly specific and unreasonable translation of ‘cut off.’

In summary, Steve Caruso’s trivial and/or incorrect criticisms only reinforce our conviction that the Aramaic Peshitta New Covenant is the most accurate version of the New Covenant that we have.

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