

## OBSEQUIES OF MY LADY MARY (I):

UNPUBLISHED EARLY SYRIAC PALIMPSEST  
FRAGMENTS FROM THE BRITISH LIBRARY  
(BL, ADD 17.137, NO. 2)

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### ABSTRACT

*The Syriac palimpsest folios listed under Add 17.137, no. 2 in Wright's Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum have been described as deriving from the Obsequies of My Lady Mary. This attribution has never been questioned afterwards. Although a specimen consisting of only one column of a single folio was published a few years ago, the remaining text on the folio and the other five have been left unedited. It was recently understood that under this sub shelfmark number two divergent manuscripts are hidden. One manuscript surviving only in two folios contains the Obsequies and is written in an elegant Estrangela script (ca. 5<sup>th</sup> cent.), while the other, in a much bolder script type, shows Jacob of Serugh's Homily on the Presentation in the Temple (ca. 6<sup>th</sup> cent.), one of the few palimpsest and earliest text examples of this author. Only the folios with the Obsequies are edited here, which offer noteworthy textual additions and a selection of diverse variants that are not accounted for by the Christian Palestinian Aramaic and much later Ethiopic transmissions.*

## 1. RESEARCH HISTORY AND TEXT

William Wright describes the palimpsest fragments under Add 17.137, no. 2 in his catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts acquired by the British Museum since 1838 in the following way: “Six leaves from a manuscript, written in two columns, in a fine Estrangēlā of the v<sup>th</sup> or vi<sup>th</sup> cent. From what is legible on fol. 9 a, it appears that they belonged to the apocryphal work entitled ‘the Obsequies of my Lady Mary,’ ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ.”<sup>1</sup> He did not include any text samples of these folios in his book *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature* published shortly before.<sup>2</sup> Upon consultation of the six palimpsest folios in Syriac just for the sake of comparison with the recently published Christian Palestinian Aramaic transmission, it emerged that this primary description by Wright for no. 2 in Add 17.137 was not accurate for the content of all folios. It soon became quite clear that underneath the upper text (*Hymns for the Vigil*) one could definitely detect two differently-sized hands of two divergent early *Estrangela* scripts that did not match as one would expect within a single manuscript. This fact not only escaped Wright, who might obviously have had some doubts concerning all folios,<sup>3</sup> but also Andrea Schmidt, who recently described all the Syriac palimpsest manuscripts in

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<sup>1</sup> W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired Since the Year 1838*, vol. 1 (London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1870), 369 [no. 465]; A. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur mit Ausschluß der christlich-palästinensischen Texte* (Bonn: Marcus und Webers, 1922), 98 n. 7. He only covers the available manuscripts of the five-book cycle in the British Library from Deir al-Suryan, since none from other provenances were known at his time or have surfaced in the meantime. The only disadvantage of Baumstark’s very comprehensive description is that he never indicates if a manuscript is a palimpsest.

<sup>2</sup> W. Wright, *Contributions to the Apocryphal Literature of the New Testament* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1865).

<sup>3</sup> Wright, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 369–370. Baumstark, *Geschichte der syrischen Literatur*, 98 n. 7 relied on Wright without ever seeing the original.

the British Library,<sup>4</sup> and also Stephen Shoemaker, who published just column (b) of the recto of fol. 9 some years ago without scrutinizing the deviating scribal hands on the other folios. Concerning these vellum pages, Shoemaker states the following: “The remaining folios are indeed largely illegible, and while it is possible to identify their content with this Dormition apocryphon, they are not sufficiently legible for any meaningful edition and translation.”<sup>5</sup>

In the smaller and elegant *Estrangela* hand (ca. 5<sup>th</sup> cent.) on two folios one can make out the *Obsequies of My Lady Mary*, the Syriac title given to the *Liber Requiei Mariae*, but in the larger and bolder type on the remaining four folios is found the *Homily on the Presentation in the Temple* by Jacob of Serugh (ca. 6<sup>th</sup> cent.). This discovery came as surprise as it happens to be one of the few and earliest palimpsest examples for this popular fifth- to sixth-century Syriac author so far, whose texts circulated widely.<sup>6</sup> In his recycling of the vellum leaves the twelfth-century scribe of the Syriac upper text<sup>7</sup> was not very particular as to what he selected from the dismembered manuscripts.<sup>8</sup> He did not adhere to the original sequence of the

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<sup>4</sup> A. Schmidt, “Syriac Palimpsests in the British Library,” in V. Somers (ed.), *Palimpsestes et éditions de textes: les textes littéraires* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009), 161–186, esp. 170, still follows the entries in Wright, *Catalogue*, vol. 1.

<sup>5</sup> S. J. Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments from Palimpsests in the Schøyen Collection and the British Library,” *Le Muséon* 124 (2011), 259–278, esp. 261.

<sup>6</sup> Along with this early palimpsest witness survived another early palimpsest (6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> cent.) with three folios and their adjoining stubs containing the *Ninth Homily of Joseph* in Sinai, Arabic 514, fol. 96, 98–99; see G. Kessel, “Undertexts of Sinai, Arabic 514,” in KatIlkon (<https://sinai.library.ucla.edu>; accessed 4 August 2019). There is another palimpsest (6<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> cent.) recorded in Wright, *Catalogue*, vol. 1, 251, no. 312, 8c (Add 14.512).

<sup>7</sup> The upper text has *Hymns for the Vigil* ܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܡܪܝܡ ܕܠܝܠܐ, see Wright, *Catalogue*, 370 [no. 4].

<sup>8</sup> It was only described as *hymns* in the index of the British Museum collection numbers by Wright, *Catalogue*, vol. 3, 1230, but under the manuscript entry [no. 465] no title for the content of the upper manuscript is listed.

folios and separated them by cutting each folio in half. Through this procedure both lower manuscript texts were disarranged and follow a different sequence than the upper text, i.e. that the top and bottom fragments of the two manuscripts are sometimes combined into one folio and the script of the lower text may appear in an upside down fashion in contrast to the upper text. Neither did the scribe keep the former obverse and reverse sides from the original manuscripts. Only fol. 8, 9, and 11 remained unseparated in this dismembering process. Fol. 10 belongs to two different paragraphs of Jacob of Serugh's *Homily*. On fol. 9 the upper text script is flipped by 180 degrees to the underlying text. It should also be pointed out that the texture of all six vellum leaves and their trimmed halves looks very much alike. The script of the lower text is generally very much faded except for fol. 9. Consequently, this made it a bit cumbersome to obtain a result for the correct order of the two former manuscript sequences and their content. This obviously misled Wright and his successors into assigning the folios to one single manuscript of the *Obsequies*. The established attribution that was oddly neither questioned nor checked for over one hundred and fifty years, although the palaeographic features pointed to other textual affiliations.<sup>9</sup> Apart from the content, such palaeographic peculiarities are always the primary telling points to determine a specific palimpsest manuscript.

Through the help of a number of word combinations from fol. 6 bottom, 7 top, 8, 10, and 11, the identification with a homily composed by Jacob of Serugh was made possible by

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<sup>9</sup> This oversight can hardly be blamed only on Wright considering the amount of material he had to sight, attribute, and describe for his catalogue of the Syriac manuscripts in three volumes in a rather short period of time and without technical means for such diverse and difficult-to-read palimpsest texts. It is also rather peculiar that presently it seems to be a habit to search and hunt for new material in the most remote places, while enough unidentified and unedited texts await their publication in open access libraries.

Sebastian Brock.<sup>10</sup> This implies that two thirds of the manuscript running under shelf mark BL, Add 17.137, no. 2 constitute one of earliest text witness of Jacob of Serugh's *Homily on the Presentation in the Temple*, displaying a faithful text with some variations to the younger transmission.<sup>11</sup>

The remaining third of the manuscript with two folios contains the *Obsequies of My Lady Mary*. The top part of fol. 6 and the bottom one of fol. 7 join into one folio, and with fol. 9 they form a very early Syriac *Obsequies* version (ca. 5<sup>th</sup> cent.) along with British Library, Add 14.665, fol. 21–24, still mostly unedited.<sup>12</sup> There are no paragraph divisions or enlarged letters visible to indicate a new section as twice in Add 14.665, fol. 22r [G1 § 33] and 21v [G1 § 39; E1 §73]. The right hand column (a) on fol. 9 recto happens to have a rather interesting section. Here an additional unattested passage was inserted before


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<sup>10</sup> After gleaning some catchwords from five fragments, I sent them to Sebastian Brock, for I had suspected the authorship of Jacob of Serugh on account of the combination of Jacob in connection with the lyre. In the end it turned out to be an additional passage from the *Obsequies* for § 101 according to the Ethiopic counting, yet the other four folios belonged to this *Homily* by Jacob of Serugh. Thanks to Sebastian Brock's generous help I could invest most of my time in assigning the folios of both manuscripts to their correct sequence during my research stay at the British Library in the spring of 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Initially, the sorting of the folios tended at the beginning to be rather tricky when it came to the establishing the correct sequence of the *Homily* due to the faint script and the mixing of top and bottom parts by the scribe of the upper text. The full description with some text samples is presented in C. Müller-Kessler, "Jacob of Serugh's Homily on the Presentation in the Temple in an Early Syriac Palimpsest (BL, Add 17.137, no. 2)," *ARAM* 32 (2020) [in press].

<sup>12</sup> See Wright, *Contributions*, 13–15. The text of the four fragments of BL, Add 14.665, fol. 21–24 are in preparation by me. It might take some time, since the reading of the partially faint script is quite difficult on these vellum sheets. A disturbing error occurred in another article on the *Dormition* when citing Add 14.665. It should read there Add 14.665 for 16.445 on p. 85 and n. 22 in C. Müller-Kessler, "An Overlooked Christian Palestinian Aramaic Witness of the Dormition of Mary in *Codex Climaci Rescriptus* (CCR IV)," *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 16 (2019), 81–98.

The diversity in the transmission of this Marian apocryphon of the five-book (only attested in the Ethiopic text witnesses) or palm version or as termed in Syriac *Obsequies* from the fifth- and sixth-centuries witnesses becomes here quite visible, since the Syriac text transmission often deviates considerably from the Christian Palestinian Aramaic one (CP2)<sup>15</sup> and from the thousand years younger Ethiopic sources (E1)<sup>16</sup>, neither of which contains this addition. The translations into Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Ethiopic, and Syriac from a Greek *Vorlage* have to be taken as independent of each other. How much can be accounted for by redactional interpolation

<sup>14</sup> I would like to thank Nestor Kavvadas (University of Tübingen) for drawing my attention to this textual similarity. He suggested the reading  'marriage' in fol. 9ra6 and some better translations in the additional section (§ 98). I am grateful also to the two peer reviewers, who pointed out some textual corrections in the reading, which could be verified in time for publication.

<sup>16</sup> See V. Arras, *De Transitu Mariae apocrypha aethiopice* I (CSCO 342/343; *scriptores Aethiopici* 66/67; Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1973), 38 (Latin). The abbreviation system follows M. van Esbroeck, "Les textes littéraires sur l'Assomption avant le Xe siècle," in F. Bovon (ed.), *Les actes apocryphes des Apôtres* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1981), 265–285.

cannot be judged by means of the still fragmentary early Syriac versions. Other transmissions such as the Coptic, Georgian, Gaelic-Irish, and Latin do not help to clarify much on this matter.<sup>17</sup>

To demonstrate the divergence of this early Syriac text with the *Obsequies* from other text witnesses it is important that the text should be presented at first in reliable readings of the legible text parts.<sup>18</sup>

## 2. CONTENT OF MANUSCRIPT(S) BRITISH LIBRARY, ADD 17.137, NO. 2 [WRIGHT, *CATALOGUE* NO. 465]<sup>19</sup>

Sequence of the folios in BL, Add 17.137, no. 2 according to the upper manuscript text with the *Hymns for the Vigil*<sup>20</sup>:

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<sup>17</sup> For the relevant editions of these transmissions see the comprehensive overview in S. J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 419–428.

<sup>18</sup> The reading could be partially achieved with the help of an ultraviolet lamp, actually a LED torch, and despite the unfavourable light conditions of the British Library Reading Rooms. Reading palimpsest texts has its special laws. The best time to work on such difficult palimpsests is a time late in the afternoon, when the sunlight is not too bright, and probably contains more ultraviolet rays than in the morning, and a dark environment; see also the older method used by Nigel Wilson in R. Netz and W. Noel, *The Archimedes Codex: Revealing the Secrets of the World's Greatest Palimpsest* (London: Phoenix, 2008), 221, ph. 11b. Such working conditions were possible in the old National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg and Westminster College, Cambridge. The overhead artificial light in modern libraries hinders the reading and librarians often do not have an understanding for the special needs of a palimpsest reader. The simple employment of ultraviolet lamps and a dark room would be sufficient and less expensive than the modern multispectral imaging, which also has its limitations, and not all readings can be solved with this modern form of technology.

<sup>19</sup> Both scripts on the folios are rather difficult to read, even with the help of an ultraviolet light, especially on folios 6–8, 10–11.

<sup>20</sup> In the modern bound volume the top half-fragments of all six folios are arranged upside down for the upper script!

fol. 6r top, ll. 1–15	<i>Obsequies</i> §§ 101–102
fol. 6r bottom, ll. 16–26	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 6v top, ll. 1–15	<i>Obsequies</i> §§ 102–103
fol. 6v bottom, ll. 16–26	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 7r top, ll. 1–15	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 7r[v] <sup>21</sup> bottom, ll. 16–26	<i>Obsequies</i> §§ 101–102
fol. 7v top, ll. 1–15	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 7v[r] bottom, ll. 16–26	<i>Obsequies</i> §§ 103–104
fol. 8r	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 8v	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 9r	<i>Obsequies</i> §§ 98–100
fol. 9v	<i>Obsequies</i> §§ 100–101
fol. 10r	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 10v	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 11r	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh
fol. 11v	<i>Homily on the Presentation</i> by Jacob of Serugh <sup>22</sup>

Distribution of the underlying texts on the six folios:

fol. 6r top, ll. 1–15 <i>Obsequies</i>	fol. 7r top, ll. 1–15 <i>Homily</i>	fol. 8r, ll. 1–26 <i>Homily</i>	fol. 9r ll. 1– 27/26 <i>Obsequies</i>	fol. 10r, ll. 1–15 <i>Homily</i> (a) <sup>23</sup>	fol. 11r, ll. 1–26 <i>Homily</i>
bottom, ll. 16–26 <i>Homily</i>	r [v] bottom, ll. 16–26 <i>Obsequies</i>			ll. 16–26 <i>Homily</i> (b)	

<sup>21</sup> For the upper text it is the verso side, but for the lower text it is the recto one indicated by square brackets.

<sup>22</sup> The details of the *Homily on the Presentation in the Temple* by Jacob of Serugh is edited separately in Müller-Kessler, “Jacob of Serugh’s Homily”. The text on these folios cannot be easily read and requires special reading technologies. At first only the contextual sequence could be roughly established.

<sup>23</sup> The text on this folio derives from two non-consecutive sections.



fol. 6v top, ll. 1–15 <i>Obsequies</i>	fol. 7v top, ll. 1–15 <i>Homily</i>	fol. 8v, ll. 1–26 <i>Homily</i>	fol. 9v, ll. 1–27 <i>Obsequies</i>	fol. 10v, ll. 1–15 <i>Homily</i> (a)	fol. 11v, ll. 1–26 <i>Homily</i>
bottom, ll. 16–26 <i>Homily</i>	v [r] bottom, ll. 16–26 <i>Obsequies</i>			ll. 16–26 <i>Homily</i> (b)	

**b)** Original sequence of the folios for the underlying text in BL, Add 17.137, no. 2(A) containing the *Obsequies*

fol. 9r	§§ 98–100(beginning)
fol. 9v <sup>24</sup>	§§ 100(middle)–101(beginning)
fol. 6r top, ll. 1–15 +	§§ 101(end)–102(middle)
fol. 7r [v] <sup>25</sup> bottom, ll. 16–26	
fol. 6v top, ll. 1–15 +	§§ 102(final words)–104(beginning)
fol. 7v [r] bottom, ll. 16–26	

The measures of the cut down vellum folios are approximately 27,2 x 20,8 cm, having a short gap between the separate top and bottom fragments on the mounted and restored paper leaves. No line rulings are visible. The text is written on an area of 20,2 x 16,5 cm in two columns, with 25 to 27 lines per column. Each line is 0,4 cm apart, in a very fine and elegant *Estrangela* hand, most probably dating to the ca. 5<sup>th</sup> cent. The lines are not justified on the left hand side of the columns nor are any line fillers detectable. Some letters show pronounced early forms, such as a very large *gamal* and *šadeh*, and *he*, *waw*, and *mim* have open shapes. The left loop of the *taw* is at times squeezed. Some words are stained and therefore illegible. On the joined folio consisting of fol. 6 top + fol. 7, the bottom script is often too effaced to be legible in a number of lines.

<sup>24</sup> The upper text is flipped by 180 degrees in contrast to the lower text.

<sup>25</sup> See n. 21.

### 3. LANGUAGE TRAITS

The spellings and morphological forms in the fifth- and sixth-century manuscripts often do not conform to the Classical Syriac as presented in the standard reference grammars by Theodor Nöldeke<sup>26</sup> or Rubens Duval<sup>27</sup> and earlier ones. The missing *quiescent alaph* in ܫܬܪ 'others' (§ 98, 101) is one of these salient features.<sup>28</sup> This also applies to the randomly occurring *plene* spelling in ܠܗܠ 'all' (§ 99, 100) and ܠܗܠܗ 'on account' (§ 99, 100, 101), which cannot be explained only by the filling of space, as here in the case for the *Obsequies* manuscript.<sup>29</sup>

Noteworthy are a number of nouns appearing in the absolute state in the genitive construction for either the *nomen regens* or *nomen rectum*: ܫܒܬܐ ܕܢܝܫܐ 'a Shabbat's rest' (§ 100); ܐܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ 'a wink of an eye' (§ 100); ܐܝܠܐ ܕܡܝܐ 'of the flood' (§ 102).

The verb in the perfect masculine plural can occur without ending ܡܠܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ 'those who did

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<sup>26</sup> T. Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1898), XXXII, who speaks there concerning the language and orthography of a fixed form in the excellent manuscripts for the fifth century. Working with random various very good manuscripts of the fifth and sixth centuries leaves a different impression. In the meantime, this has been pointed out by several Syriac scholars and should carry more weight, since one should not consider this diversity improper Classical Syriac or even classify such spellings as scribal mistakes or slips.

<sup>27</sup> R. Duval, *Traité de grammaire syriaque* (Paris: Vieweg, 1881).

<sup>28</sup> See L. van Rompay, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Origins of Classical Syriac as a Standard Language," in G. Goldenberg and S. Raz (ed.), *Semitic and Cushitic Studies* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994), 70–89, esp. 75.

<sup>29</sup> See for various early spellings and deviations in early Syriac Gospel texts in F. C. Burkitt, *Evangelion da-mepharreshe*, vol. 2 *Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904), 39–78; M. D. Koster, *The Peshitta of Exodus: The Development of its Text in the Course of Fifteen Centuries* (Assen, 1977), 94–95; S. P. Brock, "Some Diachronic Features of Classical Syriac," in M. F. J. Baasten and W. T. H. van Peursen (ed.), *Hamlet on the Hill: Greek and Semitic Studies Presented to Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 118; Louvain: Peeters, 2003), 95–111, esp. 96–98; D. G. K. Taylor, *The Syriac Versions of the De Spiritu Sancto by Basil of Caesarea* (CSCO 576; *Scriptores Syri* 228; Louvain: Peeters, 1999), 183–195.

something without being humble and justifying something' (§ 98). Such usage seems to be quite regular in the early Syriac manuscripts of the fifth- and sixth-century.<sup>30</sup> Note also the masculine form ܡܫܥܢܐ 'persuade' instead of an expected feminine ܡܫܥܢܐ (§ 99). Particular are the spellings of the participle masculine plural without *yod*: ܡܫܥܢܐܢ ܕܡܪܝܩܐ 'those who are reclining' (§ 101).

The rarely attested derived noun ܡܫܥܢܐ 'calmness', in the *Lexicon Syriacum*.<sup>31</sup> First readings and *hapax legomena* are always problematic to establish and should be rightly treated hesitatingly.

Of considerable interest is the frequent appearance of the very rare and unusual Greek lexeme ܡܫܥܢܐ for 'shoot, branch' instead of the Aramaic alternatives. Here it occurs in the combination ܡܫܥܢܐ ܡܫܥܢܐ 'olive-branch' (§ 102), which is also employed for palm-shoot in the other Syriac *Obsequies* version from BL, Add 14.665, where it is now attested thrice in succession ܡܫܥܢܐ ܡܫܥܢܐ ܡܫܥܢܐ 'and take the palm-shoot from this pinnate' (§76);<sup>32</sup> ܡܫܥܢܐ ܡܫܥܢܐ [...] '[...] on him this palm-shoot' (§ 76);<sup>33</sup> ܡܫܥܢܐ ܡܫܥܢܐ 'and he carries that palm-shoot' (§ 77).<sup>34</sup> For unknown reasons ܡܫܥܢܐ never made it into the *Thesaurus Syriacus*, nor is it consequently recorded in any other Syriac dictionary,<sup>35</sup> nor does it appear in the language

<sup>30</sup> See on more examples Taylor, *The Syriac Versions of the De Spiritu Sancto*, 191.

<sup>31</sup> E. Sachau, *Inedita Syriaca* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1870), 45:9; C. Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1928), 779a; not recorded in R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879–1891), but entered in the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* as col. 4162!.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *Contributions*, 15.

<sup>33</sup> Additional reading not in Wright, *Contributions*.

<sup>34</sup> Additional reading not in Wright, *Contributions*.

<sup>35</sup> There one finds only the homograph ܡܫܥܢܐ 'derision' from the verbal root in *Pael* ܡܫܥܢܐ, e.g., in E. Castelli, *Lexicon Syriacum* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1788), 901; Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, col. 4448; J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903), 607b; 614a [verbal root]; Brockelmann, *Lexicon Syriacum*, 825b [only verbal

lists as Bar Bahlūl or Bar Ali. Therefore it was not discussed by Imanuel Löw in the *Flora der Juden* in his very comprehensive chapter on the *Palmaceae* or his earlier work *Aramäische Pflanzennamen*.<sup>36</sup> This applies also to the special studies on Greek loanwords, including the recent one by Aaron Butts.<sup>37</sup> Now with the occurrence of five attestations in two independent early fifth-century Syriac manuscripts it can be considered securely established. It is an obvious loan from the Greek word *θαλλός*<sup>38</sup> with the emphatic ending added to the nominal Greek ending -ος by elision of the former *omicron* in Syriac and is comparable to other Greek loanwords and their treatment in Syriac, e.g. ܠܚܫܐ ܬܚܫܝܫ, ܠܚܫܐ ܬܕܡܝܫ, ܠܚܫܐ ܬܝܫܝܫ, ܠܚܫܐ ܬܡܝܫ, ܠܚܫܐ ܬܕܡܝܫ.<sup>39</sup> One has to consider ܠܚܫܐ more a foreign word (Fremdwort) than a loanword as it was only integrated into these two texts from their dependent Greek “Vorlage”. Apart from this example no other Greek borrowings are to be noted, leaving aside the very early inherited ܠܚܫܐ < *πείσαι*<sup>40</sup> and the long before integrated

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root for the *Afel* followed by the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*]; T. Audo, *Dictionnaire de la langue chaldéenne*, vol. 2 (Mosul: Imprimerie des Pères Dominicains, 1897), 625b [verbal root and derived noun]. The verbal root and its derivations give a bit the impression as only being attested in the lexical lists and then being integrated into the dictionaries. In the latest Syriac dictionary by M. Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2009) one looks in vain for both homographs.

<sup>36</sup> I. Löw, *Flora der Juden*, vol. 2 (Wien: A Kohut Memorial Foundation Inc., 1924), 302–362; I. Löw, *Aramäische Pflanzennamen* (Leipzig: Wilhelm Engelmann, 1881).

<sup>37</sup> A. Butts, *Language Change in the Wake of the Empire* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2016).

<sup>38</sup> At first suggested by Shoemaker, *Ancient Tradition*, 330 n. 136. The Greek lexicon by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897 [reprint]), 782b understands it as 1) ‘young shoot, young branch’ and 2) *θαλλοί* ‘palm leaves’ attested only in the plural.

<sup>39</sup> See S. P. Brock, “Greek Words in Syriac,” *Scripta Classica Israelica* 15 (1996), 251–262, esp. 254.

<sup>40</sup> This derived verb from Greek is a lexical feature of Middle Aramaic, from a stage of the Hellenistic impact on the Aramaic language, where Greek was the language of the learned, therefore this loan is an early

common particles **ܕܐ** and **ܕܝ**. A similar situation exists for the Christian Palestinian Aramaic transmission, which employs another special technical term borrowed from the Greek “Vorlage” *ᾠδὴ ἀγάπας* ‘memorials’ (§ 98).<sup>41</sup>

#### 4. TEXT AND TRANSLATION

BL, Add 17.137, fol. 9ra — §§ 98–99 (unpublished)<sup>42</sup>

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|-----|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1.  | ܐܬܪܐ ܕܠܝܬܐ ܕܢܝܢܐ  | other men and women,          |
| 2.  | ܡܠܝܢ ܕܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܢ   | those who did something       |
| 3.  | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܢ   | without being humble          |
| 4.  | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ . ܕܠܝܬܐ | and justifying something. But |
| 5.  | ܕܠܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ   | men, however, renounced       |
| 6.  | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ    | that marriage,                |
| 7.  | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ    | which God had placed on all   |
| 8.  | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ    | human-beings. And in an       |
| 9.  | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ    | unnatural way they made       |
|     |                   | use. <sup>43</sup>            |
| 10. | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ    | Inasmuch they forsook         |
| 11. | ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ    | their wives, and one          |

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inheritance into Middle Aramaic and its successive dialects, except for Mandaic (only the noun *py's* ‘persuasion’ as a late technical term) and Talmudic Aramaic. The Mandaean scribal schools and the Babylonian academies were outside of direct Hellenistic influence.

<sup>41</sup> See Müller-Kessler, “Three Early Witnesses,” 86–87.

<sup>42</sup> Most of column (b) was published by Shoemaker 2011, 267, but column (a) and the reverse were left unread.

<sup>43</sup> Only this passage nearly agrees with Romans 1:27 **ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ**.



27.      ܐܘ ܡܠܝܚܐ ܕܐܝܬܐ      namely, they saw these  
(things). [Bu]t each

fol. 9rb — §§ 99–100 (published)<sup>48</sup>

1.      ܡܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ<sup>49</sup>      was taken from them,
2.      ܡܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ<sup>50</sup> .      Jesus and Michael.<sup>51</sup>
3.      ܡܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ<sup>52</sup>      And he forsook Mary
4.      ܡܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ<sup>53</sup> .      and the Apostles on earth,
5.      ܡܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ<sup>54</sup>      so that they will be of the  
same mind.
6.      ܡܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ<sup>55</sup>      And at once those, who were  
in torment,
7.      ܡܚܝܬܐ ܕܡܝܚܐ<sup>56</sup>      cried out and sought an

<sup>48</sup> Most of column (b) was published by Shoemaker 2011, 267, but column (a) and the reverse were left unread.

<sup>49</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: ܡܚܝܬܐ.

<sup>50</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: ܡܚܝܬܐ. CP2 and E1 have here ‘Saviour’ instead (Müller-Kessler, “Three Early Witnesses,” 86; Arras, *De Transitu*, 58 [Eth] and 38 [Lat]).

<sup>51</sup> This passage differs from the Ethiopic in so far as that both Jesus and Michael are separated from the Apostles, and not only Jesus. It is comparable to a similar understanding in version CP2 *mhyn' wmyk'yl rhqrw npsawn* ‘the Saviour and Michael removed themselves’ (Müller-Kessler, “Three Early Witnesses,” 86).

<sup>52</sup> In CP2 both Jesus and Michael are forsaking Mary.

<sup>53</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: ܡܚܝܬܐ[ܡܚܝܬܐ]. Additions are always debatable, especially if there does not exist an established text basis.

<sup>54</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: .....ܐ .

<sup>55</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: \*ܡܚܝܬܐ..... \*.

- intercession
8.                   ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ<sup>56</sup>                   by Mary and said,
9.                   ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ                   ‘Mary, the light and the  
mother
10.                  ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ                   of light; Mary, the life
11.                  ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ                   and the mother<sup>57</sup> of life;  
Mary,
12.                  ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ                   the golden lamp<sup>58</sup>, who bore
13.                  ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ<sup>59</sup>                   the one bearing all<sup>60</sup>; Mary,
14.                  ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ                   the Lady and the Mother of  
the Lord
15. ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ<sup>61</sup>                   of all; Mary, the queen<sup>62</sup>,
16. ܡܪܝܡ ܕܡܪܝܡ                   and the mother of our King<sup>63</sup>  
and our God.

<sup>56</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: ܡܪܝܡ.

<sup>57</sup> Only pronominal suffix singular masculine instead of plural.

<sup>58</sup> CP2 has instead *mmrt’ dqnšt’* ‘the lamp of truth’ (Müller-Kessler, “Three Early Witnesses,” 86). E1 has both by taking it as ‘Mary, golden lamp, you who carries every true lamp’ (Arras, *De Transitu*, 58 [Eth] and 38 [Lat]).

<sup>59</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: *nil*.

<sup>60</sup> Obviously ‘true lamp’ was omitted in Syr. The phrase ‘who bore the one bearing every true lamp’ is missing in CP2.

<sup>61</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267: ܡܪܝܡ[ܝ].

<sup>62</sup> Shoemaker, “New Syriac Dormition Fragments,” 267 translates ‘our queen’ despite the Syr text having only ܡܪܝܡ ‘the queen’ as in CP2 (Müller-Kessler, “Three Early Witnesses,” 87), but in E1 it reads ‘our queen’ (Arras, *De Transitu*, 58 [Eth] and 38 [Lat]).

<sup>63</sup> This addition with ‘our king’ is also found in CP2 (Müller-Kessler, “Three Early Witnesses,” 88), but is completely omitted in E1 (Arras, *De Transitu*, 58 [Eth] and 38 [Lat]).





- |     |                   |  |
|-----|-------------------|--|
|     |                   | For did                                  |
| 4.  | ܠܗܝܢ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ  | you not hear of all,                     |
| 5.  | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | which I denied while they                |
|     |                   | were driven                              |
| 6.  | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | to me and that word?                     |
| 7.  | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | And I was treated with                   |
|     |                   | contempt                                 |
| 8.  | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | and had no idea,                         |
| 9.  | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | since for our Lord I                     |
| 10. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | was not able with a wink                 |
| 11. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | of an eye <sup>68</sup> not to turn upon |
| 12. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | her (= the earth) inhabitants            |
|     |                   | and upon                                 |
| 13. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | the sinners, those who had               |
|     |                   | sinned against me.                       |
| 14. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | But I did not do                         |
| 15. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | these (things), since it was             |
| 16. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | against them and [...]                   |
| 17. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | their signs will thus come.              |
| 18. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | You shall move this,                     |
| 19. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ | [...] these (things) you                 |

<sup>68</sup> ܡܠܟܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ can be taken as a fixed expression, therefore the absolute state in ܡܠܟܐ, see Nöldeke, *Kurzgefasste syrische Grammatik*, 149. It can be compared to constructions to describe material ‘made of’.

- |     |   |                            |
|-----|---|----------------------------|
| 20. | ܠܗܘܢ ܠܐ ܥܝܠܐ                                  | did not do, unless         |
| 21. | ܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ                              | your ... own hearing       |
| 22. | [.] ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ ܕܥܝܢܐ .                       | and bringing in greatness. |
| 23. | ܥܠ ܥܠܡ ܕܥܠܡ                                   | On account of this, see,   |
| 24. | ܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ                              | you are repaid as          |
| 25. | ܥܠܡܐ [ܠܡܢܐ .] ܕܥܠܡܐ                           | you did [to them]. Thus    |
| 26. | <sup>69*</sup> ܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ <sup>70</sup> ܕܥܠܡܐ | the kindness ... to you,   |
| 27. | ܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ ܕܥܠܡܐ                              | but because of the tears   |

fol. 9vb — §§ 100–101 (unpublished)

- |    |                 |                                |
|----|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. | ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ | of Michael and of my holy      |
| 2. | ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ | Apostles, and of Mary, my      |
|    |                 | Mother,                        |
| 3. | ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ | who went and saw you.          |
| 4. | ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ | And he persuaded us on         |
|    |                 | behalf of you                  |
| 5. | ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ | so that there will be rest for |
|    |                 | you                            |
| 6. | ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ | day and night, which           |
| 7. | ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ ܕܡܝܚܐܝܠ | is one and a Shabbat's rest.'  |

<sup>69</sup> \*...\* The Syriac diverges here considerably, but this is also the case for the early Latin and Gaelic-Irish versions, see also Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, 345 n. 161.

<sup>70</sup> On the *plene* spellings in fifth- and sixth-century Syriac manuscripts, see Brock, "Some Diachronic Features," 96–97.

(101) And

- |     |                                |                                |
|-----|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 8.  | ܐܝܬܐ ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                | after these (things) our Lord  |
|     |                                | gave a sign                    |
| 9.  | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | to the angels to open          |
| 10. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | the earth, and they were       |
|     |                                | hurled                         |
| 11. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | inside, and the Apostles went  |
| 12. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | to Paradise. They were         |
| 13. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | near the tree of life,         |
| 14. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | near from here. But            |
| 15. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | there was Abraham and          |
|     |                                | Isaac,                         |
| 16. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | and Jacob with all             |
| 17. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | the others. And after          |
| 18. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ <sup>71</sup> [...] | our Saviour [...] him, who was |
| 19. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | among the dead, and            |
| 20. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | he also hid them in Paradise,  |
| 21. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | as they had been               |
| 22. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | in their life. And             |
| 23. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | there was David                |
| 24. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | after him, and he was          |
| 25. | ܕܡܠܟܐ ܕܝܗܐ                     | playing his harp all           |

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<sup>71</sup> The lower script is here very much erased by an additional correction in the upper script.



- |     |                        |   |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| 16. | ܚܝܐ ܢܦܩܬܐ ܕܚܝܬܝܢܐ      | souls of the Christians <sup>73</sup> ,                 |
| 17. | ܡܠܝܐ ܕܢܦܩܐ ܡܝܢ         | those, who pass from                                    |
| 18. | ܗܠܝܐ ܡܠܝܐ ܡܕܢܐ         | this world before                                       |
| 19. | ܕܠܝܐ ܡܕܢܐ ܡܠܝܐ         | all things, those                                       |
| 20. | ܕܡܨܬܝܢ ܕ[ܚܝܐ] ܡ        | who are reclining <sup>74</sup> in [the<br>bosom]       |
| 21. | ܕܐܒܪܗܡ ܕܝܣܬܐܥ          | of Abraham and Isaac                                    |
| 22. | *ܕܕܐܘܕ ܕܝܥܩܒ           | and Jacob. And David                                    |
| 23. | ܡܨܬܝܢ ܕܡܨܬܝܢ           | brought up calmness                                     |
| 24. | [ܡܨܬܝܢ] ܕܡܨܬܝܢ *ܕܡܨܬܝܢ | with his harp. <sup>75 (102)</sup> And [we<br>also] saw |
| 25. | ܐܢܬܐ ܕܐܢܬܐ ܕܐܢܬܐ       | Enoch and that olive                                    |
| 26. | ܕܐܢܬܐ ܕܐܢܬܐ ܕܐܢܬܐ      | branch. That one, which she                             |

**fol. 6rb top + fol. 7rb [v] bottom — § 102 (unpublished)**

- |    |                      |                             |
|----|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | [...] ܐܢܬܐ [...]     | [...] Enoch [...]           |
| 2. | [...] ܕܐܢܬܐ . ܡ      | it. The dove . [...]        |
| 3. | [.....]              | [.....]                     |
| 4. | [ܡܨܬܝܢ ... ܕܐܢܬܐ]    | her [... in the days]       |
| 5. | ܕܡܨܬܝܢ [...] ܕܡܨܬܝܢ  | of the flood [Noah] had     |
| 6. | ܕܡܨܬܝܢ ܕܡܨܬܝܢ [ܐܢܬܐ] | [sent] the dove to Paradise |

<sup>73</sup> E1 has 'good people'.

<sup>74</sup> ܡܨܬܝܢ is spelled here without *yod*.

<sup>75</sup> \*...\* is an addition not found in E1.

7.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ḏṡṡṡṡ                    to ask the eldest
8.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ                    of ...<sup>76</sup> of his father, where  
our
9.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ [ṡṡṡṡ]                    Lord al[so] saved by his  
hands
10.                    ṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ                    the earth on account of
11.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ . ṡṡṡṡ                    the dove. She went to the  
earth,
12.                    ṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ                    because there was no earth
13.                    ṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ . ṡṡṡṡ                    for her. And after she had  
gone,
14.                    ṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ                    she asked Enoch and there
15.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ [...]                    [...]. and she returned
16.                    ṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ                    to Noah, when she had
17.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ . ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ                    nothing on her. And again
18.                    . ṡṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡ [ṡṡṡṡ]ṡṡṡṡ                    Noah [sent her] a second  
time.
19.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ                    At once she went and asked
20.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ . ṡṡṡṡṡṡ                    Enoch. And he saw that  
God
21.                    ṡṡṡṡṡṡ ṡṡṡṡṡṡ , ṡṡṡṡṡṡ                    had saved the earth and  
she stayed behind.

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<sup>76</sup> The genealogy is not clear here. It could be ṡṡṡṡ ‘brother’ missing in the illegible space. Noah was, however, according to Genesis 8:23–28 the great grandfather of Enoch.







fol. 6vb top + fol. 7vb [r] bottom — §§ 103–104  
(unpublished)

- |     |                         |   |
|-----|-------------------------|---|
| 1.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ...         | ... in all creation                       |
| 2.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]       | [...] to the Lord, into the<br>hands      |
| 3.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]             | [...] them as                             |
| 4.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...] | [...] to this one, whose name is          |
| 5.  | [...]ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]        | [Paul], who [...]                         |
| 6.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ       | before fighting with me                   |
| 7.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]             | [...] For those                           |
| 8.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]       | [...] was fitting                         |
| 9.  | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]       | [...] .....                               |
| 10. | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ             | [...] [...] because they fought           |
| 11. | [.....]                 | [.....]                                   |
| 12. | [.....]                 | [.....]                                   |
| 13. | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]             | [...] my body                             |
| 14. | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ        | you take him in [...]                     |
| 15. | [.]ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ    | And he will fight with me and<br>[.]      |
| 16. | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ [...]       | [...] he brought him up and<br>showed him |
| 17. | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ . ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ     | all things. <sup>(104)</sup> And again    |
| 18. | ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ ᵐᵃᵗᵃᵗ       | he went to Paul                           |



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