

AN EXAMPLE OF THE INFLUENCE OF HEBREW ON THE PESHITTA  
TRANSLATION - THE STATUS CONSTRUCTUS

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It is now generally accepted that the Hebrew Bible is the Vorlage of the Peshitta. The following essay is an attempt to support this theory using syntactical considerations.

The Syriac language expresses the genitive relation in three ways:

- a) בית הגברא "house of (the) man;"
- b) ביתא דגברא "(the) house of (the) man;"
- c) ביתה דגברא "the man's house."<sup>1</sup>

In my study of the syntax of the Peshitta,<sup>2</sup> I concluded that type *b* was the most common way of expressing the genitive relation. However, certain cases were noted in which type *a*

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Th. Nöldeke, *Kurzfassste syrische Grammatik*, 2d ed. (Leipzig 1898), §205; C. Brockelmann, *Syrische Grammatik*, 3rd ed. (Berlin 1912), §202.

<sup>2</sup> Part of this study was accepted by the Hebrew University as a doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Prof. M. Goshen-Gottstein. The Ambrosian Codex was used in ed. Ceriani, *Translatio syra Pescitto ex codice Ambrosiano etc.* (Mediolani 1876-83).

and type *b* were used in different verses to express the same Hebrew structure. In all these instances, type *a* was used at the first occurrence of a given expression. I claimed that this resulted from the influence of Hebrew, in which a genitive structure is predominantly expressed by the construct state (type *a*).<sup>3</sup> Here I shall examine the suggestion that when the Syriac translator encountered a Hebrew construct state for the first time, he usually translated it by a parallel Syriac structure.

This may be illustrated from Gen. 8:9 - MT: **וְלֹא מִצָּאָה הָיוּנָה** *and no dove was found*. In all subsequent passages **כִּף רִגְלָה** *dove's foot* is rendered **פִּסְחָא דְרִגְלָה**, also when pronom. suff. are attached to type *a* of the genitive structure (cf. Deut. 2:5, 11:24, 28:35, 56, Jos. 1:3, 2 Sam. 14:25, Jes. 1:6, Job 2:7). Only in one instance the construct state is used - Deut. 28:65 MT: **וְלֹא יִהְיֶה מִנוּחַ לְכִף רִגְלֶךָ** *and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot*. In this case, the resemblance with Gen. 8:9 - **וְלֹא מִצָּאָה**, probably triggered the employment of the *stat. constr.*

An additional example may be found in Gen. 7:11 MT: **וְכָל מִבְּעֵי תְהוֹמָא רַבָּא** *and all the fountains of the great deep*. Yet, *ib.* 8:2 MT: **וַאֲסַתְּכֵרוּ מִבְּעֵי דְתְהוֹמָא** *and you shall dig up the fountains of the deep*. A similar case, also involving **מִבְּעֵי**, occurs in 1 Kings 18:5

<sup>3</sup> The author wishes to thank Prof. M. Goshen-Gottstein for suggesting this explanation.

MT: *על כל מבועי מים*, P: *ואל כל מעיני המים*. However, in 2 Kings 3:19, P has *וכל מעיני מים תסתמו* for MT: *וכל מבועא דמיא תטממון*. Further examples of such pairs are: 1) Gen. 31:21 MT: *הר הגלעד*, P: *בטורא*, as against *ib.* 31:23 MT: *בהר הגלעד*, P: *לטור גלעד*; 2) *ib.*, 41:3 MT: *על שפת היאור*, P: *על שפת נהרא* (and likewise *ib.* 41:17); but in Ex. 2:3 MT: *על שפת היאור* is rendered in P: *על שפתה דנהרא*; 3) Ex. 27:9 MT: *לפאת נגב תימנה*, P: *לפאת קדמה מזרחה*, as against *ib.* 27:13 MT: *לפאת נגב תימנה*, P: *לפאת קדמה מזרחה*; 4) Deut. 23:18 MT: *אגר*, P: *אתנן זונה*, as against *ib.* 23:18 MT: *אגר*, P: *אתנן זונה*; 5) Deut. 24:14 MT: *אגרא דמסכנא*, P: *שכיר עני*, in contrast to *ib.* 24:14 MT: *אגרא דמסכנא*, P: *שכיר עני*.

The proposed explanation of the phenomenon may also apply to non-similar expressions, as Gen. 20:5 MT: *בתמימות*, P: *בתמימות*, followed by *ובדכיותא דאידי* = MT: *ובדכיותא דאידי*.

This study gives some support to the generally accepted notion that the Peshitta indeed is translated from the Hebrew text and not from an ancient version.