

DuTillet Hebrew Matthew

The DuTillet version of Matthew is taken from a Hebrew manuscript of Matthew which was confiscated from Jews in Rome, in 1553. On August 12th, 1553, at the petition of Pietro, Cardinal Caraffa, the Inquisitor General, Pope Julius III signed a decree banning the Talmud in Rome. The decree was executed on September 9th (Rosh HaShanna) and anything that looked like the Talmud, that is, anything written in Hebrew characters was confiscated as the Jewish homes and synagogues were ravished. Jean DuTillet, Bishop of Brieu, France was visiting Rome at the time. DuTillet was astounded to take notice of a Hebrew manuscript of Matthew among the other Hebrew manuscripts. DuTillet acquired the manuscript and returned to France, depositing it in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. It remains there to this day as Hebrew ms. No. 132.

While most scholars have ignored the DuTillet Hebrew version of Matthew, two scholars, Hugh Schonfield and George Howard, have stated their opinion that this Hebrew text underlies our current Greek text. Schonfield writes:

....certain linguistic proofs ... seem to show that the Hebrew text [DuTillet] underlies the Greek, and that certain renderings in the Greek, may be due to a misread Hebrew original.

(An Old Hebrew Text of St. Matthew's Gospel; 1927, p. 17)

(Initially Howard concluded that the DuTillet text was a translation from Greek. (JBL 105/1 (1986) p. 53, 62) but later Howard concluded that DuTillet is a "revision of an earlier Hebrew Matthew" related to the Shem Tob version (JBL 105/1 (1986) p. 63 n. 34))

The Missing Name

There is a well known mistake in the Greek text of this passage. While the text itself claims to give three lists of fourteen names (Mt. 1:17), the Greek text contains only 13 names in the last list:

14 names from Abraham to David:

1. Abraham
2. Isaac
3. Jacob
4. Judas
5. Phares
6. Esrom
7. Aram
8. Aminadab
9. Naasson
10. Salmon
11. Boaz
12. Obed
13. Jesse
14. David

14 names from David to the carrying away to Babylon

1. Solomon
2. Roboam
3. Abia
4. Asa
5. Jehosaphat
6. Joram
7. Ozias
8. Joatham
9. Achaz
10. Ezekias
11. Manases

12. Amon
13. Josias
14. Jehonias (carrying away to Babylon)

13 names from carrying away to Babylon to Messiah

1. Salathiel
2. Zorobabel
3. Abiud
4. Eliakim
5. Azur
6. Sadoc
7. Achim
8. Eliud
9. Eleazar
10. Matthan
11. Jacob
12. Joseph
13. Yeshua/Jesus

The Definite Article

Both Hebrew and Greek have a definite article (English “the”). Yet there seems to be no real connection between where DuTillet uses the definite article and where it appears in the Greek:

Three Examples where the Hebrew has no definite articles but the Greek does have them:

Mt. 3:7 “many of the Pharisees and Sadducees”

Mt. 6:32 “the Gentiles”

Mt. 14: 15 “the villages”

Three examples where the Hebrew does have definite articles and the Greek lacks them:

Mt. 3:8 “the fruit worthy”

Mt. 4: 18 “the net”

Mt. 7:9 “the stone”

This would certainly imply that at some point in between the Hebrew and the Greek the text went through a language that either had a weak definite article or none at all. The likely candidate for such a language would be Aramaic (Syriac) which lacks a definite article.

In other words the evidence indicates that the Hebrew text of DuTillet is not a Hebrew translation of the Greek. Instead it appears that the Aramaic text represented by the Old Syriac is a direct Aramaic translation of the Hebrew text represented by DuTillet, and that our Greek text is a representative of a Greek version which was translated from the Aramaic.

DuTillet and the Old Syriac

Avner and Aviur (Matthew 1:13)

1:13 The DuTillet Hebrew manuscript of Matthew contains the missing name “Avner” which occurs between Aviud and Eliakim in the DuTillet Hebrew text of Mt. 1:13.

The DuTillet Hebrew manuscript of Matthew contains the missing name אבנר “Abner” (A Hebrew name which is sometimes spelled אבניר) which occurs between אביהוד Abiud and Eliakim in the DuTillet Hebrew text of Mt. 1:13. In Hebrew and Aramaic ד “d” and ר “r” look very much alike and are often misread for each other. In this case a scribe must have looked back up to his source manuscript and picked back up with the wrong name, thus omitting “Abner” from the list. The Greek text must have come from a Hebrew or Aramaic copy, which lacked the name “Abner.”

There is amazingly clear evidence for this. The Old Syriac Aramaic version of Matthew was lost from the fourth century until its rediscovery in the 19th century. This ancient Aramaic text has אביור “Aviur” where the Greek has “Aviud” (= אביוד) thus catching the error in a sort of “freeze frame” and demonstrating the reliability of the reading in the Hebrew.

You can see this laid out in detail in [my free online commentary to Matthew 1](#) (On Matthew 1:13)

Miriam’s Conception (Matthew 1:20b)

Here the Greek reads:

... for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

However the DuTillet Hebrew reads:

כי מה שילד ממנה מרוח הקדש הוא כי מרוח הקודש היא הרה

*...for that which **will be born** of her is from the Ruach HaKodesh; for from the Ruach HaKodesh **she has conceived**.*

And the Old Syriac Curetonian Ms reads:

הו גיר דמתילד מנה מן רוּחַא הו דקודשא בטין

...for that which *is born* of her, from the Ruach HaKodesh *is conceived*.

No other versions have “born” and then end with “conceived”.

Spoken by the Prophet (Matthew 2:23)

In the Hebrew (Shem Tob, DuTillet, Munster) and Aramaic (Old Syriac) the word “Prophet” is singular, while it is plural in the Greek and Latin Vulgate.

From Jerusalem (Matthew 3:5)

The Greek says “Then went out to him Jerusalem” (as does the Latin Vulgate and Peshitta), however the Old Syriac DuTillet and Shem Tob have “from Jerusalem”.

And Immersed Him (Matthew 3:15)

Only DuTillet, Shem Tob and the Old Syriac add “and he immersed him” to the end of verse 15, this does not appear in the Greek, Latin Vulgate or Peshitta.

As the Likeness of a Dove (Matthew 3:16)

DuTillet Hebrew version of Matthew says not “like a dove” but כדמות יונה “in the likeness of a dove” in agreement with בדמותא דיונא of the Old Syriac S manuscript. This also [corresponds with the reading in the Gospel according to the Hebrews](#).

Yeshua Answered and Said (Matt. 4:4)

In the Greek, the Latin Vulgate and even the Peshitta, Matthew 4:4 opens with “And *he* answered and said to him...”. However in the DuTillet Hebrew Matthew and the Old Syriac the passage opens “*Yeshua* answered and said...”

Their Throne (Matthew 5:34)

Another such passage is found in Matt 5:34. In this passage we see a very unique grammatical nuance in the Hebrew text of DuTillet that is found elsewhere *only in the Old Syriac*:

Here the DuTillet Hebrew reads:

כי כסא אלהים המה

“for it is Elohim’s throne (theirs)”

And the Old Syriac has:

דכורסיה אנון דאלהא

“which is Eloah’s (their) throne”

This is similar to an occasional grammatical phenomena in the Tanak in which Elohim is occasionally paired with plural verbs and adjectives (Gen. 20:13; 35:7; Deut. 4:7; Josh. 24:19; 2Sam. 7:23; Ps. 58:12/11) and pronouns (Gen. 1:26; Gen. 3:22; Gen. 11:7 & Is. 6:8) or is otherwise thought of in the plural (“your creators” Eccl. 12:9). The plural which DuTillet uses in 5:34-35 especially recalls Dan. 7:9 “I watched till *thrones* were put in place and the Ancient of Days was seated”.

Two Scribal Errors Ironically Preserve the Original Reading

In Matthew 4:24 the KJV reads (in agreement with the Greek):

And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

(Matthew 2:24 KJV)

The DuTillet Hebrew version of Matthew opens this verse with the phrase:

ותצא שמועתו אל כל העם

“And his fame went forth to all the people”

While the Munster Hebrew text has:

ותצא שמועתו אל כל ארם

“And his fame went forth to all Aram”

And as is so often the case, Shem Tob has a revised Latinized reading:

וילך שמועתו בכל ארץ סוריא

“And his fame went into all the Land of Syria”

The Shem Tob reading can be immediately discounted as an obvious corruption. This leaves us with the variant between DuTillet’s HaAm העם (the people) and Munster’s Aram ארם (Aram (i.e.Syria)).

This was clearly an error of diction. A scribe must have been taking dictation, and misunderstood “HaAm” (the people) as “Aram” (Arama/Syria).

So how do we know that the error of diction did not go the other direction. Perhaps a scribe misunderstood “Aram” as “HaAm”. How do we know Munster did not have the correct reading?

The answer lies in the reading of the Old Syriac Sinaitic Aramaic manuscript of Matthew. In this ancient Aramaic manuscript the scribe omitted this phrase altogether. This must have been an example of the scribal error known as homoeoteleuton, which literally means “same ending”. This type of error occurs

when a scribe's eye skips from one appearance of a word to a subsequent appearance of the same word. In this case the scribe wrote the phrase "all sickness and manner among the people" (at the end of Matthew 4:23) and then looked back over to look at his source text, looking for the word "the people" and accidentally found his place in the wrong place, picking up with the word "the people", not at the end of verse 23, but at the end of the opening phrase of verse 24. thus failing to copy that opening phrase, but instead picking up with "and they brought to him...".

This second scribal error in the Old Syriac Sinaitic manuscript, demonstrates that the last word in this opening phrase of verse 24 must have been "the people" as we read in DuTillet and not "Aram (Syria)" as we read in Munster.

Barabbas

There is an account, found in all four gospels, that there was a prevailing Passover custom in Jerusalem that allowed Pilate, the governor of Judea, to commute one prisoner's death sentence by popular acclaim. According to all four Gospels (Matt. 27:15-26; Mk. 15:6-15; Lk. 23:13-25 and Jn. 18:38b-40) . According to all four accounts, Pilate put forward two individuals, and let the crowd choose between the two: Yeshua and Barabbas. As the accounts go, the crowd chose Barabbas.

However in the Commentary to Matthew by the Fourth Century Church Father Jerome, he makes an interesting comment, speaking about Barabbas in his commentary to Matthew 27:16 he writes "... is interpreted in the so-called Gospel according to the Hebrews as 'son of their teacher' (Latin: filius magistri eorum). (Jerome on Matthew 27:16)

It has been proposed by some authors that Jerome is saying that Barabbas (Bar Abba) was not really names "Bar Abba" (son of a father) but "Bar Rabbon" (Son of their master"). The problem is that when Jerome says "their" here, is is almost certainly doing so to distinguish himself from the Jews. It is very unlikely that anyone would be given the name or title "son of their master". It is much more likely that the word "their" is Jerome's, and that the term that appeared in the original Hebrew Gospel source was "Son of the Master" or "Son of a Master" not "Son of their Master." Thus we would expect the original Hebrew to read Bar Rabbah (בר רבבה) rather than Bar Abba (בר אבא).

Both the DuTillet Hebrew Matthew and the Munster Hebrew text of Matthew, have in their accounts, not "Barabbas", or "Bar Abba" but "Bar Rabbah" (בר רבבה) just exactly as we would expect to find in the original Hebrew of the Gospels!