

'According to all' in MT and the Peshitta

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It is a striking feature of the Peshitta Old Testament¹ that corresponding to the occurrence in MT of the sequence *kl* 'according to all' or 'according to every' about eighty-six times² (not including the one occurrence of *kakkol* with the definite article in Jb 24:24), the Peshitta only has the sequence $\text{y}k\ kl$ seven times. This is striking because Syriac is so closely cognate to Hebrew that one might well expect a literal rendering of the Hebrew preposition *k* 'according to' by Syriac $\text{y}k$, and of Hebrew *kl* 'all' by Syriac *kl*. The Peshitta seems to avoid representing the Hebrew literally in the overwhelming majority of cases. There is a number of devices the Peshitta uses to do this:

1. Omission of an equivalent of *k*, but retention of *kl*, e.g. Gen 6:22

MT 'And Noah did *according to all* that God had commanded him.'

Peshitta 'And Noah did *all* that God had commanded him.'

The Peshitta does the same in Gen 7:5, Ex 39:32, 40:16, Num 2:34, 30:1, Dt 4:34, 1 Sam 25:12, 2 Sam 3:36, 7:17 (2x), 9:11, 1 Ki 5:20, 2 Ki 21:8, Jer 11:4, 35:10, 36:8 and 50:29.

2. Omission of *kl*, but use of $\text{y}k$, e.g. Ex 39:42

MT 'According to all that the LORD commanded Moses'

Peshitta 'As the Lord commanded Moses'

The Peshitta does the same in Num 1:54, 8:20, Dt 1:41, 12:8, 17:10, 18:16, 24:8, 26:14, Jos 10:32, 10:37, 11:23, 21:42 (Hebrew versification), 1 Ki 8:39, 8:43, 8:56, 9:4, 21:26, 22:54, 2 Ki 11:9, 14:3, 15:34, 16:11, 16:16, 18:3, 23:32, 23:37, 24:9, 24:19, Jer 50:21, 52:2 and Ezek 24:24.

3. Other forms of paraphrase. These include the use of $\text{y}kn$ 'just as', e.g. Ex 29:35, Jos 1:17, 4:10, 10:35, 2 Chron 6:33, 23:8, 26:4, 27:2, 29:2; *klmdm* or *kl mdm* 'whatever', e.g. Ex 25:9, 31:11, Dt 1:3, 2 Sam 15:15, 2 Chron 7:17, Esth 4:17, Jer 42:20; *km*³ 'as much as', e.g. Ex 21:30; *kl m*³ 'all what', e.g. Ruth 3:6; $\text{y}k\ m$ ³ 'according to what', e.g. 1 Chron 6:34; or the use of a preposition other than $\text{y}k$ to represent 'according to', e.g. 1 Chron 17:15 (2x).

¹ For the Peshitta I have used the volumes of *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version*, produced by the Peshitta Institute, Leiden, except where these were not available. For Jeremiah, Ruth, Esther and Chronicles I have used 7a1 as produced in A.M. Ceriani, *Translatio Syro Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex codice Ambrosiano sec. fere VI. photolithographice edita*, Milan, 1876-1881.

² This figure is approximate because there is some doubt about the definition of MT in 2 Sam 7:22.

All these translations have in common that they do not represent literally both elements 'according to' and 'all'. They may represent either element, or paraphrase both, but do not represent both literally. Sometimes a more major restructuring of the phrase takes place in order to avoid a literal translation. Take, for instance, 2 Ki 15:3, where we read:

MT 'And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD according to all that Amaziah his father had done.'

Peshitta 'And he did what was right before the Lord as Amaziah his father.'

Here the Peshitta has reduced the number of clauses by one due to its omission of several words. Other such radical paraphrases may be found in 1 Sam 25:30, 2 Sam 3:36 (mentioned above), 7:22, 2 Ki 10:30, 23:25, 24:3, Jer 35:18 and Ezek 18:24.

In seven cases (Dt 4:8, 20:18, 29:20, 30:2, 1 Ki 14:24, 2 Chron 36:14 and Jer 26:20) Hebrew *kkl* is literally represented by Syriac ʔyk kl . However, six of these seven occasions (all except Dt 30:2) have a suffix on Syriac *kl*. The one other case (Dt 30:2) provides an exception to the tendency stated above. Here the Peshitta reads:

$\text{ʔyk kl mdm dmpqd ʔnʔ lk}$

'According to all that I am commanding you'

Here, however, 7a1 omits *kl mdm*.

The explanation for why the Peshitta is so divergent from MT at these points is clearly not to be sought in supposing that the Peshitta translated a *Vorlage* other than MT. The supposition that the variations could occur in all the Hebrew books at exactly the point of this construction is implausible. Neither is it likely that literal representation of MT was avoided as part of a deliberate translation strategy. The avoidance takes place in every book of the Peshitta despite the fact that in some other matters of translation technique Peshitta books are not similar. A possible explanation for the data is that the sequence ʔyk kl was avoided for euphonic reasons. The word ʔyk , we know, is certainly a phonetic oddity since the middle *y* is not pronounced. Perhaps the juxtaposition of two *kaphs* was avoided in this case. The six occasions where ʔyk kl occurs followed by a suffix may have been more euphonic to Syriac ears, and therefore were permitted. On the other hand, Syriac may not have represented *kkl ʔsr* literally because to do so would not have been idiomatic Syriac, and because *kkl ʔsr* in Hebrew shows little semantic opposition to *kʔsr*.³

Finally, it should be noted that on fourteen occasions BHS suggests that the lack of formal correspondence between the Peshitta and MT points to a Hebrew textual variant (see BHS's notes at Dt 24:8, 26:14, Jos 10:32, 10:35, 10:37, Ruth 3:6, 1 Sam 25:12, 2 Sam 3:36, 9:11, 15:15, 1 Ki 5:20, 8:39, 2 Ki 10:30 and Esth 4:17). The type of variant BHS suggests varies from supposing that the Peshitta had a *Vorlage* without *k* (e.g. Ruth 3:6) to supposing that the Peshitta had a *Vorlage* with *kʔsr* instead of *kkl* (e.g. Jos 10:32). In all cases BHS's notes are equally misguided and it is to be hoped that future critical editions of the Hebrew Bible will not repeat its mistakes. Although it is a time-consuming process, the production in scholarly

³ Ernst Jenni (*Die hebräischen Präpositionen Band 2: Die Präposition Kaph*, Stuttgart, Berlin and Köln, 1994, 20) says, '... *kkl ʔsr* ist daher wohl nur als stilistisch steigernde Variante zu *kʔsr* zu betrachten.' I would like to thank Professor Jenni for commenting on a previous draft of this article.

editions of other such pseudo-variants can only be avoided by considering the translation of each construction by a version as a whole.

Abstract:

The Peshitta uses a number of devices to avoid a literal translation of MT's *klk* 'according to all'. It is erroneous to attribute its translation to a non-Masoretic *Vorlage*.

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