

THE ELEMENTS OF SYRIAC GRAMMAR

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The Elements of Syriac Grammar by Benjamin Davidson

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BENJAMIN DAVIDSON

**THE ELEMENTS OF
SYRIAC GRAMMAR**

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THE ELEMENTS
OF
SYRIAC GRAMMAR
WITH
READING LESSONS

CONSISTING OF COPIOUS
EXTRACTS FROM THE PESHĪṬTA VERSION OF
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS
AND THE
CRUSADE OF RICHARD I
FROM THE CHRONICLES OF BAR HEBRAEUS

Grammatically Analysed and Translated

NEW AND REVISED EDITION

Davidson /



*by B. Davidson
185*

Multae terricollis linguae, coelestibus una

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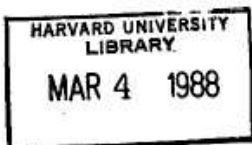
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*From the library of
Francis A. Chester*



PREFACE

THE present Work forms one of a series of "Reading Lessons," of which the Hebrew, Arabic, and Aramaic have already appeared.

The plan of these works is simple, but, it is hoped, complete. They consist of the elements of the Grammar with copious extracts from the language. The extracts are grammatically analysed word by word, and an exact translation into English is added.

To the present Work, the prefixed Syriac Grammar is more than usually extensive, on account of the scarcity of introductory grammars to the Syriac language.

ELEMENTS OF SYRIAC GRAMMAR.

I. THE ALPHABET.

SYRIAC.		NAMES.	POWERS.		NUM. VALUE.
1 Separate.	2 Joined.		Hebrew.	English.	
Final	ܐ	Ālaph	א	·	1
ܐ	ܐܐ	Beth	ב	b, bh (v)	2
ܐ	ܐܐܐ	Gāmal	ג	g, gh	3
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐ	Dālath	ד	d, dh	4
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐ	He	ה	h	5
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Vau	ו	v or w	6
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Zain	ז	z	7
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Heth	ח	h	8
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Teth	ט	t	9
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Yud	י	y in yet	10
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Kāph	כ	k, kh	20
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Lāmad	ל	l	30
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Mim	מ	m	40
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Nun	נ	n	50
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Semkath	ס	s	60
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Ē	ע	·	70
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Pe Fe	פ	p, ph	80
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Tāde	צ	ts	90
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Kuph	ק	k	100
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Rish	ר	r	200
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Shin	ש	sh	300
ܐ	ܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐܐ	Thau	ת	t, th	400

The Table, as given here, exhibits a striking similarity between the Syriac and Hebrew alphabets, with respect to order of succession and names and powers of the letters. The Syriac, however, differs first in the greater number of *final* letters, and secondly in the connecting of the letters belonging to one word. The learner has therefore to observe that—

1. *Nine* of the final letters differ from the ordinary ones only in a slight additional stroke, or hook, at the end; but the remaining *five* assume a different form.

2. Each letter may (whenever the position will allow it) be joined either to the *preceding* letter *only*, or to both the *preceding and following*. We thus obtain two classes of letters, distinguished likewise by another peculiarity, that those of the former have *no finals*; those of the latter have.

The column, No. 2, of the alphabet exhibits every possible position and manner of connecting of each letter. Those of the first class need be repeated but twice, those of the second, with their finals, *three times*.

3. One letter is joined to another by a small horizontal line drawn from its extremity, with the exception of *four*, viz., β , δ , ζ , and λ , which assume another form when joined to a *preceding* letter.

NOTE.—It is advisable that the learner copy the alphabet a few times, especially the column, No. 2. In doing so, or in writing any Syriac word, he has to form merely the tops of as many letters as are joined on both sides, and then to connect them by a horizontal line drawn from the last to the first. Thus, in forming the Beths in succession, let him write the three tops first, $\cup\cup\cup$, and then the line underneath from left to right, — , and he will obtain one initial, one medial, and one final Beth.

The following compound letters are frequently used: \mathfrak{B} ,

Ⲫ, Ⲭ (final), and Ⲭ, which stand for ⲉ, ⲓ, ⲓ, and ⲓ Ⲭ; the last when a word terminates with Lāmād final, and the next begins with Ālaph.

2. VOWELS.

There are two ways of indicating the vowels. One is the Nestorian. This consists of points placed in various positions, and has developed out of the practice of using a single point above or below a letter. The other system is the Jacobite, invented by Jacob of Edessa (†708). This consists of the Greek vowels in a reversed direction. Its invention has also been ascribed to Theophilus of Edessa (†785-786), but with less probability.

Both systems are now sometimes used indiscriminately. We have so used them in some of our pages, as a practice for the learner.

Greek.		Syriac.	
ⲁ	Pethāḥā	ⲁ	a read <i>ah</i>
ⲉ	Revātsā	ⲉ or ⲉ	e „ <i>ay</i>
ⲓ	Hevātsā	ⲓ	i „ <i>ee</i>
ⲁ	Zekāfā	ⲁ	ā „ <i>ah</i>
ⲟ or ⲟ	‘Etsātsā	ⲟ or ⲟ	o or ū

NOTE.—In giving the pronunciation of Syriac words in English characters, we have represented *Zekāfā* by *ā* throughout (cp. *Maran-atha* in 1 Cor. 16, 22).

The position of the Greek vowels as given above is the usual one, but they are by no means confined to it.

The vowel ‘Etsātsā is always accompanied with ⲟ, except