



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**PHILOLOGICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ABBA ABRAHAM'S  
MATTHEW GOSPEL WITH THE GREEK AND GE'EZ VERSIONS: SOME  
SALIENT FEATURES**

**BY**

**NEBEYOU ALEMU**

**OCTOBER 2009  
ADDIS ABABA**

Addis Ababa University  
School of Graduate Studies

PHILOLOGICAL AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ABBA  
ABRAHAM'S MATTHEW GOSPEL WITH THE GREEK AND  
GE'EZ VERSION: SOME SALIENT FEATURES

By

NEBEYOU ALEMU

Institute of Language Studies approved by the examining board

Chairperson, Department of

Graduate Committee

Signature

Advisor

Dr. Hailu Habte

[Signature]

Examiner

PROF. ORIN GENSLER

Orin D. Gensler



## Symbols

### Vowels

ä = stands for the first order of the *fidäl*

u = stands for the second order of the *fidäl*

i = stands for the third order of the *fidäl*

a = stands for the fourth order of the *fidäl*

e = stands for the fifth order of the *fidäl*

ø = stands for the sixth order of the *fidäl*

o = stands for the seventh order of the *fidäl*

### Consonants

ʎ = '

ʙ = b

ɣ = g

ɖ = d

ɕ = ħ

ɣ̣ = x

m = t

ɸ = y

h = k

ʎ̣ = l

ʙ̣ = m

ɣ̣̣ = n

ʙ̣̣ = ś

ʙ̣̣̣ = '



## Abbreviations

BFBS	The British and Foreign Bible Society
CMS	Church Missionary Society
EOC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church
LXX	Septuagint
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Matt.	Matthew
V.	Verse
MS	Manuscript
MT	Masoretic Text
SL	Source Language
TL	Target Language

## CONTENTS

Acknowledgement  
Abstract

### Chapter One: Introduction and Background

#### Part One

1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.2 Translation .....	3
1.3 The Topic .....	4
1.4 The Significance of the Research .....	4
1.5 Specific and General objectives of the Research.....	4
1.6 Literature Review.....	5
1.7 The Procedure of the Study.....	6
1.8 Methods .....	7

#### Part Two

1.1 History of Bible Transmission and Translation: General History .....	8
1.2 The Hebrew Bible .....	8
1.3 The Septuagint .....	10
1.4 The New Testament.....	13
1.5 Translation of the Bible in Ethiopia.....	15
1.6 Translation and Translation Theories.....	19
1.7 Some Amharic Translations of the Bible.....	21
1.8 Types of translations.....	22
1.9 The Impact of the Translation.....	24
1.10 What is the underlying text ( <i>vorlage</i> )? .....	24
1.11 Editions of the Translation.....	25

### Chapter Two: Biographical Note

2.1 Biography .....	27
2.2 Journey to Jerusalem (pilgrimage) .....	28
2.3 The Translation Process.....	29
2.4 His Death.....	31
2.5 Asselin and Jowett .....	31

### Chapter Three: Brief History of Amharic Literature

3.1 A Brief History of Amharic Literature/Language History.....	32
3.2 The Translation's Role in Language History.....	35

## Chapter Four: Linguistics and Stylistic Features of the Text

4.1 Stylistic Features of the Text.....	37
4.1a Divisions.....	37
4.1b Lexical Innovations.....	37
4.1c Theology.....	38
4.2 Linguistic Features of the Text.....	39
4.2a Syntax.....	39
4.2b Phonology.....	39
4.2c Orthography.....	40
4.2d Interrogatives.....	40
4.2e Pronouns.....	41
4.3 Other Peculiar Features .....	41
4.3a Punctuation Marks in the Text.....	42
4.3b Vocabulary .....	42

## Chapter Five: Comparative Study: Matthew 5-7

5.1 Translation Problems.....	46
5.2 The Gospel of Matthew in Ge'ez Textual Tradition.....	47
5.3 Greek Text.....	48
5.4 Comparison of Matthew 5-7: Semantic and Interpretive Point of View .....	48
5.4a Matthew 5.....	49
5.4b Matthew 6.....	65
5.4c Matthew 7.....	78
5.4d Conclusion .....	82

## Chapter Six: Research Findings and Conclusion

6.1 Preservation of Archaic Words.....	83
6.2 History of Amharic.....	83
6.3 Semantic Ambiguity.....	84
6.4 Ge'ez as Primary <i>Vorlage</i> .....	85
6.5 Conclusion .....	85

Bibliography

Appendix

## **Acknowledgments**

I am very grateful to my advisor Dr Hailu Habtu, for his inspiration and meticulous supervision and encouragement. I would like to extend my best appreciation to Prof. Orin Gensler for his great support ( **אֵיךְ אֲנִי מְשַׁבֵּחַ** who help others). I also would like to extend my appreciation to Kassahun Sisay for he has given me his paper, which he reads for ILS annual conference.

I am grateful to the libraries of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies and Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology for their help.

## **Abstract**

This thesis will discuss about the biography of Abba Abraham, language history of Amharic (in order to highlight the significance of the translation), brief analysis of the language and finally comparison of Matthew 5-7 from the Greek and Ge'ez from Semantic and interpretive point of view.

This paper has three main purposes: the first one is historical, the second is philological, and the third is comparative. The historical purpose is to sketch a brief biography of Abba Abraham; to explain how the translation took place in Cairo and how it was used by missionaries and influenced many. The second purpose of this paper is philological. That is to comment on the Amharic language of the period (syntax, orthography, morphology and vocabulary). The third part compares the translation with the Greek and Ge'ez versions. As it is a known fact that the New Testament was written in Greek, this part attempts to investigate how much the translation is in line or deviates from the original Greek.

# Chapter One: Introduction and Background

## Part One

### 1.1 Introduction

The exploration of the Nile and James Bruce's famous book *Travels to Discover the Source of the Nile*, which was published in 1770, introduced Ethiopia to many Europeans. This gave stimulus to Protestant Europe to send missionaries to Ethiopia, the oldest Christian country in Africa. The translation of the Bible into vernacular languages and distribution was related with this historical development.

Amharic literature developed in the nineteenth century, during the reign of Tewodros. Before that, we do have many Amharic glosses in MSS, commentaries, war songs and short theological tracts. However, King Tewodros encouraged Amharic literature to be used as a written language instead of Ge'ez for his general plan of unification. Isichei said "Tewodros came to the throne as a reformer. He allowed missionaries to distribute Amharic (rather than Ge'ez Bibles)."<sup>1</sup> Krapf and Flad presented to King Tewodros printed books. Crummey reported Flad's observation of Tewodros's reaction as follows: "On receiving them, to our great delight, he said, looking at the *Ethiopic* books, "What is the use of these?—the *translation* is far better."<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Isichei. *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: SPCK, 1995), 213. See also Donald Crummey, *Priests and Politicians: Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia 1830-1868* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972), 121.

<sup>2</sup> Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 121. Quoting Flad, *Notes from the Journal*, 33-4, late June 1856.

It was during this time that the missionaries came onto the scene. Throughout history, those Christians who promoted Bible translation into the languages of the common people did so because they believed it was critical to the expansion and growth of the church. Isichei said “The circulation of British and Foreign Bible Society Bibles led, in about 1860, to a religious movement in Eritrea that was reminiscent of the reformation in Europe.”<sup>3</sup>

The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) was dedicated to the distribution of Scriptures in Britain and abroad. The first Protestant missionaries to come to Ethiopia were Germans, educated at Basel (Switzerland) Mission Training School and sent by the British Church Missionary Society (CMS).<sup>4</sup>

The aim of the early Protestant missionaries to the Middle Eastern Churches including Ethiopia was not to establish new churches but to renew the old churches<sup>5</sup> and bring about a reformation, as happened in Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

This is among the reasons why missionaries wanted to translate the Bible into many vernacular languages. They attempted to do this through renewal and reformation of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church through the Bible and Biblical teaching. It did not work,

---

<sup>3</sup> Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa*, 213.

<sup>4</sup> John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Nairobi: Pauline Publication Africa, 2001), 157.

<sup>5</sup> Old churches like the Coptic Church and Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

<sup>6</sup> Sven Rubenson, “The Missionary Factors in Ethiopia: Consequence of a Colonial Context” in *The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia* (Getachew Haile; Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson, eds) (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1998), 60. See also Crummey, *Priest and Politicians*, 12.

however. The EOC resisted influence from outside. For this reason, the European missions had to found new Evangelical Churches in non-Orthodox areas of the country. The creation of Bible translations was a major catalyst for this evangelizing movement.

## 1.2 Translation

Protestant missionaries recognized the great importance of translating the Bible into the language of the people to whom they desired to preach the Gospel. “The mission to Ethiopia got its first impetus from the Amharic Bible translation by the Ethiopian monk Abu Rumi [Abba Abraham] in Cairo.”<sup>7</sup>

The translation of Abba Abraham or Abu Rumi (an Arabicized corruption of Abraham) was acquired by The British Bible Society and printed in 1824 (Four Gospels) and 1840 (full Bible). “It seemed the ideal means for the planned renewal of the Ethiopian Church that had only Ge’ez manuscripts of the Scriptures.”<sup>8</sup> Samuel Gobat and Christian Kugler were chosen for the task- they were stationed in Cairo (1826) and arrived in Tigre in late 1829. They had the opportunity both to learn Amharic from a monk and “to join an embassy sent by Ras Sabagadis of Tigre to London. Through this friendship, they were able to establish themselves at Adigrat in 1830.”<sup>9</sup> They brought with them sixty copies of then new Amharic Gospel translation, which were gladly accepted.”<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 157.

<sup>8</sup> Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 157.

<sup>9</sup> Later Gobat went to Gondar and Kugler was based in Tigre.

<sup>10</sup> Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, 157.

### **1.3 The Topic**

This thesis presents a history of the translation process, a comment on the Amharic (syntax, vocabulary, orthography, morphology) and a comparative study of Abba Abraham's Amharic translation of Matthew's Gospel with the Greek and Ge'ez versions. It ends with a recommendation and conclusion.

### **1.4 The Significance of the Research**

Abba Abraham's Amharic Bible was used by missionaries and had great importance for their mission and a great impact upon those who read it. This translation was the first of its kind. It is the first to be translated in its entirety (the whole Bible into Amharic language); translated in a foreign country (Cairo); translated by one individual within a period of ten years. For this reason, it deserves attention. To the best of my knowledge no serious study has been conducted on this monumental work. It is believed that this research will serve those who are interested in Ethiopian Philology and history and serve as a base for further studies on the subject.

### **1.5 Specific and General Objectives of the Research**

This study aims...

- To present a short biography of Abba Abraham and history of the translation
- To give some comments on the Amharic (to analyze the linguistic features): syntax, vocabulary, orthography, morphology

- To assess how much the translation deviates or is in line with the original Greek

## 1.6 Literature Review

Why did Abba Abraham decide to translate the Bible? What was his training? What books were on his desk? Did he make use of the Hebrew and the Greek Bibles? A careful examination of Abba Abraham's work will hopefully give some answers to these questions. Apart from a brief account, the work has never been seriously researched.

The writer did not find many papers written on the topic. But a few books in passing discussed the general work of the translation. Aren in his book entitled *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*, discusses briefly the biography of Abba Abraham and the impact of Abba Abraham's Bible translation.<sup>11</sup> Ullendorff also discusses briefly the translation.<sup>12</sup> Kassahun in his conference paper discusses some of the linguistic features that are exhibited in Abba Abraham's Bible, mainly in the Gospel of John.<sup>13</sup>

Different historians, philologists and linguists have studied old Amharic documents. However, I could not find a single document which treated Abba Abraham's Bible

---

<sup>11</sup> Gustav Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers in Ethiopia: Origins of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Stockholm: EFS Forlaget), 168.

<sup>12</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> Kassahun Sisay, "Amharic Linguistic Feature[s] in the Abu Rumi's Bible: Some Examples from The Gospel of John", Unpublished Paper Presented at 21<sup>st</sup> Annual ILS Conference, Addis Ababa University, June 26-27, 2009.

translation. In this section I will survey some of the articles which discuss characteristic features of old Amharic.

Renate Richter wrote an article entitled: "Some Linguistic Peculiarities of Old Amharic Texts". This article discusses some of the characteristic features of old Amharic of the Royal Songs. Professor Getachew Haile has dealt with old Amharic texts and forms in many of his writings. To mention some of the articles: "Archaic Amharic Forms" in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa, 1970, 61-80; "Some Archaic Features of Amharic," in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, session B, Chicago 1978, 111-124; "Some Notes on 'A Text in Old Amharic' of Roger Cowley," in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 43 (3), 578-580; "Old Amharic Features in a Manuscript from Wollo," in S. Segert and A. J. E. Bodrogligeti (eds.), *Ethiopian Studies Dedicated to Wolf Leslau on the Occasion of his Seventy-fifth Birthday*, Wiesbaden 1983, 157-169.

### **1.7 The Procedure of the Study**

In order to accomplish the above stated purposes, this paper will start by discussing the historical part. The second part discusses the biography of Abba Abraham. It will be followed by a brief history of Amharic literature. Chapter four gives a comment on the Amharic. This linguistically oriented study is important to our topic because Amharic at the time was in its early stages of development as a literary language. Chapter five compares the Amharic translation with the Greek and Ge'ez versions. The last chapter

concludes the paper, first by summarizing the evidence, then suggesting some recommendations and the need for serious study in the future.

### **1.8 Methods**

During the research both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data is the printed translation of Abba Abraham's Bible, and the secondary data are books related to the subject at hand.

## Part Two

### 1.1 History of Bible Transmission and Translation: General History

As modern readers of the Bible we generally use translated texts. What we now call the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew except parts of Daniel (2:4b-7:28) and Ezra (4:8-6:18; 7:12-26) and one verse in Jeremiah (10:11), which are in Aramaic. The OT was translated into Greek in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. The New Testament was originally written in Greek. And those translations were copied and recopied in various periods. We don't have the original autographs. We are entirely dependent on copied and transmitted texts. These are the texts that were canonised by the early Church fathers. In the following sections, we wish to study the manner in which the texts of the Bible were transmitted and kept.

### 1.2 The Hebrew Bible

Before about 100 CE, there did not exist a single standard text of the various books of Scripture that was regarded as possessing sole authority (a *textus receptus*).<sup>14</sup> From about 100 CE onwards, the textual tradition of the OT known as the Masoretic Text (MT) existed. We can give this textual tradition such a name, because the Jewish scholars known as Masoretes from 600 CE through to the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE edited a form of the Hebrew text that had already been in existence in oral form.<sup>15</sup> The biblical manuscripts found in the Judean Desert between 1947 and 1954 (known as the Dead Sea Scrolls and dating to the early part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE) agree to a considerable extent with the MT.<sup>16</sup> So the Masoretic text is the standard Hebrew text used today. There are variants

---

<sup>14</sup> See Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov (eds.) *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic: 2008).

<sup>15</sup> MT is the official version of the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament. The Masoretes were the scholars who preserved, edited, and pointed the text (i.e., added vowel signs, accents, and punctuation of a sort). Craig A. Evans, "Introduction" in *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary and Theological Perspective* (Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov (eds.) (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic: 2008), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Evans, "Introduction", 15.

among the preserved manuscripts of the MT because of simple scribal errors, but overall the MT has been transmitted with remarkable accuracy.<sup>17</sup>

But can we speak of the OT before 100 CE as a canon of Scripture? It depends what we mean by 'canonical'. The Greek word *kanon* means "rule" or "yardstick" or "norm".<sup>18</sup> If by canonical we mean a strictly limited number of books regarded as a single standard text, as having special authority and being holy and inspired, the OT in the pre-late first century CE cannot be spoken of as canonical. However, in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus or the Book of Sirach, the grandson of Ben Sira (the author) refers to the Scripture as 'the Law, the Prophets and the other or rest of the books'. By 'the other or rest of books', the writer may be referring to the Writings. If so, he is agreeing with the sort of division that existed at the time of Christ. That is that the Jewish Scriptures were known by the three-fold division: the Law, the Prophets and the Writings (the Hebrew acronym is *Tanakh*: Torah, Nevi'im, Kethuvim).<sup>19</sup>

The Torah or Pentateuch (the Five Books of Moses) was the first corpus or body of literature that came to be regarded as authoritative Scripture. Probably, the Torah was first translated into Greek in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, by which time the Pentateuch had achieved a primary status as the Scripture of the Jews. But before the adoption of the Pentateuch as the Law of Moses, there were certain writings that were probably compiled shortly before the death of King Josiah and during the Babylonian exile. Those writings are Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings. These (except Deuteronomy) came to be grouped together as the Former Prophets. The Latter Prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the book of the Twelve (or the Minor Prophets).

---

<sup>17</sup> Evans, "Introduction", 22.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel J. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999) 3.

<sup>19</sup> Evans, "Introduction", 21.

Finally, the books of the Writings. These were not edited in groups as in the case of the other books, but circulated separately. These books are: 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah are a connected history (some even attribute their authorship to a single person). The canonical status of the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes was disputed until the time of the Christian era. Esther's canonicity was much contested by certain Jews as late as the fourth century CE and later by a number of Greek Church fathers. The five shortest books of the Writings, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther, came to be known as the five scrolls (*megilloth*) that are read at the great festivals of the Jewish year.<sup>20</sup>

### 1.3 The Septuagint

Our earliest witness to the origin of the ancient Greek translation called the Septuagint (LXX) is the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Aristobulus (who lived in Alexandria in 181-145 BCE). He tells us simply that a translation of the Law was made in the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283-246 BCE).<sup>21</sup> Josephus (*Antiquities* 12:3ff) also tells us that during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus the Torah was translated into Greek. The source of Josephus' story is the *Letter of Aristeas*, a pseudepigraphal document in which the label "Septuagint" first appears.<sup>22</sup> The Letter of Aristeas purports to be a letter written by a high official at the court of Ptolemy II Philadelphus to his brother Philocrates.<sup>23</sup> The letter describes how, at the instigation of Demetrius of Phalerum, the king's librarian; Ptolemy II gave orders for a translation of the Jewish law into Greek to be made. The

---

<sup>20</sup>Evans, "Introduction", 23. Exactly when the content of this portion became widely known and accepted is unclear and a subject of debate.

<sup>21</sup>"Aristobulus... claims that the Law was translated before the time of Plato and that Plato drew upon it in his thinking" (E. Porter, "Septuagint/Greek Old Testament" in *Dictionary of NT Background*, Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (ed.) (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 1100.

<sup>22</sup>Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 14.

<sup>23</sup>Albert C. Sundberg, "The Septuagint: The Bible of Hellenistic Judaism" in *The Canon Debate* (Lee Martin McDonald and James. A. Sanders, eds.) (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 69. cf. also Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 14.

letter tells how an embassy was sent to the High Priest Eleazar to obtain both a reliable copy of the law and suitably qualified individuals to undertake the translation. 72 elders or scholars (six from each tribe) were chosen and sent to Ptolemy II, who threw a 7-day banquet in their honour and installed them on the island of Pharos to do the translation of the Pentateuch from Hebrew into Greek. The 72 elders completed their task in 72 days around 200 BCE. The narrative concludes by describing how the translation was given official approval. The production of the LXX enabled Jews who lived outside Judea and could not speak Hebrew to have access to their scriptures.<sup>24</sup>

There are two obvious differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew OT. First, the Septuagint's translations of the canonical books of the OT are in many cases different from the Hebrew reading.<sup>25</sup> Second, a number of other books commonly called apocryphal or deuterocanonical are included in the Septuagint but not in the Hebrew.<sup>26</sup> These are a very varied collection. Some are translations of Hebrew originals, while some were composed in Greek. They include history, propaganda, wisdom literature, philosophy, religious novels and stories. None of the books claims to be inspired Scripture. But in them theological doctrines that are only hinted at in the OT find expression. They teach us about the impact that Hellenism had on Judaism particularly in the Second Temple period. In them we learn about anti-Semitism. They also teach us about the kind of persecution that the Jews suffered because of their faith.<sup>27</sup>

The finding in the Dead Sea Caves (Qumran) of Greek and Hebrew biblical manuscripts that represent to a degree the probable *Vorlage* of the so-called Old Greek (i.e. the 'autographs' from which the uncial manuscripts [or their predecessors] of the fourth and fifth century were copied) suggests that in the case of certain books the Hebrew text with

---

<sup>24</sup> Sundberg, "The Septuagint: The Bible of Hellenistic Judaism", 73; Metzger, *The Bible in Translation*, 14-15.

<sup>25</sup> The Book of Isaiah is a very good example. Major differences are to be seen in Job, Proverbs, Jeremiah, as well as there being additions to Daniel and Esther.

<sup>26</sup> Evans, "Introduction", 23-26.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha*, 1999.

which the LXX translators worked was not necessarily the same as the MT.<sup>28</sup> It has been shown that the Qumran writings show considerable agreement with the medieval MT in their consonantal framework etc., arguing that the predecessors of the MT or texts that resembled them plausibly were extant to a large degree in Qumran. But there are also sufficient orthographical and morphological variations between some texts of the MT and some Qumran texts (e.g. 1QIsa<sup>b</sup> and MS L 48-51) to suggest that there also existed biblical texts which differed from the predecessors of the MT.<sup>29</sup> This, coupled with the noticeably large amount of differences between the MT and our earliest witnesses to the Greek OT, prevents us from readily regarding the MT (or its predecessor) as the parent text of the Septuagint translation of Habakkuk available to us. The LXX can give some help towards establishing with greater and more detailed accuracy what the original Hebrew text must have been.

It is worth pointing out here, however, that it is wrong to assume that in the early period people like Paul had a copy of the Masoretic text or the LXX. There may have been a collection of biblical extracts (previously called a book of testimonies) used by those like Paul in their controversy with other Jews.<sup>30</sup> These biblical extracts may have been used, using Lim's terms, as 'handy collections of biblical passages for reference'.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> S.E. Porter, *Dictionary*, 1099.

<sup>29</sup> James Vanderkam, *Introduction to Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: William E. Eerdmans, 2002), 25,

<sup>30</sup> See Dodd, *Scripture*, 26f and Lim, *Scripture*, 150-158 for a survey of the scholarship regarding the so-called Testimony Book hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, there was 'one lost Testimony Book against the Jews which was first compiled by Matthew, used by Paul and other New Testament writers, attested to in Papias, cited by the Church Fathers (especially Cyprian), and extant in a secondarily redacted, sixteenth-century manuscript found in the monastery of Iveron on Mount Athos' (Lim, *Scripture*, 150). Lim prefers 'biblical extracts' to 'testimony book' and reinforces the hypothesis by using examples from Qumran, which, not surprisingly, include 2 Cor 6:14-7:1 in relation to texts such as 4QFlor (4Q174) and 1QM 4:1-2.

<sup>31</sup> Lim, *Scripture*, 154. For the possible existence of a collection of passages used by Paul and his disciples, see Lk 4:16-19; Acts 17:2-3 and 2 Tim 4:13.

## 1.4 The New Testament

In the earliest days of the Christian church, there was a tradition of sending an apostolic letter to a congregation or an individual as Paul, for example, did. An account of the gospel of Jesus Christ would also be produced to meet the needs of a particular community of people. Copies would be made not only in order to extend the sphere of influence of these writings but also to enable others to benefit from the writings. Those copies were of course made by hand and thus would inevitably contain differences from one another. There are different reasons that such differences arise.

First, differences could arise from quite accidental causes such as mistaking a letter or a word for another that looked like it. Such accidental errors are unavoidable when lengthy passages are copied by hand, particularly if the scribe had defective eyesight, was fatigued or interrupted while working.<sup>32</sup> Secondly, differences could arise from deliberate attempts to smooth out grammatical or stylistic harshness or to eliminate obscurities of meaning in the text. The result of this, of course, is that we have today hundreds (or thousands) of variant readings.<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, during the second and third centuries translations were made into languages that existed in Syria, southern Egypt and North Africa. So translations in Syriac, Latin and several dialects of Coptic were made. In the fourth and following centuries, translations were made into Armenian, Georgian, Ge'ez, Arabic and Nubian.<sup>34</sup> That was in the East. In the West, translations were done into Gothic and later into Anglo-Saxon. In all these cases, the quality and faithfulness of the translation obviously depended on the carefulness of the translator and the degree to which he was familiar with both Greek and the language into which the translation was made. Finally, scribes might transmit handwritten copies with a slightly different form of text, because they would have deliberately adjusted the new copies with wording and content that, in their view, would have been preferable.

---

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Leon Vaganay and Christian-Bernard Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 5-46.

<sup>33</sup> Vaganay and Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 5-46.

<sup>34</sup> Vaganay and Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 5-46.

Despite this variability, the tendency to develop and preserve a particular type of text prevailed. Thus distinctive types or groups of NT text grew up. The most important of these text groups are:<sup>35</sup>

1. The Alexandrian text: considered to be the best text and the most faithful in preserving the original. The two chief witnesses are Codex Vaticanus (B) and codex Sinaiticus (Σ) – parchment mss dating from about the mid-fourth century
2. The Western text: used by Marcion, Irenaeus and Tertullian – P<sup>38</sup> (300 CE)<sup>36</sup> and codex Bezae (D) of the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century and codex Claromontanus (D) of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>37</sup>
3. The Caesarean text: originated in Egypt (perhaps brought by Origen to Caesarea) – P<sup>45</sup> (Chester Beatty Papyrus).<sup>38</sup>
4. The Byzantine text: otherwise called the Syrian text, Koine text, the Ecclesiastical text and the Antiochian text: characterised chiefly by a striving for stylistic lucidity and completeness and a tendency to combine two or more divergent readings into one conflated expanded reading.<sup>39</sup>

The Byzantine text, corrupt though it was, became the standard form of the NT text in printed editions. The first published edition of the Greek NT was done in 1516 by the Dutch humanist Erasmus, who depended on the Byzantine and two other inferior texts from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and corrected edition was produced in 1519. William

---

<sup>35</sup> Paul D. Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible: Its History, Methods & Results* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 244-246.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible*, 2006.

<sup>37</sup> P refers to the Greek papyri.

<sup>38</sup> Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism*, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism*, 243. Cf. also Vaganay and Amphoux, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 5-46.

Tyndale (1522) and Martin Luther (1525) depended on Erasmus's translation for their English and German translations. The corrupt Byzantine text provided the basis for almost all translations of the NT into modern languages down to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, critical editions appeared, the most notable of which was done by two Cambridge scholars, Westcott and Hort (1881). It is this edition on which the UBS editions are based.

### **1.5 Translation of the Bible in Ethiopia**

Usually we read the Bible in a modern printed edition and in a modern translation, whether it be in Amharic or English or some other language. Printed Bibles date back to the sixteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Prior to the sixteenth century, the Bible had to be copied by hand, a slow and a laborious process. The invention of the printing press had two consequences for the Bible. First, printing made it possible for the Bible to be circulated widely and more cheaply. Second, it helped to standardize the arrangement and contents of the Bible (introduction of standardized systems of chapter and verse numbering).<sup>41</sup>

Many translated works exist in Ge'ez from foreign sources.<sup>42</sup> These include biblical scripture, the service book of the Coptic Church, exegeses, and texts dealing with the lives of saints of the Universal Church that existed before the schism at the Council of

---

<sup>40</sup> Sebastian Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2006), 7.

<sup>41</sup> Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Translational works reflect different kinds of approaches to translation, which are characterized by scholars sometimes as extremely literal, sometimes as meaning-based, and sometimes as free and periphrastic.

Chalcedon in 451 CE<sup>43</sup> and of saints of the Coptic Church, especially the desert fathers, and homilies by the early church fathers.<sup>44</sup>

In Ethiopia the Bible translation from Greek into Ge'ez has a long history going back to the Aksumite period. According to the tradition of the church, the Bible translation was carried out by Abba Salama, or Frumentius, as he is known to western Christendom.<sup>45</sup> It is believed that all the canonical and Apocryphal books of the scripture were available in Ge'ez before the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>46</sup> These represent the most notable literary achievement of the Aksumite kingdom.

Ge'ez was eventually replaced by the Amharic vernacular and today is no longer spoken, although it remains the cherished heritage of scholars within the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

According to Ullendorff the Ge'ez Bible translation extended over a century or two, a view shared by Conti Rossini, who rules out early dates of the fourth century for the work.<sup>47</sup> The translation of the Bible into Ge'ez is traditionally attributed to Syrian monks

---

<sup>43</sup> Councils are summoned to settle disputes of interpretation, or to pass judgment on matters not found in scripture, and their decision are binding if they are 'received' by the church as being in accordance with Scripture and its traditional interpretation. The council of Chalcedon, held at Chalcedon in 451, condemned the Christology of Eutyches. The council's famous declaration was that Jesus Christ was one divine person in two natures, one human and one divine. This eventually drove the Egyptian and Syrian Churches into schism, because they upheld the doctrine of monophysitism, according to which Christ had one nature, which was divine.

<sup>44</sup> Such as Athanasius of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Severus of Antioch, and Cyril of Alexandria.

<sup>45</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 50.

<sup>46</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 33-34.

<sup>47</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 35.

who had taken refuge in Ethiopia during the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>48</sup> The earliest printed Bible texts in Ge'ez were done by a small group of Ethiopian monks at Santo Stefani dei Mori in Rome: the Psalms in Ge'ez were published in 1513 and the New Testament in 1548 CE.<sup>49</sup> By that time, Ge'ez was no longer used as a vernacular language in Ethiopia and the official language was Amharic.

Nevertheless there were no printed works in Amharic prior to Peter Heyling's Gospel publication and distribution in the 1640s. When the British Bible Society decided to distribute the Bible in Ethiopia, the only portion of Scripture available to them was Job Ludolf's version of the Psalter of 1701 in Ge'ez.<sup>50</sup>

Abba Abraham's Bible is a notable publishing event in the history of Amharic Bible translations. In Europe, after the Reformation most Bible translation work was tied to the missionary movement.<sup>51</sup> However, the first Amharic Bible translation was not done by missionaries but by an Ethiopian, Abba Abraham. The missionary played a role only in the printing and distribution process.

---

<sup>48</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 56.

<sup>49</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 8.

<sup>50</sup> Job Ludolf was the first foreign scholar to study Ethiopian languages. He studied Ge'ez and Amharic under the Ethiopian monk Gorgoreyos, and published a Ge'ez-Latin dictionary, Ge'ez grammar, and an Amharic dictionary and grammar. Habte Mariam Marcos, "Scholarship on the Ethiopian Languages – Retrospect and Prospect" in *Silver Jubilee Anniversary of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies*, Richard Pankhurst and Taddese Beyene, eds. (Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University, 1990), 97.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. William A. Smalley, *Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in Modern Missionary Movements* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1991).

In many cases, we know that Bible translations have been done by a group of experts gathered together for the task. Example: King James I first initiated The King James English Bible translation, as he appointed 54 men as translators.<sup>52</sup> Most of these translators were leading classical and oriental scholars in England, Anglican or puritan, with some laymen scholars. The same holds for the revision process of the English Bible that took place in 1881 and 1885: 16 scholars were appointed to supervise the project, and 54 translators were assigned.<sup>53</sup> By contrast, Abba Abraham's Amharic Bible translation was completed by one man, that is, himself, except for the help he received from Asselin, the French consul in Cairo.

The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), founded in 1804 as a voluntary association for the wider circulation of the Holy Scriptures in Britain and abroad, was the result of the evangelical revival that revitalized many evangelical churches in Europe.<sup>54</sup> When the society started collecting MSS to publish the Bible in Amharic, it was able to obtain only Ludolf's version of the Psalter of 1701 in Ge'ez. Job Ludolf, the German scholar and diplomat, worked closely with Abba Gorgorious of MakaneSelassie in Amhara.<sup>55</sup>

In December 1818 William Jowett, the agent of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) Mediterranean, came to Egypt and met Asselin de Cherville, the French vice-consul in Cairo, who owned a translation in manuscript of the entire Bible in Amharic. The

---

<sup>52</sup> Paul D. Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI:, Baker Academic Books, 1999) 305.

<sup>53</sup> Wegner, *The Journey from Texts to Translations*, 305.

<sup>54</sup> Aren, *Evangelical*, 41.

<sup>55</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 55.

manuscript was the work of an Ethiopian monk from Gojjam by the name of Abba Abraham.<sup>56</sup>

Reflecting on Ethiopian history in connection with Bible translation, Jowett made the following observation: “Instead of attempting to torture the Abyssinians into Popery, the Jesuits in the courts of Gonder could have worked on the Holy Scriptures in the vernacular, and Christian missions would have long made a difference in Africa.”<sup>57</sup>

### 1.6 Translation and Translation Theories

Translation can be defined as an attempt to communicate “what was first expressed in one language by expressing it in another.”<sup>58</sup> Leeuwen consider translation as:

A communicative *process* in which the translator in effect “quotes” (directly or indirectly) what was first written in an SL in a TL [a source language (SL) in a target language (TL)]. The communicative goal is that readers in the TL will understand what Isaiah, Matthew, or Paul wrote in a SL, and ultimately what God said over many generations to Israel and the human race through them. Crucial here is that readers of translated Bibles expect the translator to give them, as faithfully as possible, *what God said* through the human biblical authors.<sup>59</sup>

By nature, translation involves at least two languages and a message.<sup>60</sup> Language, and any text in a language, involves both *form* and *meaning*. Everyone would agree that *meaning* is the primary concern in translation. Yet how to handle *form* has occasioned

---

<sup>56</sup> Aren, *Evangelical*, 42.

<sup>57</sup> Crummey, *Priests and Politicians*, 12.

<sup>58</sup> Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, “Translation” in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*. (Keiven J. Vanhoozer, ed) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic; London: SPCK, 2005), 812.

<sup>59</sup> Van Leeuwen, “Translation”, 812.

<sup>60</sup> For detailed discussion see John Beekman and John Callow, *Translating the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), 19-21.

wide diversity of opinion. Modern Bible translators have followed various translational philosophies and as a result a proliferation of translations exists which reflects the widest possible applications of specific methodologies.<sup>61</sup>

Translation theories have changed over the course of time. Contemporary Bible translators approach their task very differently from the way in which the ancient translators went about their work. “The aims and the self-understanding of ancient and of modern biblical translators were radically different.”<sup>62</sup> It seems reasonable to generalize that ancient translators were oriented toward the original text, while modern translators are oriented toward the reader.<sup>63</sup> As a result, many ancient translations seem to be ‘word for word’ type of translation. On the contrary, modern translators tend to render the text in a way which is more intelligible to the reader. This type of translation is normally referred as ‘sense for sense’ or ‘dynamic equivalence’.<sup>64</sup> “Virtually all ancient biblical translations, into whatever language, are basically text-oriented rather than reader-oriented.”<sup>65</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Nida sees four periods of translating the scriptures: Early Church, Reformation, Modern Missionary Endeavor, Indigenous National Translations. See Eugene A. Nida, “The Book of a Thousand Tongues,” *The New Testament Student and Bible Translation*, ed. John H. Skilton (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1978), 1-4.

<sup>62</sup> Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition*, 11.

<sup>63</sup> This might not be always the case. There are some ancient translations like LXX which in some instances deviate from the original text.

<sup>64</sup> Ancient translators thus tend to be more literal and modern translators tend to be more free and interpretive.

<sup>65</sup> Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition*, 11.

### 1.7 Some Amharic Translations of the Bible

There are many different translations of the Bible in Amharic, the first being Abba Abraham's. A new translation was being prepared, under Emperor Haile Selassie's patronage, when the Italian army invaded. This manuscript was later sent to Britain and printed, but most of the copies were destroyed in a fire during the bombing of London. This translation is sometimes known as the "Buxton" translation, after the British BCMS missionary named Alfred Buxton who was instrumental in sending the manuscript from occupied Ethiopia to Britain. This same basic translation, with some changes, was later printed in the USA, with funds raised by Rev. Donald Barnhouse. Sadly, after it was printed, this translation (sometimes referred to as the "Barnhouse New Testament") was found to contain serious errors so that most copies were destroyed.<sup>66</sup>

In 1962, a new Amharic translation was printed, again under the patronage of the Emperor, by the Ethiopian Bible Society. This version of the Bible, first published in 1962, was the fulfillment of the express desire of Haile Selassie.<sup>67</sup> Ullendorff has the following to say regarding this translation: "I can find no evidence that the new recension ['Emperor' translation] has been subjected to any perceptible collation with the Hebrew and Greek originals. The Amharic has certainly been modernized and 'up-dated'; the order of words, in particular, has been brought into conformity with contemporary stylistic tastes in Amharic. The use of Abu Rumi's [Abba Abraham's] text can be clearly

---

<sup>66</sup> Brian Fargher, *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944* (Studies of Religion in Africa, 16) (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 291.

<sup>67</sup> Eskil Forslund, *The Word of God in Ethiopian Tongues: Rhetorical Features in the Preaching of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus* (Uppsala: International Tryck, 1993), 38. Ullendorff 1968, 62

discerned, even where the changes that have been introduced are by no means negligible.’<sup>68</sup>

A new translation was printed in 1987, and a revised version of this in 2005. Also, Living Bibles International produced a New Testament in 1985 and the International Bible Society produced a complete Bible in 2001. There is still another recent translation by the Ethiopian Bible Study, published in 2007.

### 1.8 Types of translations

What sort of Bible version should the modern translator consider authoritative and translate from? Many would agree with the following answer: Hebrew text for the Old Testament and Greek text for the New Testament. However, some disagree with this idea.<sup>69</sup> Assuming that Abba Abraham’s translation was primarily based on the Ge’ez

---

<sup>68</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 67.

<sup>69</sup> Brock argues that this cannot be the only possible answer. He further argues: “Certainly most modern translations set out to translate from the Hebrew and the Greek, but even here problems arise; the edition of the Hebrew Bible used is in fact a medieval Jewish one where the originally consonantal text goes back more or less in its present form to the late first century AD, but in many cases (especially in poetic books) this consonantal text can be read with different vowels, providing somewhat a different meaning. Modern translators normally follow the medieval Jewish tradition of understanding the text, but it would also be possible to take the consonantal text as the starting point, without necessarily following the particular interpretation of reading the vowels which the medieval tradition provides...” Sebastian Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2006), 14. In defense of his position Brock employs two terms which are relevant for his argument: “literary authenticity” and “scriptural authenticity” He defines the two terms as follows: “Literary authenticity” refers to the exact wording of the original author (which in the case of Hebrew is unattainable) and “scriptural authenticity” refers to a form of biblical text which has been held by the religious community as authoritative” (Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition*, 14). He claims that these two terms have a distinction which in turn has important consequences. Namely, literary authenticity can be applied only to a single form of text while scriptural authority refers “simultaneously to

version (as I will argue in Chapter 5), it can be categorized as both a secondary (NT) and tertiary (OT) translation: a translation of a translation, and a translation of a translation of a translation (see the following table).

Type of Translation	Definition	Example
Primary translation	A translation directly from the Greek or Hebrew text	LXX, Latin Vulgate (for the most part)
Secondary translation	A translation from a primary translation, or a translation of a translation	Old Latin Versions (translated from the LXX in the Old Testament)
Tertiary translation	A translation of a secondary translation, or a translation of a translation of a translation	Georgian version (translated from the Syriac or Armenian versions that were translated from the LXX)

Taken from Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism*, 270.

---

different forms of text” (Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition*, 14-15). Hence, if we take the Hebrew Bible as example, we can say that scriptural authenticity applies to both the medieval Jewish edition of the Hebrew and the Hebrew text which was used by the translators of the LXX. But this does not mean that scriptural authenticity is confined only to the Hebrew Text and the LXX; “it applies just as much to the ancient versions, the Greek Septuagint and the Syriac Peshitta, since both these translations have been regarded as authoritative biblical texts by the communities using them” (Brock, *The Bible in Syriac Tradition*, 15). The logical conclusion of this argument is that modern biblical translations should not be made exclusively from the Hebrew or Greek.

### 1.9 The Impact of the Translation

In the 19th century, Emperor Tewodros welcomed missionaries who were skilled in practical and technical craftsmanship. This is because Tewodros, in his attempt to unify Ethiopia, wanted to use the technical skills of the missionaries to produce weapons. This, of course, was contrary to the purpose of the missionaries in coming to Ethiopia. As a result, the task of promoting the Gospel and Bible study in the Gondar area proved to be difficult.

The distribution of the Bible led to the “Bible Movement” in the city of Tsezega in the Hamasen area west of Asmara. Subsequently, the important work of two local pastors, *qes* Solomon Atsqua and *qes* Zer’a Tsion Muse, grew out of this movement. They had been co-workers of the Swedish Mission that eventually reached out the Gospel to Nekempte and Nejo (western Wollega). *Qes* Solomon Atsqua and *qes* Zer’a Tsion Muse and their followers are referred to as “Bible readers”.<sup>70</sup>

### 1.10 What is the underlying text (*vorlage*)?

Most versions of the Bible in Africa and the rest of the world have been translated from English, French or some other modern language, but not from Greek or Hebrew. In all such cases the translations were made from other translations (secondary translations).<sup>71</sup>

In the case of Abba Abraham’s translation there are disagreements on the question of the

---

<sup>70</sup> The name “Bible readers” was given to the group of Ethiopian Orthodox priests and followers who most probably received illumination and inspiration of salvation by reading vernacular scripture in Amharic translation.

<sup>71</sup> Fabian, “The Need for Indigenization”, 30.

underlying *vorlage*. Various scholars have suggested various answers. “He [Abba Abraham] used as his source an Arabic version, and script in Hebrew and Syriac, together with Ge’ez.”<sup>72</sup> Aren says, “Presumably he [Abba Abraham] knew [a] portion of the Ge’ez Bible by heart or else had access to it in manuscript.”<sup>73</sup> Still others suggest Arabic. Ullendorff has to say the following about *vorlage*, “critical study of the Amharic Bible is not sufficiently advanced to throw any light on this question [regarding *vorlage*, Abba Abraham’s knowledge of Arabic and Asselin’s knowledge of Hebrew, Greek and Syriac].”<sup>74</sup> In a lecture delivered to students of Ethiopian Graduate School of Theology, the former consultant for Ethiopian Bible Society, Dr. Mikere Silassie, argued that Abba Abraham’s translation was mainly done from the King James version.<sup>75</sup>

### 1.11 Editions of the Translation

A number of changes have been introduced to Abba Abraham’s translation since the first edition. Most of these have been minor, but some of them reflect the thoughts of editors. “Ludwig Krapf published an improved edition of this Amharic Bible in the 1870s. It becomes the very key to Protestant mission work in the nineteenth century. Missionaries distributed the Bible in their evangelical effort to reform the Orthodox Church from within. In certain northern monasteries, the printed Amharic Bible caused distrust and

---

<sup>72</sup> Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 156.

<sup>73</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 43.

<sup>74</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 64.

<sup>75</sup> Lecture given on the topic of Ge’ez Bible Translation, May 2009.

fear, as well as great expectations. Here indeed was a 'revolutionary prepared in the womb of the established society', to use Karl Mark's expressive metaphor."<sup>76</sup>

Johann Martin Flad with the Falasha convert Aleqa Mikael Aregawi (1850-1931) worked on editing and publishing the Bible translation of Abba Abraham, which appeared in a one-volume edition in 1886.<sup>77</sup> Even today, the Abba Abraham Bible translation is held in high regard within some churches in Ethiopia. It remains uncertain whether Flad used material of earlier translators such as Peter Heyling (1607/08-1652).

---

<sup>76</sup> Sundkler and Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa*, 157.

<sup>77</sup> Johann Martin Flad (1831-1915), a German-born missionary, spent about 60 years in Ethiopia. Among his other activities, he worked to convert the Falashas (Ethiopians of Jewish faith), and produced an Amharic translation of the Old Testament that was widely read throughout the country. Cf. *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* for more discussion.

## Chapter Two: Biographical Note

### 2.1 Biography

We do not have many sources for the biography of Abba Abraham. One resource we do have is an exchange of letters by missionaries, the French consul and the BFBS. A second major source is the story recorded by William Jowett (1824). These letters and records are found in archives in London and are not readily accessible to researchers. So, in this section I must depend on secondary data.

Abba Abraham was a monk from Gojjam, though we do not know which part. He was educated in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, but it is not clear if he was a monk, priest, or had any official status within the church.<sup>78</sup> According to Jowett, Abba Abraham was a teacher of James Bruce and Sir William Jones.<sup>79</sup> Abba Abraham had acted as an interpreter and instructor for Bruce in Gondar in 1872, at the age of 22.<sup>80</sup> However, this is not corroborated by other evidence (e.g. Bruce's writings).<sup>81</sup> Abba Abraham also served as a translator for William Jones. "We are not told what he is supposed to have taught that great orientalist", writes Edward Ullendorff, "but presumably it was a

---

<sup>78</sup> Since he had a good knowledge of Ge'ez it might be safe to assume that he had mastered the Ge'ez Bible.

<sup>79</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 63.

<sup>80</sup> Michael Kleiner, "Abu Rumi" in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia*, 54. Born around 1750 and died 1818 or 1819 in Cairo (in Jerusalem according to Pankhurst: Richard Pankhurst, "Two Forgotten Ethiopian Scholars of the Late 18<sup>th</sup> and Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century: Abu Rumi and Liq Atsqu, *Ethiopian Observer* 12: 1969,140.

<sup>81</sup> Kleiner, "Abu Rumi" in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopia*, 54.

smattering of Ge'ez and Amharic poetry".<sup>82</sup> Kleiner said that Abba Abraham studied under Sir William Jones.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.2 Journey to Jerusalem (pilgrimage)

The practice of pilgrimage to the Holy Land by Ethiopians is believed to have started in the early days of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom. At the age of twenty-eight Abba Abraham went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem by way of Egypt. "From the Holy Land he went on to Syria, Armenia, and Persia. He even went as far as India before he returned to Ethiopia."<sup>84</sup> It can be assumed that his encounter with different cultures enabled him to master various languages more easily.

He stayed for some period in Ethiopia. At the age of about 50, he went to Egypt for a second time. While he was in Cairo he fell seriously ill, but he was found and "snatched from the arms of death" by the French vice-consul, M. Asselin de Cherville, "to whom he become strongly attached."<sup>85</sup>

The French vice-consul found that Abba Abraham "was not only a linguist, who spoke Persian, Italian, Greek and other languages, but also a true scholar and master of Ethiopian literature, ... [he] set him to translate the entire Bible into Amarinya, the

---

<sup>82</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 66.

<sup>83</sup> Kleiner, "Abu Rumi" in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 54.

<sup>84</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 42.

<sup>85</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, quoting Asselin to BFBS, in 1814, quoted in BM/MM 1817 555-556; Jowett 1822 200.

vernacular spoken at Gonder.”<sup>86</sup> The French Consul in Cairo provided Abba Abraham with food, lodging, medical care, and writing materials.

When William Jowett of the Church Missionary Society in the Mediterranean came to Egypt and met the French consul Asselin in December 1818, the plan for publishing the Amharic Bible translation was born.<sup>87</sup>

### 2.3 The Translation Process

Ethiopia is among the few African countries with a long history of literature. It has also had the privilege of preserving that literature. A number of texts which have been lost in their Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic versions now exist only in Ge’ez translation. The literary tradition of Ethiopia contains both translation and original works. “Medieval Ethiopia was a country surrounded by nations with little or no literary traditions. Our ancestors, therefore, received little inspiration from their neighbors. Always striving to learn more about Christianity, Ethiopians never abated their trek to the north. The road from Ethiopia to Egypt, Cyprus, the Holy Land, and (sometimes) Armenia was littered with the relics of these persistent and stubborn Ethiopians.”<sup>88</sup>

These two, Abba Abraham and the French consul, spent every Tuesday and Saturday together translating the Bible for about ten years. Abba Abraham translated the Bible

---

<sup>86</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 43.

<sup>87</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 43.

<sup>88</sup> Getachew Haile, “Highlighting Ethiopian Traditional Literature” in *Silence Is Not Golden: A Critical Anthology of Ethiopian Literature* (Tadesse Adera & Ali Jimal Ahmed, eds.). Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 1995), 39-40.

verse by verse with great care while Asselin helped him by explaining difficult words and phrases with the aid of “the Hebrew original, the Syriac version, or the Septuagint as well as a few glossaries and commentaries if Abraham himself had trouble finding the expression in Ge’ez.”<sup>89</sup>

In Ethiopia Ge’ez was and is considered to be a sacred language. This might be the reason why the Ethiopian Orthodox Church did not attempt to translate the Bible into Amharic. The same was true of medieval church history in Europe. When John Wycliffe translated Jerome’s Latin *Vulgate Bible* into English in the fourteenth century, his translation was rejected by the church because English was considered as a language for the common people.<sup>90</sup> The Bible was meant for ministers and the learned; it was not to be made easily accessible to all members of the church. As Fabian noted, “The monopoly of the Bible being understood by only certain categories of people was being threatened with the translation of the Bible into English.”<sup>91</sup> We do not know what motivated Abba Abraham to translate the Bible into Amharic. Perhaps it might have been to create a tool for evangelism, as part of the missionaries’ agenda.<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 43; cf. CMS/CM/E 3. 79: Asselin to Jowett, 1819.05.31.

<sup>90</sup> Jerome translated the Bible into Latin during the fourth century.

<sup>91</sup> Dapila N. Fabian, “The Need for Indigenization of Bible Translations for African Christians” in *African Ecclesial Review* Volume 40, Number 1, February, 1998, 22.

<sup>92</sup> The missionaries considered the Bible in the local language to be a very powerful tool for converting people to Christianity.

## 2.4 His Death

Upon the completion of the translation process Abba Abraham wanted to go to Jerusalem 'there to die and be buried'. In Jerusalem "Soon after his arrival there, the plague made its appearance, and he fell a victim to it."<sup>93</sup> He died of the plague at the beginning of 1818.

## 2.5 Asselin and Jowett

When Asselin met Jowett, Asselin agreed to be part of the process of distribution of the vernacular Bible. The translation of Abba Abraham consists of about 9,539 pages in small octavo "in the handwriting of the translator."<sup>94</sup> Asselin requested the "repayment of actual expenses" and the Bible Society accepted his offer. He received £ 1,250. He took the translation to Britain where it was typeset and printed. These printed copies were sent back to Ethiopia. According to Ullendorff, "Abu Rumi's version, with some changes and amendments, held sway until the Emperor Haile Sellassie I ordered a new translation of the entire Bible which appeared in 1960/1."<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 43 quoting Burckhardt's letter 1818.03. 25. Christopher Burckhardt was a Swiss clergyman who traveled in the countries of the Near East studying the religious situation in the region.

<sup>94</sup> Aren, *Evangelical Pioneers*, 43.

<sup>95</sup> Ullendorff, *Ethiopia and the Bible*, 66.

## Chapter Three: Brief History of Amharic Literature

### 3.1 A Brief History of Amharic Literature/Language History

Amharic is the second most widely spoken Semitic language, next to Arabic. It is estimated that around 80% of the present Ethiopian population speak Amharic as a first or second language.<sup>96</sup> This brief chapter attempts to argue that Abba Abraham's translation contributed greatly to the development of Amharic literature.

Amharic belongs to the Ethio-Semitic language family, with Ge'ez, Tigre, Tigrinya, Argobba, Harari, Gurage and Gafat. "A. [mharic] had been the language of the royal court and the dominant political elite in Ethiopia since the rise of the Solomonic dynasty at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> cent."<sup>97</sup>

Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia, was originally spoken in northern Ethiopia in the regions south of Tigray (Lasta, Amhara, Goggiam, Shoa), where the Amharas held political supremacy from about 1270 (Solomonic dynasty). Because of this, Amharic has been the dominant language of Ethiopia down to the present day, where it is spoken in almost all parts of the country at least as a second language.

---

<sup>96</sup> Meyer, Ronny and Richter, Renate, *Language Use in Ethiopia from a Network Perspective: Result of Sociolinguistic Survey Conducted among High School Students* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003) 40.

<sup>97</sup> David L. Appleyard, "Amharic" in *Encyclopedia Aethiopica* (vol 1), 233.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when Amharic begins. However, many scholars agree that it began before the 13<sup>th</sup> century “in a region on the southern fringes of the old Aksumite heartland.”<sup>98</sup>

It is believed that Ge’ez was used as a spoken language only until the 12th century.<sup>99</sup> Yet it continued to be the major literary language of Ethiopia until the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>100</sup> Amharic became a literary language only long after its birth. We have “modern” written documents available in Amharic already from a century ago. But unlike the other modern Ethiopian languages except Harari, Amharic is also documented in an ancient phase, consisting of different kinds of texts:

1) The first attested written Amharic documents known to us are the the eleven Royal Songs written in honor of the Ethiopian kings between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>101</sup> These texts are sometimes called “Ge’ez-Amharic” because their language seems to be

---

<sup>98</sup> David L. Appleyard, “Amharic” in *Encyclopedia Aethiopia* (vol. 1), 233.

<sup>99</sup> However, Ge’ez continued to be used as a religious and scholarly language. As the official language of the country, Amharic was introduced. Ge’ez was called “the language of the Books”, and Amharic “the language of the kings”. Ayele Teklehaymanot, “Early Christian Traditional Sources in the Ethiopian Ghe’ez Literature”, *Ethiopian Review (Vol. 2)* (Addis Ababa: Capuchin Franciscan Institute of Philosophy and Theology, 2000), 237.

<sup>100</sup> Renate Richter, “Some Linguistics Peculiarities of Old Amharic Texts’ in *Ethiopia in Broader Perspectives: Papers on the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies* vol. 1 (eds., Katsuyoshi Fukui; Eisei Kurimoto; Masayoshi Shigeta) (Kamigyo, Kyoto: Shokado Book Seller, 1997), 543.

<sup>101</sup> These are eleven royal songs which praise the power and glory, the courage and heroism of the famous Ethiopian kings Amda Seyon (1314-1344), Yeshaq (1414-1429), Zara Yaeqob (1434-1468) and Asnaf Saggad or Galawdewos (1540-1559). These eleven royal songs are preserved in the libraries of Paris, Oxford, and Frankfurt.

somewhere between Ge'ez and Amharic—although it is difficult to say if it was a real language, or Amharic with a strong influence of literary Ge'ez.

2) The morphological and lexical Amharisms in the historical Chronicles, the language of which is considered as a particular kind of Ge'ez (the *lassanä tarik* “the language of history”). During medieval times all sort of writings, secular, religious and historical, were written in Ge'ez. Richter has the following to say about the Amharic language during this time: “Like pearls in a mussel the old Amharic texts are usually embedded in chronicles and other literary writings in Ge'ez. Beside these songs there exist other Amharic texts with riddles, proverbs and folktales, manuscripts on medicine, on historical events or documents on problems of everyday life written between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.”<sup>102</sup>

These written documents “offer the rare chance for detailed studies in the history of this [Amharic] language.”<sup>103</sup> It is possible to assume, based on the language and style of these songs, that the Amharic language had already gone through a considerable stage of internal linguistic development.<sup>104</sup>

---

<sup>102</sup> Richter, “Some Linguistic Peculiarities of Old Amharic Texts”, 543.

<sup>103</sup> They also hold importance for literary and historical research. Cf. Richter, “Some Linguistic Peculiarities of Old Amharic Texts”, 543.

<sup>104</sup> Richter, “Some Linguistic Peculiarities of Old Amharic Texts”, 543.

3) Various texts of the 17th century: a) the small theological treatises against the Catholics, in particular the Jesuits;<sup>105</sup> b) the magico-medical treatises; c) the *sāwasaw* (“stair”, a term translated from Coptic), Geez-Amharic dictionaries, frequently preceded by a grammatical introduction; d) the writings of the German Job Ludolf (the father of Ethiopian studies in Europe), notably his grammar and dictionary of Amharic;<sup>106</sup> e) the writing down of oral commentary in the form of marginal notes (*andəmta* commentary) is another development of Amharic literature.

### 3.2 The Translation’s Role in Language History

Abba Abraham’s translation represents an enormous contribution to the development of Amharic literature. Ge’ez serves as the source of lexical innovations needed by Amharic to meet the needs of the translator.

The actual quantity of words and lines of attested Amharic prior to Abba Abraham’s Bible translation is tiny. The translation increased the corpus enormously. However, most scholars who have studied the history, development and grammar of Amharic have simply overlooked this translation.

---

<sup>105</sup> “In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese are reported to have written some texts in Amharic in order to promote their Catholic faith. The religious confrontation caused by their attempts gave an impetus to native counter-activity in creating Amharic writings.” Denis Nosnitsin, “Amharic Literature” in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, 236.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. W. Leslau, *Reference Grammar of Amharic* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1995) and Lecture notes of Paolo Marrassini for Historical Linguistics and Philology class (Addis Ababa: Unpublished Lecture Notes, 2007), 64-65.

Recently Girma Demeke has published a book entitled *The Origin of Amharic*, 2009. In the appendix, various written documents are mentioned which he assumes will be helpful for the study of Amharic. He mentions some imperial songs, a lyric for Zar'a Ya'qob, a poem praising the deeds of Gelawdewos, *Timhirta Haymanot* and Debtara Zenebe's *Meshafe C'hawata Sigawe Wamanfesawi*. Compared with the other written documents *Meshafe C'hawata Sigawe Wamanfesawi*, written by the chronicler of king Tewodros around 1850, is (relatively) quite large. But Abba Abraham's translation predates this book, is much larger, and has much more significance for the study of Amharic.

## **Chapter Four: Linguistics and Stylistic Features of the Text**

The comparison of Abba Abraham's translation with modern Amharic leads to interesting findings from the morphological, orthographical, syntactical as well as semantical point of view. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the text's linguistic peculiarities. The discussion is based almost entirely on the Gospel of Matthew (1824 edition). In some instances, I will mention other passages from the other Gospels.

Abba Abraham's Amharic language usage is much older than ours, and differs in many ways compared with current Amharic. Prior to the present research, there has been no scientific study undertaken of these differences.

The translation of Abba Abraham contains the following noteworthy features:

### **4.1 Stylistic Features of the Text**

#### **4.1a Divisions**

Abba Abraham's translation divides the text into chapters, verses, and subdivisions. Although there are no descriptive introductory words/phrases, the chapters and subsections are numbered and printed in red. The translation of Matthew is divided into the usual 28 chapters, with 101 subsections.<sup>107</sup>

#### **4.1b Lexical Innovations**

Much vocabulary in any language is culture-specific, and we can see this in Abba Abraham's translation. Example: Matt 6: 24

---

<sup>107</sup> The subsections are based on pericopes.

ለእግዚአብሔርና፡ ለከብት፡ ትገዙ፡ ዘንድ፡ አትችሉም።<sup>108</sup>

Literal translation: “You cannot be a servant for both God and cattle.” “Cattle” (ከብት, not ሀብት) is used here to translate “wealth”, which seems very natural in an Ethiopian context.

አዲስ፡ ፀጅ፡ አያስቀምጡ፡ ባረጁ፡ ጋኖች Matt. 9: 17 “Neither do men pour new *tej* into old jars”. Just as wine was a normal drink in Middle Eastern culture, *tej* was the common drink in the northern parts of Ethiopia during the translator’s time.

#### 4.1C Theology

It is believed that the Ge’ez version of the Bible was translated from the Septuagint. As a result, the Apocryphal books are included in the Ge’ez Bible and they are part of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church canon.<sup>109</sup> However, the translation of Abba Abraham did not include Apocryphal books. This might be an indication that the author subscribed to Protestant religious convictions, or that his French collaborator influenced him.

የቅዳሜው፡ ጌታ<sup>110</sup> (“The Lord of Saturday”), modern Amharic የሰንበት ጌታ (Matthew 12:8). The original Greek simply reads “Sabbath” but the translator, knowing that the Sabbath is Saturday, employed Saturday instead of Sabbath. It is one of the clearest pieces of evidences that no translation exists without interpretation.

---

<sup>108</sup> The Greek term *μαμωνᾶ* can refer to money, wealth, property.

<sup>109</sup> Cowley writes, “The Biblical corpus is recognized in Ethiopia as a limited group of writings, and is generally called ‘the 81 books’”; R. W. Cowley, “The Biblical Canon Of The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Today” *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 1974, 23: 318-323.

<sup>110</sup> ቀዳሜት means የመጀመሪያዬቱ (“the first”).

## 4.2 Linguistic Features of the Text

### 4.2a Syntax

In Amharic the normal word order is Subject, Object, and Verb (SOV). On the contrary, Ge'ez syntax is flexible. It is probably because of the influence of Ge'ez that we see some flexibility of word order in Abba Abraham's translation. For example:

3:17 ከሰማይ :መጸ: ድምጽ: ሲል: ልጅ:

Translation: "Came from heaven a voice saying 'my son'". In modern Amharic it would be ከሰማይ: ድምጽ:መጣ "From heaven a voice came"

11:25 እገዛልኻለሁ : አባት : ሆይ : የሰማይና : የምድር : ጌታ

Translation: "I will submit to you father, the Lord of heaven and earth". In modern Amharic it would be የሰማይና : የምድር : ጌታ: አባት : ሆይ: እገዛልኻለሁ

### 4.2b Phonology

The translator prefers the glottalized fricative *s'* (ጸ) instead of the glottalized stop *t'* (ጠ); the latter is more typical in modern Amharic. On the other hand, sometimes we see the reverse phenomenon: ተጠጠተና (regret) vs. modern Amharic (ተጸጸተና).

On the first page of the translation the language-name is written በአምጳርኛ instead of present-day በአማርኛ. This clearly archaic form of orthography reflects the older pronunciation.<sup>111</sup>

The pronoun ለእርሳቸው appears as ለርሳቸው, indicating a phonetic reduction of the glottal stop: lä'ərsačäw→lərsačäw "for him". Similarly we have ርሱም for እርሱም, and many similar examples.

---

<sup>111</sup> Some early Amharic literature also uses this form አምሐርኛ.

The letter ኸ is not common today in Amharic fidäl; instead it is written as ‘ሀ’. In the translation of Abba Abraham one finds many instances where ኸ is used instead of ‘ሀ’, especially in the 2msg ending. This surely reflects an earlier pronunciation [x], as in Tigrinya.

#### 4.2c Orthography

Four types of *h* are used in the translation (ሀ፣ ሐ፣ ኀ፣ ኸ), two *ts* (ጸ፣ ፀ), two *s* (ሰ፣ ስ), and two ‘*a*’ (አ፣ ዐ). Many words involving these sounds are spelled in a consistent way. Some examples:

ሕዝብ (not ህዝብ or ኀዝብ)

ዓለም (not አለም)

ከብ (not ዐብ)

ዮሐንስ (not ዮሀንስ or ዮኀንስ)

As in many manuscripts of Ge’ez, the distinction between ሰ and ስ is not always graphically clear.

#### 4.2d Interrogatives

Like contemporary Amharic the translation does not have any graphic sign for question mark.<sup>112</sup> This may sometimes be misleading to modern readers. The translation uses various interrogative words to indicate a question, just as in modern Amharic, e.g.

ምን፣ ለምን፣ -ን

Matthew 5:13 በምን፣ ይጣፍጣል

<sup>112</sup> The question mark (“?”) was borrowed only later from western languages.

Matthew 7:10 ግሣስ ቢለምነው። እባብን ይሰጠዋል። Translation: “If he asks for a fish, will he give a snake?” -ን is apparently used here as a question marker, not an object marker.

#### 4.2e Pronouns

እናንተ፣ እላንተ (You plural) vs. modern-day Amharic እናንት

እነርሳቸው (they) vs. modern-day Amharic እነርሱ. Here the -u of modern Amharic እነርሱ is replaced by the suffix -ቸው.

ለርሳቸው (for him (polite)) vs. modern day-Amharic ለእርሳቸው [see Phonology]

#### 4.3 Other Peculiar Features

In Abba Abraham’s Bible there is apparently no use of the explicit copular sentence construction as is found in modern Amharic.<sup>113</sup>

e.g. ልጁ እየበላ ነው።

The boy is eating

Perhaps this kind of sentence with copula *näw* might not have been known at the time of Abba Abraham, about two hundred years ago.

The absence of copula is found in all the ancient Semitic languages, including Ge’ez, except in a few cases.<sup>114</sup>

---

<sup>113</sup> Getachew, *The copula Näw*, 141

<sup>114</sup> Getachew, *The copula Näw*, 141-144

### 4.3a Punctuation Marks in the Text

Punctuation marks appear in all the manuscripts of the translation (1829, 1870, and 1886). Each word in the sentence is separated by two dots (:), also called colon.<sup>115</sup> The end of a sentence is marked by a double colon (::) which is used as a period. Western punctuation marks like the question mark (?), semicolon (;), explanation point (!) are absent in all the publications of Abba Abraham's Amharic Bible translation, except the publication of 1886, which has all the punctuation marks known from the later period.

Absence of punctuation can make a significant difference in the translation of several passages in Abba Abraham's Bible. The modern reader, if by chance s/he is not already familiar with the text of the Bible in some version, might not understand properly the true meaning intended by the author of the original Bible (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek). Many examples could be given from selected verses of the Gospels. For example,

John 3:4 reads:

**አእንዴት ይችላል ሰው ይወለድ ዘንድ እርሱም ሽማግሌ::**

Literal translation: "how is it possible for a man to be born, he (being) an elder"

In this sentence, we would expect a copula in modern Amharic: **እርሱም: ሽማግሌ: ሆኖ**. Without the copula, the sentence becomes hard to understand, as I checked with several informants. Thus this sentence in Abba Abraham's translation could be understood properly only from our modern knowledge of the Biblical text. If there had been a graphic question mark at the end, the meaning would have been clearer.

### 4.3b Vocabulary

---

<sup>115</sup> This practice is now being discontinued.

- የየሱስ (of Jesus) vs. modern Amharic የኢየሱስ
- ምሽት (wife) vs. modern Amharic ሚስት
- ጮኛህን (fiancé) vs. modern Amharic እጮኛን
- ምስርም (Egypt) vs. modern Amharic ግብጽም<sup>116</sup>
- አጣሮችስ (tax collectors) vs. modern Amharic ቀራጮችስ
- ስንጣቂ (speck) vs. modern Amharic ጉድፍ
- አቤቱ (Lord) vs. modern Amharic ጌታ
- ይረፍቃሱ (sits) vs. modern Amharic ይቀመጣሉ
- ዖፎች (birds) vs. modern Amharic ወፎች
- በሰረሩ<sup>117</sup> (embarked) vs. modern Amharic በተሳረሩ
- ተጠጠተና (regret) vs. modern Amharic (ተጸጸተና) [see Phonology]
- የሩሳሌም (Jerusalem) vs. modern Amharic (እየሩሳሌም)
- የበክር (first born) vs. modern Amharic (የበክር)
- ከብት (cattle) vs. modern Amharic (ሃብት፣ ገንዘብ)
- ከቅባኑ ጋችሁ (nug oil)<sup>118</sup> vs. modern Amharic (ከዘይታችሁ)
- በመስጊድ (synagogue)<sup>119</sup> vs. modern Amharic (ምክራብ)<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Most likely the translator borrowed the word ምስር from Arabic. Αἴγυπτος “Egypt” is a very old word and the Ge’ez reads the same as the Greek ግብጽ. The Amharic rendering differs from the Greek and Ge’ez.

<sup>117</sup> The Ge’ez ሰረረ has a wider meaning: fly, fly forth, flee, leap up in the air, leap up on, rush upon, spring forth, assault, cover (of male animal), roam (Leslau, *A Comparative Dictionary of Ge’ez*, 514) At the same time in Amharic the meaning of ሰረረ could be taken as: jump, mount, climb, copulate (male animal). But the common usage of the verb ሰረረ in Amharic is to copulate (male animal). Obviously the translator used the verb in its archaic form. Cf. Kassahun, “Old Amharic Linguistic Feature[s]”, 12.

<sup>118</sup> It is formed from two words ቅባ ‘oil’ and ኑግ ‘kind of leguminous plant with oily seeds’.

<sup>119</sup> መስጊድ is not commonly used as a term for Christian or Jewish houses of prayer. It normally means “mosque”.

In this chapter I have briefly discussed two issues. First, I attempt to describe the text. Second, I discussed some of the linguistic features of Abba Abraham's Matthew Gospel. Compared to contemporary Amharic, it shows some noteworthy features in terms of syntax, phonology and vocabulary.

---

<sup>120</sup> In verse 6:2 the Amharic ተባቢ “assembly/congregation” is used instead of መስጊድ to refer to a synagogue.

## Chapter Five: Comparative Study: Matthew 5-7

Almost all Christians read the Bible in translation, and usually identify their translation with the true word of God. Because of this, “the quality and character of the translations people read have an extraordinary importance for shaping worldview and theology—whether for good or ill.”<sup>121</sup>

The work of translating the Bible presents special difficulties. Since the Scriptures are a source of both information and inspiration, Bible translations must be accurate as well as felicitous. They must be suitable for rapid scanning as well as for detailed study, and suitable for ceremonial reading aloud to large and small audiences. Ideally, they should be intelligible and even inviting to readers of all ages, of all degrees of education, and of almost all levels of intelligence. Such an ideal is, of course, virtually impossible to attain.<sup>122</sup>

Bible translations have increased tremendously beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many languages have their own version of the Bible, and multiple versions in the same language are not unusual.<sup>123</sup> “Thus, awareness of the nature of Bible translation and its limitation is crucial for the church’s well-being.”<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>121</sup> Van Leeuwen, “Translation”, 812.

<sup>122</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, “The Bible in Translation” 8-10

<sup>123</sup> See Metzger, “The Bible in Translation” 8-10.

<sup>124</sup> Van Leeuwen, “Translation”, 812.

During the time of Abba Abraham, translation was not yet developed as a scientific discipline. Today translators of the Bible are equipped with different tools of translation and with different kind of translation philosophies. As any Bible translator will admit, conveying a message from a source text to a receptor language is sometimes a very difficult task. As Maanga puts it, “This is because the language structure of the receptor language is to a certain degree different from that of the source text.”<sup>125</sup>

Translation demands 1) the translator’s clear understanding of the content and the author’s intention 2) a good command of the two (or more) languages involved 3) proper representation of the customary usage of the native language and 4) consideration of the environment of the people.<sup>126</sup>

### **5.1 Translation Problems**

Many translational problems are connected with real-world differences—distance in time, geography, culture, fauna and flora, artifacts, measurement, color vocabulary, etc. Some terms and phrases that we find in the Bible may have no equivalent in the receptor language.

Understanding this, the translator has in part to coin a language to make his translation relevant to the people for whom he is translating. Translators normally refer to this as

---

<sup>125</sup> Godson S. Maanga, “Occasional Hurdles in Translating the Bible into the Changga Language: Focus on selected sections” in *African Theological Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 1, 2008.

<sup>126</sup>

“re-creation”. The source text is faithfully re-rendered in equivalent forms of the receptor language.<sup>127</sup>

## 5.2 The Gospel of Matthew in Ge’ez Textual Tradition

Rochus Zuurmond, who has edited the critical edition of Matthew, argues that “The textual tradition of Matthew is much more complicated than the tradition of the Gospel of Mark.”<sup>128</sup> In the comparison process, I have simply followed Zuurmond’s textual edition of the Gospel of Matthew. The basic text I used is Zuurmond’s reconstructed text, which is accompanied by textual variants. This relieved me of the task of directly comparing various Ge’ez manuscripts by myself (an impossibly huge job). However, whenever I found it necessary I consulted other Ge’ez versions like the United Bible Societies Edition, as well as alternative readings in Zuurmond’s critical apparatus. It is probably impossible to know which Ge’ez text Abba Abraham was familiar with or used as *vorlage*, but surely it was a late version.

The Ge’ez Matthew Gospel is classified into five different text groups: the A-text, the B-text, the C-text, the D-text and the E-text. Zuurmond in his textual edition attempts to reconstruct the original reading by comparing these different manuscript traditions.

---

<sup>127</sup> See Jan P. Sterk, “Translation as re-creation” in *the Bible Translator*, ed. Paul Ellingworth, United Bible societies, Technical Papers Vol. 45, No. 1, January 1994 for a good discussion of re-creation in translation process.

<sup>128</sup> Rochus Zuurmond, *Matthew*, prefix.

### 5.3 Greek Text

Currently there are two versions of the Greek New Testament available in critical editions. The first is UBS 4 and the second is the Nestle-Aland edition. In the comparative process I will be using UBS 4.

### 5.4 Comparison of Matthew 5-7: Semantic and Interpretive Point of View

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus preaches five sermons: the sermon on the Mount in chapter 5-7, the missionary sermon in chapter 10, the sermon in the parable in chapter 13, the church sermon in chapter 18, and finally the eschatological sermon in chapters 24-25. The Sermon on the Mount is the longest discourse section in Matthew and it is Jesus' first on the ethics of the kingdom of God.

The comparative study will be a verse-by-verse analysis of Matthew 5-6, with a briefer treatment of Matthew 7. Each verse will be compared with the respective verses from Ge'ez and Greek. However, much emphasis will be give to the comparison with the Greek.<sup>129</sup> I will translate each verse of the Amharic into English and compare it with the respective Greek and Ge'ez versions.<sup>130</sup> In the process of comparison emphasis will be given to semantic and interpretive issues. This is done because the Bible is translated largely in order to be used in the church setting, mainly for homiletical and liturgical purposes.

---

<sup>129</sup> Greek is the standard against which all translations of the New Testament should be measured. Comparison with the Ge'ez is needed because many believe that Abba Abraham used a variety of sources when he translated the Bible. Comparing with Ge'ez and other relevant versions will shed light on the process of identifying the base text of the translation.

<sup>130</sup> Except where I find it particularly important I will not translate the Greek and Ge'ez verses separately.

Sometimes the Amharic translation shows some graphic errors. I will indicate what seems to be the right reading in square brackets “[ ]”. Often the Amharic text deviates from both the Greek and the Ge’ez; sometimes we could call this an error, sometimes a difference of interpretation. What is particularly interesting is when the Amharic agrees with the Ge’ez but not the Greek. Such cases provide a strong argument for a Ge’ez *vorlage*, and I will emphasize them in the discussion below.

## Matthew 5

**Matthew 5:1** ብዙ፡ የተሰበሰቡም፡ ባየ፡ ጊዜ፡ ወደ፡ ተራራ፡ ወጣ። በተቀመጠም፡ ጊዜ፡ ደቀ፡ መዝሙሮቹ፡ ወደ፡ ርሱ፡ መጡ። □

ወሰባ፡ ርእየ፡ ብዙ፡ ስራ፡ ሰርገ፡ ወሰተ፡ ወነበረ፡ ወመጽኢ፡ አርዳኢሁ፡ ንቤሁ።  
 Ἴδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος, καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσήλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ·

Translation: “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain. When he sat down his disciples came to him.” It correctly reflects both the Ge’ez and Greek.

**Matthew 5:2** አፋንም፡ ገለጸ፡ ለያስተምራቸው፡ እንዴህ፡ ሲል።

ወከሰተ፡ አፋሁ፡ ወመሀረሙ፡ ወይቤ፡  
 καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς λέγων,

Translation: “He opened his mouth to teach them, saying”. The Greek should be translated as “opening His mouth He began to teach them”. It is a New Testament idiom; Jesus’ teaching followed immediately after he went up on the mountain; it is not something to be done in the future. In the Greek the action is simultaneous, while the Ge’ez reading can be either simultaneous or future. The Amharic is an immediate future.

**Matthew 5:3** በንፍሳቸው፡ የተቸገሩ፡ የተመሰገኑ፡ ናቸው። መንግሥተ፡ ሰማያት፡ ለርሳቸው፡ ናትና።

ብፁዓን፡ አለ፡ ያገድዩ፡ ነፍሶሙ፡ እስመ፡ ሰሙ፡ ይእቲ፡ መንግሥተ ሰማያት  
Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Translation: “blessed are those who are lacking (troubled) in soul. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” The Greek πνεύματι (“spirit”) is translated into Amharic as “soul”. In theological discussion there is a debate as what constitutes a human being. Some argue that humans are constituted of soul, spirit and flesh. Others argue that in the scriptures the two terms “soul” and “spirit” are used interchangeably, so that human beings are composed of two elements, “soul/spirit” and body.<sup>131</sup> Here in the translation the Greek term spirit is translated as soul. The Ge’ez also, like the Amharic translation, renders it as ነፍሶሙ “soul”. This translation might mislead a modern reader if he/she is not aware of the original Greek. This is also a clear piece of evidence that the translator used his Ge’ez Bible knowledge in the translation process: both the Amharic and the Ge’ez use the same word ነፍሱ.

Matthew 5:4 ዛሬ፡ የሚያሰቅሱ፡ የተመሰገኑ፡ ናቸው፡ ደስ፡ ይላቸዋልና።  
ብፁዓን፡ አለ፡ ይላሕው፡ ይእዜ፡ እስመ፡ እሙንቱ፡ ይትፎሥሑ።  
μακάριοι οἱ πειθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.

Translation: “Blessed are those who mourn today, for they shall be happy” The Amharic introduces one new word which is not in the original Greek: ዛሬ “today”. The Ge’ez has ይእዜ “now” like Amharic, an indication of Ge’ez influence on the Amharic translation; the Greek has no adverb at all. Though the Greek is in the present tense, the temporal reference is not limited to the present. It has relevance for all time.

---

<sup>131</sup> These two beliefs are referred by theologians as trichotomist and dichotomist, respectively. “The major foundation of trichotomy is certain Scripture passages that either enumerate three components of human nature or distinguish between the soul and spirit”: Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 539 (cf. 1Thess 5:23; Heb 4:12).

ደስ፡ ይላቸዋልና “for they shall be happy” should be translated as “for they shall be comforted” to represent the original. Here ደስ፡ ይላቸዋልና is contrasted with የሚያለቅሱ “those who mourn”. The Ge’ez has ይትፎሥሐ like Amharic, again an indication of Ge’ez influence on the Amharic translation.

**Matthew 5:5 ገርኝም፡ የተመሰገኑ፡ ናቸው፡ ምድርን፡ ይወርሳሉና።**  
**ብፁዓን፡ የዋሃን፡ እስመ፡ እሙንቱ፡ ይወርስዋ፡ ለምድር፡**  
 μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.

Translation: “Blessed are the meek/gentle, for they shall inherit the earth”. This is a perfect translation which is in line with both the Greek and Ge’ez.

**Matthew 5:6 የሚራቡ የሚጸሙም፡ ስለ፡ ጽድቅ፡ የተመሰገኑ፡ ናቸው። ይፀግባሉና።**  
**ብፁዓን፡ አለ፡ ይርጎቡ፡ ወይጸምእዋ፡ ለጽድቅ፡ እስመ፡ እሙንቱ፡ ይጸግቡ።**  
 μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.

Translation: “Blessed are those who are hungry and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Apart from a syntactic problem the Amharic translation exhibits no major deviation from the Greek or the Ge’ez.

**Matthew 5:7 የሚምሩ ብፁአን ናቸው ይማራሉና**  
**ብፁዓን፡ መሐርያን፡ እስመ፡ እሙንቱ፡ ይምሕርዎሙ።**  
 μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.

Translation: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”

**Matthew 5:8 ልባቸው፡ የንጻ፡ የተመሰገኑ፡ ናቸው። እርሳቸው፡ እግዚአብሔርን፡ ያዩታልና።**  
**ብፁዓን፡ ንጹሐን፡ ልብ፡ እስመ፡ እሙንቱ፡ ይፈክላሉ፡ ለእግዚአብሔር።**  
 μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται.

Translation: “Blessed are those who are pure in heart, for they shall see God”

**Matthew 5:9** ዕርቅ፡ የሚያደርጉ፡ የተመሰገኑ፡ ናቸው። እርሳቸው፡ የእግዚአብሔር፡ ልጆች፡ ይባላሉና።

ብፁዓን፡ አለ፡ ይገብሩ፡ ሰላም፡ እስመ፡ እሙንቱ፡ ወሉደ፡ እግዚአ፡ ብሔር፡ ይከውኑ።

μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται.

Translation: “Blessed are those who are the peacemakers. They shall be called sons of God”. Here the Amharic translation is broken into two sentences. This affects the clear cause and effect sense of the Greek and Ge’ez versions: the cause is being peacemakers and the effect is being called sons of God. The word ὅτι “for” in each beatitude explains why the person is a blessed individual.

**Matthew 5:10** ስለጽድቅ፡ የተሰደዱ የተመሰገኑ፡ ናቸው። የመንግሥተ፡ ሰማያት፡ ስርሳቸው፡ ናትና።

ብፁዓን፡ አለ፡ ይሰድድዎሙ። በእንተ፡ ጽድቅ፡ እስመ፡ ሎሙ፡ ይእቲ፡ መንግስት፡ ሰማያት።

μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Translation: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake. For the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.”

**Matthew 5:11** እላንት፡ የተመሰገናችሁ፡ ናችሁ፡ በሰደብዎችሁ፡ ባሳደድዎችሁም፡ ጊዜ። በላያችሁ፡ ክፍውን፡ ሁሉ፡ ባሉ፡ ጊዜ፡ በሐሰት፡ ስለኔ።

ብፁዓን፡ አንትሙ፡ ሶቤ፡ ይጻእሉክሙ፡ ወይሀነገጉክሙ፡ ወይነብብ፡ ከሉ፡ እኩዩ፡ ላዕሌክሙ፡ በሐሰት፡ በእንቲአዩ፡

μακάριοί ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἰπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ’ ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.

Translation: “blessed are you, when men reproach you and persecute you. When they utter all evil against you falsely<sup>132</sup> on my account” This is also a good translation apart from a syntactic problem in the Amharic.

**Matthew 5:12** ደስ፡ ይበላችሁ፡ ሐሴትም፡ አድረጉ፡ ዋጋችሁ፡ ታላቅ፡ ነውና፡ በሰማያት፡ እንዴሁ፡ አሰደዋልና፡ ነቢያትን፡ ከላንተ፡ በፊት፡ የነበሩትን፡

<sup>132</sup>[ψευδόμενοι] “falsely” may or may not be original. It is not in all the manuscripts.

ሶቤሃ፡ ተፈሥሐ፡ ወተሐወዩ፡ እስመ፡ ብዙ፡ ወእቱ፡ ዕሴትክሙ፡ በሰማያት፡፡ እስመ፡ ከማሁ፡ ሰደድዎሙ፡ ለነቢያት፡ ለቀደምትክሙ፡፡  
 χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς· οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

Translation: “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, similarly they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Verses 11-12 offer an expansion of the final beatitude and, in addition to promising reward to those who face opposition because of their allegiance to Jesus (5:11), serve to remind them that this is not something new or unprecedented – they stand in line with the prophets who suffered for their allegiance to God.

Matthew 5:13 እላንተ፡ የምድር፡ ጨው፡ ናችሁ፡ ጨው፡ አልጫ፡ ከሆነ፡ በምን፡ ይጣፍጣል፡ የሚረባው፡ የለም፡፡ ሜዳ፡ ይወድቃል፡ እንጅ፡ ሰውም፡ ይረገጠዋል፡፡  
 አንትሙኬ፡ ወእት፡ ጼው፡ ለምድር፡ ወለእመሰ፡ ጼው፡ ለስጎ፡ በምንትነ፡ እንከ፡ የቁስምዎ፡ አልባክ፡ ለዘ፡ ይበቁዕ፡ እንከ፡ ዘእንበለ፡ ዘይገድፍዎ፡ አፍክ፡ ወይከይዶ፡ ሰብእ፡፡  
 ‘Υμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς· ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῆῃ, ἐν τίνι ἀλισθήσεται; εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει ἔτι εἰ μὴ βληθῆεν ἕξω καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων.

Translation: “You are the salt of the earth; if salt lost its taste, how can it gain taste? It will not be useful (to others or to itself). It will be thrown out and trodden underfoot by men.” By placing ‘Υμεῖς "you" in the emphatic position in the Greek text, Jesus was stressing the unique calling of His disciples. This is clearly rendered in the Amharic (እላንተ), as also in Ge’ez.

የሚረባው፡ የለም፡፡ involves a potentially ambiguous interpretation: it can mean two things “won’t be useful to others” or “won’t be useful to itself”.

Matthew 5:14 እላንት፡ የዓለም፡ ብርሃን፡ ናችሁ፡፡ አገርም፡ መሰወር፡ አይቻላትም፡ በተራራ፡ ላይ፡ ተሠርታ፡፡  
 አንትሙኬ፡ ወእቱ፡ ብርሃኑ፡ ለዓለም፡ ኢትክል፡ ተከብቶ፡ ሀገር፡ እንተ፡ ተሐንጸት፡ መልዕልተ፡ ደብር፡  
 ‘Υμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. οὐ δύναται πόλις κρυβῆναι ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη·

Translation: “You are the light of the world. A country which is built on a hill cannot be hidden”. Generally Amharic ሀገር or አገር means “country”; Ge’ez ሀገር and Greek πόλις can be “city” or “country”, though in context the intended meaning should be “city”. The Amharic translation retains the Ge’ez word, but narrows the meaning to just “country”.

**Matthew 5:15** መብራትም፡ አያበሩም፡ በንቅብ፡ ውስጥ ሊያኖሩት፡ በመቅረዘ፡ ላይ፡ እንጅ፡ እንዲያበሩ፡ በቤት ላለ፡ ሁሉ፡፡ ወኢየጎትው፡ ማጎቶት፡ ከመ፡ ይክድንዋ፡ ታሕተ፡ ከፈር፡ ዘእንበለ፡ ከመ፡ ያንበርዋ፡ ዲበ፡ ተቅዋማ፡ ወታብርህ፡ ለከሉ፡ ሰብእ፡ ዘውስተ፡ ቤተ፡

οὐδὲ καίουσιν λύχνον καὶ τιθέασιν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τὸν μῶδιον ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τὴν λυχνίαν, καὶ λάμπει πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐν τῇ οἰκίᾳ.

Translation: “No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, but on a stand so that it gives light to all in the house”

**Matthew 5:16** እንዴሁ፡ ብረሃናችሁ፡ ይብራ፡ በሰው፡ ፊት፡ መልካሙን፡ ሰራችሁን፡ አይተው፡ ያመሰግኑት፡ ዘንድ፡ የሰማዩን፡ አባታችሁን፡ ከማሁኩ፡ ይብራህ፡ ብርሃንክሙ፡ በቅድመ፡ ሰብእ፡ ከመ፡ ይርአዩ፡ ከመ፡ ሥነ፡ ምግባሪክሙ፡ ወያክኩትዎ፡ ለአቡክሙ፡ ዘበሰማያት፡፡

οὕτως λαμψάτω τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ὅπως ἴδωσιν ὑμῶν τὰ καλὰ ἔργα καὶ δοξάσωσιν τὸν πατέρα ὑμῶν τὸν ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Translation: “In the same way let your light shine before men, so that after seeing your good work they may praise your Father in heaven”

**Matthew 5:17** አይምሰላችሁ፡ የመጣሁ፡ አራትንና፡ ነቢያትን ለመሻር፡፡ ለመሻር፡ አልመጣሁም፡፡ ልፈጽም፡ እንጅ፡፡<sup>133</sup> አይምሰልክሙ፡ እስዐሮሙ፡ ለአራት፡ ወለነቢያት፡ ዘመጸእኩ፡ አይመጸእኩ፡ እንሥቶሙ፡ ዘእንበለ፡ ከመ፡ እፈጽሞሙ፡

Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἦλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας· οὐκ ἦλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι.

<sup>133</sup> The terms አራትንና፡ ነቢያት “the Law” and “the Prophets” refer to two of the three major divisions of the Hebrew Bible.

Translation: “Do not think that I came to abolish the law and the prophets. I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them”<sup>134</sup>

**Matthew 5:18** እውነት፡ ርንገራችሁ። ሰማይና፡ ምድር እስኪያልፍ፡ ድረስ፡ የወጣ፡ አንዲቱ፡ ወይም፡ ጽፈትዋ፡ አንዲቱ፡ ከኦሪት፡ አታልፍም፡ ሁሉ እስኪሆን፡ ድረስ። አሜን፡ እብላክሙ፡ እስመ፡ አመ፡ የኅልፍ፡ ሰማይ፡ ወምድር፡ አሐቲ፡ ኅርምት፡ ወአሐቲ፡ ቁርፀታ፡ ኢተኅልፍ፡ እምኦሪት፡ ወነቢያት።<sup>135</sup> እስከ፡ ኩሉ፡ ይከውን።  
 ἀμήν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν· ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰῶτα ἔν ἧ μία κεραία οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται.

Translation: “Let me tell you the truth. Until heaven and earth and pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” Introduced by □□□ (‘for’ [untranslated in Amharic]), verse 5:18 is tied tightly to 5:17 in the Greek. It explains Jesus’ understanding of the abiding authority of the law and so provides support for the assertion of 5:17. Cf. Davies and Allison 1988, 489: “In the present clause the conjunction shows that 5.18 establish the basis for 5.17.” This is not communicated in the Amharic translation. The two verses stand as if verse 18 has no connection with the preceding verse. The Ge’ez resembles the Amharic: it also does not preserve □□□.

In the Amharic syntax ሁሉ እስኪሆን፡ ድረስ comes at the end of the sentence and as a result it creates semantic ambiguity. In Greek γένηται “accomplished” refers to the law but in Amharic it put the reader into doubt as to what it refers to.

**Matthew 5:19** የሻረም፡ አንዲቱን ከነዚህ፡ ትእዛዛት፡ ከጥቃቅን፡ ከሰውም፡ እንዴሁ፡ ያስተማረ፡ በመንግስተ፡ ሰማያት፡ ታናሽ፡ ይባላል። አያደረገ፡ ግን፡ የሚያስተምር፡ ይኸ፡ ታላቅ፡ ይባላል። በመንግሥተ፡ ሰማያት።

<sup>134</sup> All three infinitives in 5:17 are infinitives of purpose, modifying □□□□□ and thus making statements (both positive and negative) about the goal(s) of Jesus’ mission (cf. Wallace 1996, 591).  
<sup>135</sup> Some Ge’ez texts do have the word ወነቢያት while others do not.

ወዘሰ: ያሰትት: አሐተ: እምእሳንቱ: ትእዛዝ: እለ: ያቀልል: ወይሚህር: ለሰብእ: ከመዝ: ትሐተ: ይከውን: በመንግስተ: ሰማያት:: ወዘሰ: ይሚህር: ወይገብር: ከመዝ: ለሰብእ: ዐቢዮ: ይከውን: ውእቱ: በመንግስተ: ሰማያት:

ὅς ἂν οὖν λύσῃ μίαν τῶν ἐντολῶν τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων καὶ διδάξῃ οὕτως τοὺς ἄνθρωπους, ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν· ὅς δ' ἂν ποιήσῃ καὶ διδάξῃ, οὗτος μέγας κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Translation: “Whoever rejects one of the least of these commands and teaches men to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:20 እኔ: ልንገራችሁ: ጽድቃችሁ: ካልበዛ: ከጸሐፍትና: ከፈሪሳውያን: ወደ መንግሥተ: ሰማያት: አትገቡም::

እብላክሙ: ለእመ: ኢያፈድፈድክሙ: ጸዲቀ: ፈድፋድ: እምጸሐፍት: ወእምፈሪሳውያን: ኢትበውእዋ: ለመንግሥተ: ሰማያት::

λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἂν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Translation: “Let me tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” The Greek λέγω γὰρ “I say to you” or “for I tell you” is a claim to having authority (cf. 7:29). It is translated more weakly as እኔ: ልንገራችሁ: “let me tell you”, which does not reflect a claim of authority.

Matthew 5:21 ሰማችሁ: የተባለውን: ለቀደሙት:: አትግደል:: የገደለ:: ይፈረድበታልና:: ሰማዕክሙ: ዘይቤልዎሙ: ለቀደምትክሙ: ኢትቅትሉ: ነፍስ: ወዘሰ: ቀተለ: ነፍስ: ይትኬነን: በደይን::

Ἴκούσατε ὅτι ἑρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις, Οὐ φονεύσεις· ὅς δ' ἂν φονεύσῃ, ἕνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει.

Translation: “You heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not kill’ and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’”

Matthew 5:22 እኔ ግን: እሳችሁ: አለሁ:: የተቆጣ: ሁሉ: በወንድሙ: በከንቱ: ይፈረድበታል:: ወንድሙንም: የሚለው: ጨርቅ: ለባሽ: በሻንጎ: ይፈረድበታልና:: እኔ ግን: እሳችሁ: አለሁ:: የተቆጣ: ሁሉ: በወንድሙ: በከንቱ: ይፈረድበታል:: ደንቆም: የሚለው: በገሃንም: እሳት: ይፈረድበታል::

አንሰኬ: እብላክሙ: ከመ: ከሉ: ዘያምዕዕ: ቢጾ: በከንቱ: ይትፈደይ: በደይን: ወዘይቤሎ: ለቢጾ: ጎሰር: ይትኬነን: በወውድ: ወዘይቤሎ: አብድ: ይትኬነን: በእሳተ: ገሃንም::

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ὀργιζόμενος τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ ἔνοχος ἔσται τῇ κρίσει· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ, Ῥακά, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῷ συνεδρίῳ· ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ, Μωρέ, ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός.

Translation: “But I say to you that anyone who is angry with his brother, he will be liable to judgment; and anyone who insults his brother, will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the fire of hell [lit. *Gehenna*].” Here the interesting difference between the three languages is that the Greek reads “hell of fire” while the Ge’ez and Amharic both read “fire of hell”.

**Matthew 5:23 መሥዋዕትኸንም፡ ብታቀርብ፡፡ በመሠዊያው ላይ፡፡ ከዚያም፡ ብታሰብ፡ ወንድምኸን አንዳት፡ አሳዝንኸው፡ እንዳለ፡ ወእምከመኬ፡ ታበውእ፡ መባእከ፡ ለቤተ፡ መቅደስ፡ ወተዘከርከ፡ በህየ፡ ከመ፡ የሐይለከ፡ ቢጸከከ፡**  
ἐὰν οὖν προσφέρῃς τὸ δῶρόν σου ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον κἀκεῖ μνησθῆς ὅτι ὁ ἀδελφός σου ἔχει τι κατὰ σοῦ,

Translation: “When you offer your sacrifice/gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother has something against you,”

**Matthew 5:24 መሥዋዕተኸን፡ ከዚያ፡ ተወው፡ በመሠዊያው፡ ፊት፡ አስቀድመኸም፡ ሒድ፡፡ ከወንድምህ፡ ጋራ፡ ታረቅ፡ጋላም፡ ተመልሰህ፡ መሥዋዕትኸን፡ አቅርብ፡፡ ጎድግ፡ ህየ፡ መባእከ፡ ወሐር፡ ቅድመ፡ ተኳነን፡ ምስለ፡ ቢጽከ፡ ወገቢአከ፡ አብእ፡ መባእከ፡፡**  
ἄφες ἐκεῖ τὸ δῶρόν σου ἕμπροσθεν τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου καὶ ὑπάγε πρῶτον διαλλάγηθι τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, καὶ τότε ἔλθων πρόσφερε τὸ δῶρόν σου.

Translation: “Leave your gift there before the altar and first go and be reconciled to your brother, and then later come and offer your gift.”

**Matthew 5:25 ከጸላትኸ፡ ጋራ፡ ተስማማ፡ ፈጥነኸ፡ ከርሱ፡ ጋራ፡ በምንገድ፡ ሳለህ ጸላትኸ፡ ሳገረ፡ ገዢ፡ አሳልፎ፡ እንዳይሰጥኸ፡ አገረ፡ ገዢም፡ ለሳራ፡ ያሰጥኸል፡፡**  
ወኩን፡ ጠቢብ፡ ለዕድዉከ፡ ፍጡነ፡ እንዘ ሀሎ፡ ምስሌከ፡ ወሰተ፡ ፍኖት፡ ዘእንበለ፡ ያብጽሕከ፡ በእደ፡ ዕድዉከ፡ ጎበ፡ መኮንን፡ ወመኮንን፡ ይሜጥወከ፡ ለወዓሊሁ፡ ወወዓሊሁ፡ ይሞቅሐከ፡፡ ወደ፡ ግዞትም፡ ትገባለህ፡፡

ἴσθι εὐνοῶν τῷ ἀντιδίκῳ σου ταχὺ, ἕως ὅτου εἶ μετ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ, μήποτε σε παραδῶ ὁ ἀντίδικος τῷ κριτῇ καὶ ὁ κριτῆς τῷ ὑπηρέτῃ καὶ εἰς φυλακὴν βληθῆσῃ·

Translation: “Come to terms quickly with your opponent while you are on the way lest your opponent hand you over to the governor and the governor to the guard, and you be thrown into prison.” The implication (in all three languages) is that you should reach a quick agreement even while you are still en route to the court.

**Matthew 5:26** በውንት፡ እንግርካለሁ፡ እንዳትወጣ፡ ከዚያ፡ አንዲት፡ ዲዋኒ፡ ስንኳ፡ ስትቀርኽ፡ እስከ፡ ሰጥ፡ ድረስ።  
አሜን፡ እብላክ፡ ከመ፡ እትወጃለሁ፡ እምሆየ፡ እስከ፡ ትሰልጥ፡ ደኋራተ፡ ገመሰ።  
ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃς ἐκεῖθεν, ἕως ἂν ἀποδῶς τὸν ἕσχατον κοδράντην.

Translation: “Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.”

**Matthew 5:27** ስማችሁ፡ እንደ፡ ተባለ፡ ለቀደሙት፡ አታመንዝር።  
ስማዕከሙ፡ ከመ፡ ይቤልዎሙ፡ ለቀደምትክሙ፡ ኢትሐሩ፡ ብእሴ፡ ብእሴ፡  
Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, Οὐ μοιχεύσεις.

Translation: “You have heard that it was said to those in the past, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’” The Ge’ez phrase in the above version ብእሴ፡ ብእሴ “a man going to a man” is a strange translation; it seems to be objecting to homosexuality. Some Ge’ez manuscripts simply read ስማክሙ፡ ከመ፡ ተብህለ፡ ኢትዘምው.

**Matthew 5:28** እኔ፡ ግን፡ እላችሁአለሁ። ወደ፡ ሴት፡ ያየ፡ ሁሉ፡ የተመኛትም፡ ፈጽሞ፡ አመነዘረባት፡ በልቡ።  
አንሰኬ፡ እብላክሙ፡ ከመ፡ ኩሉ፡ ዘርእያ፡ ለብእሴት፡ ወፈተዋ፡ ወድኦ፡ ዘመወ፡ ባቲ፡ በልቡ።  
ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ βλέπων γυναῖκα πρὸς τὸ ἐπιθυμῆσαι αὐτήν ἤδη ἐμοίχευσεν αὐτήν ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

Translation: “But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman and lusts has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” The Amharic ያየ፡ ሁሉ፡ የተመኛትም፡ “looks at ... and lusts” shows two coordinated, conjoined verbs. The Ge’ez also resembles the

Amharic ዘርእያ፡ ለብእሲት፡ ወፈተዋ “looks at a woman and lusts”. In the Greek it reads “looks at a woman to lust for her”. ἐπιθυμῆσαι ‘to lust’ describes βλέπων ‘looks’. So, in the original Greek ‘lust’ and ‘looks’ are not separate actions. This is very common in Ge’ez Bible translations; Ge’ez style prefers finite verbs.

**Matthew 5:29** የቀኝ፡ ዓይንኸም፡ ብታስትኸ፡ አውጥተኸ፡ ጣላት፡ ካንተ ይሻልኸልና፡ አንድ ብልትኸ፡ ቢጠፋ፡ አካልኸ፡ ሁሉ፡ ገሃነም፡ እንዳይገባ፡፡  
 ወእመኒ፡ ዐይንክ፡ ዘየማን፡ ያስሕተክ ፡ ምላኅ ፡ ወአሰስል፡ እምነኪ፡ ይኔይስክ፡ ነቋረክ፡ ትባእ፡ ወስሪ፡ መንግስሪ፡ ሰማያት፡ እምትባእ፡ ውስሪ፡ ገሃነም፡ ምስለ፡ ክልኤሆን፡ አዕይንቲክ፡  
 εἰ δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς σου ὁ δεξιὸς σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔξελε αὐτὸν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ· συμφέρει γάρ σοι ἵνα ἀπόληται ἐν τῶν μελῶν σου καὶ μὴ ὀλον τὸ σῶμά σου βληθῆ εἰς γέενναν.

Translation: “If your right eye causes you to do wrong, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into Gehenna.”

**Matthew 5:30** የቀኝ እጅኸም ብታስትህ፡ ቁርጠህ ካንተ፡ ጣላት፡ ይሻልኸልና፡ አንድ ብልትኸ፡ ቢጠፋ አካልኸ፡ ሁሉ፡ ገሃነም፡ እንዳይገባ፡፡  
 ወእመኒ፡ እድ፡ እንተ፡ የማን፡ ታስሕተክ፡ ምትራ ፡ ወግድፍ፡ እምላዕሌክ፡ ወግድፍ፡ ይኔይስ፡ ትሕጎል፡ አሐደ፡ እምአባልክ፡ እምትባእ፡ ውስተ፡ ገሃነም፡ ምስለ፡ ኩሉ፡ ነፍስትክ፡ [30A ወለእመኒ፡ ይትወቀፍ፡ እግርክ፡ ዘየማን፡ ምትራ፡ ወግድፍ፡ እምላዕሌክ፡ ይኔይስክ፡ ትትሕጎል፡ አሐዱ፡ እምአባልክ፡ እምኩሉ፡ ሥጋክ፡ ውስተ፡ እሳተ፡ ገሃነም፡ ይትወደይ]  
 καὶ εἰ ἡ δεξιὰ σου χεῖρ σκανδαλίζει σε, ἔκκοψον αὐτήν καὶ βάλε ἀπὸ σοῦ· συμφέρει γάρ σοι ἵνα ἀπόληται ἐν τῶν μελῶν σου καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ σῶμά σου εἰς γέενναν ἀπέλθῃ.

Translation: “And if your right hand causes you to do wrong, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into Gehenna.”

**Matthew 5:31** ተባለም፡ ምሽቱን፡ የፈታ፡ የፍትዋን፡ መጻፍ፡ ይስጣት፡፡ ሰማዕክሙ፡ ዘይቤልዎሙ፡ ለቀደምትክሙ፡ ዘይድሕር፡ ብእሲቶ፡ ይጽሐፍ፡ ላቲ፡ መጽሐፍ፡ ኅድጋቲሃ፡  
 Ἐρρέθη δέ, “Ὅς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναικῆα αὐτοῦ, δότω αὐτῇ ἀποστάσιον.

Translation: ““It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’”

**Matthew 5:32** እኔ ግን እላችሁ፡ አለሁ፡ ምሽቱን የፈታ፡ ያለ፡ ዝሙት፡ ምክንያት፡፡ እርሱ አመንዘራ፡ አደረጋት፡፡ የተፈታችውንም፡ ያገባ፡ አመነዘረ፡፡ አንሰኪ፡ እብለክሙ፡ ኩሉ፡ ዘይድሕር፡ ብእሲቶ፡ እንዘ፡ ኢትዜሙ፡ በላዕሌሁ፡ ለሊሁ፡ ያዜምዋ፡ ወእንተሂ፡ ኅደጋ፡ ምታ፡ ዘአውሰባ፡ ዘመወ፡  
ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ἀπολύων τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ παρεκτὸς λόγου πορνείας ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι, καὶ ὃς ἐὰν ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃ, μοιχᾶται.

Translation: “But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the grounds of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

**Matthew 5:33** ደግሞም፡ ሰማችሁ፡ የተባለውን፡ ለቀደሙት፡፡ በቀኝኝ፡ አትማል፡ መሐላኝን፡ ለእግዚአብሔር፡ ስጥ፡ እንጅ፡፡ ሰማዕክሙ፡ ዘይቤልዎሙ፡ ለቀደምትክሙ፡ ኢትምሕሉ፡ በሐሰት፡ ወአግብእ፡ መሐላክ፡ ለእግዚአብሔር፡  
Πάλιν ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις, Οὐκ ἐπιορκήσεις, ἀποδώσεις δὲ τῷ κυρίῳ τοὺς ὅρκους σου.

Translation: “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear by your right, but give your vows to the Lord’”. Here the Amharic translation reads በቀኝኝ፡ አትማል፡ “not swear by your right”. This is very odd; both the Greek and Ge’ez translation read ἐπιορκήσεις / ኢትምሕሉ፡ በሐሰት ‘not swear falsely’. This is among some of the (apparent) mistakes that we find in the translation.

In this verse Greek ἀποδώσεις “give back, restore” and Ge’ez አግብእ፡ “return, give back, restore” are more precise than the Amharic ስጥ “give” which is a little vague.

Matthew 5:34 እኔ ግን እላችሁ፡ አለሁ። ከቶ፡ አትማሉ። በሰማይ፡ ስንኳ፡ የእግዚአብሔር፡ ዙፋን ናትና።  
 አንሰ፡ እብለክሙ ኢትምሔሱ፡ ግሙራ፡ ኢበሰማይ፡ እስመ፡ መንበሩ፡ ለእግዚአ፡ ብሔር፡ ውእቱ፡  
 ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν μὴ ὀμόσαι ὅλως· μήτε ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, ὅτι θρόνος ἐστὶν τοῦ θεοῦ,

Translation: “But I say to you, do not swear at all, even by heaven, for it is the throne of God,”

Matthew 5:35 በምድርም፡ የግሩ፡ ጫማ ናትና። በየሩሳሌምም፡ የታላቁ፡ ንጉሥ፡ አገር፡ ናትና።  
 ወኢበምድር፡ እስመ፡ መከየደ፡ እገሪሁ፡ ውእቱ፡ ወኢበኢየሩሳሌም፡ እስመ፡ ሀገሩ፡ ለንጉሥ፡ ዐቢይ፡ ይእቱ፡  
 μήτε ἐν τῇ γῆ, ὅτι ὑποπόδιόν ἐστὶν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ, μήτε εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα, ὅτι πόλις ἐστὶν τοῦ μεγάλου βασιλέως,

Translation: “Also by the earth, for it is his shoe, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.” This seems strange: ጫማ “shoe” is not in the Greek and Ge’ez, which have “footstool”. However, Littmann (1943: 498) in his glossary to the Royal Songs notes that ጫማ apparently meant “footstool”; he refers to the dictionary of Kefla Giorgis.<sup>136</sup>

Matthew 5:36 በራስኸም፡ አትማል። አትችልምና፡ ታደርግ፡ ዘንድ፡ አንዲት፡ ጸጉር፡ ነጭም፡ ጥፍ፡ ጥቅርም፡ ጥፍ።  
 ወኢትምሔሱ፡ በርእስክሙኒ፡ እስመ፡ ኢትክሉ፡ አሐተ፡ ሥዕርተ፡ ገቢረ፡ ኢጸዐዳ፡ ወኢጸሊሙ።  
 μήτε ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ σου ὀμόσης, ὅτι οὐ δύνασαι μίαν τρίχα λευκὴν ποιῆσαι ἢ μέλαιναν.

Translation: “And do not swear by your head<sup>137</sup>, for you cannot make one hair white or black.”

Matthew 5:37 ነገራችሁ፡ ይሁን፡ እንጂ፡ ነው፡ ነው፡ አይደለም፡ አይደለም። ስለዚህኸ፡ የወጣ፡ የክፉ፡ ነው።  
 አሐደ፡ ይኩን፡ ቃልክሙ፡ እመኒ፡ እው፡ እው፡ ወእመኒ፡ አልቦ፡ ወፈድፋዱሰ፡ ለዝንቱ፡ እምእኩይ፡ ውእቱ።

<sup>136</sup> In the Royal Song III we read the following ምሥራቅ፡ ኸነት፡ ጫማ (“the eat becomes your footrest/footstool”)  
<sup>137</sup> The Amharic word በራስኸም can mean either “your head” or “yourself”.

ἔστω δὲ ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν ναὶ ναί, οὐ οὐ· τὸ δὲ περισσὸν τούτων ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἐστίν.

Translation: “Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”

**Matthew 5:38** የተባለውን፡ ሰማችሁ። ዓይን፡ በዓይን፡ ጥርስም፡ በጥርስ።  
ሰመዕክሙ፡ ዘይቤልዎሙ፡ ለቀደምትክሙ፡ ዐይን፡ ህየንተ፡ ዐይን፡ ወስን፡ ህየንተ፡ ስን፡  
Ἐκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, Ὁφθαλμὸν ἀντὶ ὀφθαλμοῦ καὶ ὀδόντα ἀντὶ ὀδόντος.

Translation: “You have heard what is said, ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’”

**Matthew 5:39** እኔ ግን፡ እላችሁ፡ አለሁ። ክፋት፡ አትቃወሙ። ነገር፡ ግን፡ ቀኝ፡  
ፈትኸም፡ ለጸፋህ፡ መልስለት፡ ደግሞ፡ ሀጎተኛውን፡ ደግሞ።  
አንሰከ፡ እብለክሙ፡ ኢትትቃወምዎ፤ ለእኩይ፡ ወለዘኒ፡ ጸፍዐከ፡ መልታሕተከ፡ ዘየማን፤  
ሚጥ፤ ሎቱ፡ ካልእታኒ፡  
ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν μὴ ἀντιστῆναι τῷ πονηρῷ· ἀλλ’ ὅστις σε ῥαπίζει εἰς τὴν δεξιὰν  
σιαγόνα [σου], στρέψον αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἄλλην·

Translation: “But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;”

**Matthew 5:40** ለወደደ፡ ልብስኸንም፡ ለወሰደ፡ ቀሚስኸንም፡ ደግሞ፡ ተውላት።  
ወለዘኒ፡ ተአገለከ፡ ወሄደከ፡ ክዳነከ፡ ጎድግ፡ ሎቱ፡ ልብሰኒ፡  
καὶ τῷ θέλοντί σοι κριθῆναι καὶ τὸν χιτῶνά σου λαβεῖν, ἄφες αὐτῷ καὶ τὸ ἱμάτιον·

Translation: “And to one who wants to take your garment, give your cloak as well.” Here all three languages differ. The Greek begins “If anyone wants to judge you”; the Ge’ez begins “to someone who oppresses/defrauds you”; the Amharic simply has “to one who wishes to take your garment”. The Greek and the Ge’ez have two verbs, while the Amharic has only one.

**Matthew 5:41** አንድ ምዕራፍም፡ የገተተህ፡ ከርሱ፡ ጋር፡ ሒድ፡ ሁለት።  
ወለዘኒ፡ ዐበጠከ፡ አሐደ፡ ምዕራፈ፡ ሐር፡ ምስሌሁ፡ ካልእታ፡  
καὶ ὅστις σε ἀγαρεύσει μίλιον ἓν, ὑπάγε μετ’ αὐτοῦ δύο.

Translation: “And if anyone pulls [i.e. forces] you to go one mile, go with him two miles.”

Matthew 5:42 Ἀλλοσῆυ: ἵπ:: Ἀ.በ.ጸ.ር.ም: የወደደ: እምቢ: አትበል::

ወለዘኒ: ሰአለከ: ሀብ: ወለዘኒ: ተለቀሐከ: ኢትክላእ::

τῷ αἰτοῦντί σε δός, καὶ τὸν θέλοντα ἀπὸ σοῦ δανίσασθαι μὴ ἀποστραφῆς.

Translation: “Give to anyone who begs from you. Do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.”

Matthew 5:43 ስማችሁ: እንደ: ተባለ:: ባልንጀራኸን: ወደድ:: ጠላትኸን: ጥላ::

ሰማዕከሙ: ዘተብህለ: አፍቅር: ዘያፈቅረከ: ወጽላእ: ጸላእተከ::

Ἴκούσατε ὅτι ἐρρέθη, Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου καὶ μισήσεις τὸν ἐχθρόν σου.

Translation: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your companion. Hate your enemy.’” The Ge’ez reads አፍቅር: ዘያፈቅረከ “love who loves you” instead of “your companion”. The Amharic seems to follow the Greek reading. However, there are other Ge’ez versions which read አፍቅር ቢጸክ “Love your companion”.

Matthew 5:44 እኔ: ግን: እላችሁ: አለሁ: ጸላታችሁን: ወደዱ:: ባርኩ:  
የሚረግማችሁን:: መልካም: አድርገ: ለሚጸልዋችሁ: ጸልዩም: ስለሚቀምጥችሁ:  
ስለሚያሳድዋችሁም::

አንሰኬ: እብለከሙ: አፍቅሩ: ጸላእተከሙ: ወባርክዎሙ: ለእለ: ይረግሙከሙ: ወሰናይ:  
ግበሩ: ለእለ: ይጸልኩከሙ: ወጸልዩ: ልዕለ: እለ: ይትኡገሉከሙ: ወይሰድዱከሙ::<sup>138</sup>

ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς,

Translation: “But I say to you, Love your enemies and bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who rob you and persecute you.” This translation has additional phrases not found in the Greek text. The Greek text literally is translated as follows “but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”. The Amharic adds, “bless those who curse you.” Here, the expanded Amharic translation is a direct copy of the expanded Ge’ez translation. This is an

<sup>138</sup> Some Ge’ez MSS lack the phrase ወባርክዎሙ: ለእለ: ይረግሙከሙ:

unmistakable indication that Abba Abraham’s translation was informed by the Ge’ez version.<sup>139</sup>

**Matthew 5:45** በሰማያት፡ ላለ ላባታችሁ፡ ልጆች፡ ትሆኑ፡ ዘንድ። እርሱ ፀሐዩን፡ ያወጣልና፡ ለበጎቹም፡ ለከፊቶቹም። ዝናሙንም ያዘንማልና፡ በጸድቃንም፡ በኃጥኣንም።  
ከመ፡ ትኩሩ፡ ውሉዶ፡ ለአብክሙ፡ ዘበ፡ ሰማያት። እስመ፡ ውእቱ፡ ያሠርቅ፡ ፀሐዩ፡ ዲበ፡ እኩያን፡ ውኔራን፡ ወያዘንም፡ ላዕለ፡ ጸድቃን፡ ወኃጥኣን።  
ὅπως γένησθε υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς, ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροῦς καὶ ἀγαθοῦς καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους.

Translation: “So that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.”

**Matthew 5:46** የወደዳችሁንም፡ ከወደዳችሁ፡ የታለ፡ ዋጋችሁ። አጣሮችሰ፡ እንዴህ፡ ያደርጉ፡ የለም።  
እስመ፡ አፍቀርክሙ፡ ዘያፈቀርክሙ፡ ምንትኩ፡ ዕሴትክሙ፡ አኮኑ፡ መጸብሕያንሂ፡ ከማሁሰ፡ ይገብሩ።  
ἐὰν γὰρ ἀγαπήσητε τοὺς ἀγαπῶντας ὑμᾶς, τίνα μισθὸν ἔχετε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ τελῶναι τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν;

Translation: “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”

**Matthew 5:47** ከወንድሞቻችሁም፡ ጋራ፡ ብቻ፡ ብትገናኙ፡ ምን፡ ትሩፋት፡ አደረጋችሁ። አጣሮችሰ፡ ደግሞ፡ እንዴህ፡ ያደርጉ፡ የለም።  
ወእመኒ፡ ቢጸክሙ፡ ተኣመንክሙ፡ ምንተኩ፡ ፈድፋድ፡ ዘገብርክሙ፡ አኮኑ፡ አሕዛብሂ፡ ከማሁሰ፡ ይገብሩ።  
καὶ ἐὰν ἀσπάσησθε τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς ὑμῶν μόνον, τί περισσὸν ποιεῖτε; οὐχὶ καὶ οἱ ἔθνικοὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν;

Translation: “And if you meet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” The Greek word ἀσπάσησθε ‘to greet, salute’ is translated as Amharic ብትገናኙ “meet”. The Ge’ez follows the Greek (“greet”).

---

<sup>139</sup> It is interesting that the King James Version also reads “bless them that curse you.” In the B-text of the Ge’ez version the phrase ወባርክሙ፡ ለእለ፡ ይረግሙክሙ is missing. The B-Text is the exact equivalent of the Greek of UBS.

Matthew 5:48 እላንተስ፡ ፍጹማን፡ ሁኑ፡ የሰማዩ፡ አባታችሁ፡ ፍጹም፡ እንደ፡ ሆነ።

እንትሙሰ፡ ከኑ፡ ፍጹማነ፡ከመ፡ አብክመ፡ ፍጹም፡ ውእቱ።

Ἔσεσθε οὖν ὑμεῖς τέλειοι ὡς ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τέλειός ἐστιν.

Translation: “Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The Greek has the word οὖν ‘therefore, then, accordingly’ which is missing in the Amharic. Thus the Amharic translation does not indicate the continuity of v. 48 with the previous verses.

### Matthew 6

Matthew 6:1 ተጠንቀቁ፡ አታድርጉ፡ ምጽዋታችሁን፡ በሰው፡ ፊት፡ ለርሳቸው፡ ትታዩ፡ ዘንድ። እንዴህ፡ ካልሆነስ፡ ዋጋ፡ የላችሁም፡ በሰማይ፡ ባለው፡ ባባታችሁ፡ ዘንድ። ወባሕቱ፡ ዑቁ፡ ኢትግሩ፡ ምጽዋተክመ፡ ለዐይነ፡ ሰብእ፡ ወእማእኮስ፡ ተሐጉሱ፡ ዕሴተክመ፡ በኅበ፡ አብክመ፡ ዘበ፡ ሰማያት።

Προσέχετε [δὲ] τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὑμῶν μὴ ποιεῖν ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι αὐτοῖς· εἰ δὲ μὴ γε, μισθὸν οὐκ ἔχετε παρὰ τῷ πατρὶ ὑμῶν τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.

Translation: “Beware, do not put your alms before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.” The Greek has δικαιοσύνην “righteousness”. The Amharic and Ge’ez have ምጽዋታችሁን/ ምጽዋተክመ “alms”. This is probably the influence of the following verse, where the Greek term ἐλεημοσύνην “alms” is used.<sup>140</sup>

Matthew 6:2 ምጽዋትም፡ ባደረግህ፡ ጊዜ፡ መለከት፡ አታስነፋ። በፊትህ። እንዲያደርጉ፡ ግብዞች፡ በጉባዔ፡ በገበያም። በሰው፡ ዘንድ፡ ይመስገኑ፡ ዘንድ። በውነት፡ እነግራችሁ፡ አለሁ። ዋጋቸውን ወሰዱ። ወሰነህ፡ ትገብር፡ ምጽዋተክ፡ ኢትንፋጉ፡ ቀርነ፡ በቅድሜክ፡ ከመ፡ ይገብሩ፡ መድልዋን፡ በምክራባቲሆሙ፡ ወበፍናው፡ ከመ፡ ይርአይዎሙ፡ ሰብእ፡ አሜን፡ እብለክመ፡ ሐጉሱ፡ ዕሴቶሙ።

<sup>140</sup> The New Confessional Bible which is translated by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church under the supervision of the Ethiopian Bible Society also reads as ምጽዋታችሁን “alms”. The New Amharic Standard Version, which is translated by the International Bible Society, reads መልካም ሥራችሁን “your good deeds”.

“Όταν οὖν ποιῆς ἐλεημοσύνην, μὴ σαλπίσσης ἔμπροσθέν σου, ὥσπερ οἱ ὑποκριταὶ ποιοῦσιν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς ῥύμαις, ὅπως δοξασθῶσιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν.

Translation: “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the markets, so that they may be praised by others.

Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.” The Greek and Ge’ez versions have “street”. Here Amharic innovates from both Greek and Ge’ez and has instead the word **ገቢያ** “market”. However, Ge’ez MSS like E and D concur with the Amharic translation.

Therefore, this tells us that the Amharic translator did not follow the A text only.

**Matthew 6:3** አንተ ግን፡ ምጽዋት፡ ባደረግህ፡ ጊዜ፡ ግራኸን፣ አታስታውቅ፡ ቀኝኸ፡ የምስራውን፡፡

**ወአንተሰ፡ ሶበ፡ ትገብር፡ ምጽዋትከ፡ ኢታእምር፡ ፀጋምከ፡ ዘትገብር፡ የማንከ፡**

σοῦ δὲ ποιῶντος ἐλεημοσύνην μὴ γνώτω ἡ ἀριστερά σου τί ποιεῖ ἡ δεξιὰ σου,

Translation: “But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,”

**Matthew 6:4** ምጽዋትኸ፡ በስውር፡ እንድትሆን፡ አባትኸ፡ በስውር፡ የሚያይ፡ በግልጽ፡ ይሰጥኸል፡፡

**ከመ፡ ይኩን፡ በክዱን፡ ምጽዋትከ፡ ወአቡከ፡ ዘእግረኸ፡ በክዱን፡ የዐስየከ፡ ክሠተ፡፡**

ὅπως ἤ σου ἡ ἐλεημοσύνη ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι.

Translation: “So that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

**Matthew 6:5** በጸለይኸም፡ ጊዜ፡ እንደ፡ ግብዣ፡ አትሁን፡ ይወዳሉና፡ ይጸልዩ፡ ዘንድ፡ ቁመው፡ በገባዬ፡ በአደባባይም፡ ማዕዘን፡ ለሰው፡ ሊታዩ፡ እውነት፡ ልንገራችሁ፡ ዋጋቸውን፡ እንደ፡ ወሰዱ፡፡

**ወሶበሂ፡ ትጾልዩ፡ ኢትኩን፡ ከመ፡ መድልዎን፡ እስመ፡ ያፈቅሩ፡ በምክራባት፡ ወበውስተ፡ መካዘን፡ መርሕብ፡ ቀዊሞሙ፡ ይጾልዩ፡ ከመ፡ ይርአይዎሙ፡ ሰብእ፡ አሜን፡ እብለክሙ፡ ሐጎሉ፡ ዕሴቶሙ፡፡**

Καὶ ὅταν προσεύχησθε, οὐκ ἔσεσθε ὡς οἱ ὑποκριταί, ὅτι φιλοῦσιν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς γωνίαις τῶν πλατειῶν ἕστῶτες προσεύχεσθαι, ὅπως φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν.

Translation: “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the congregation and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by men.

Let me tell you truly, they have received their reward.”

**Matthew 6:6 አንተ፡ ግን፡ በጸለይህ፡ ጊዜ፡፡ ወደ፡ ቤትህ፡ ግባ፡ በጅኸንም፡ ዝጋ፡፡ ጸለይም፡ ላባትህ፡ በሥውር ለሚያዩ፡፡ በሥውር፡ የሚያይም፡ አባትህ፡ በግልጽ፡ ይሰጥኸል፡፡ ወአንተሰ፡ ሶበ፡ ትጹሊ፡ ባእ፡ ቤተክ፡ ወዕጹ፡ ፍንተክ፡ ወጸሊ፡ ለአቡክ፡ በክዱን፡ ወአቡክ፡ ዘይፊኢ፡ ኅቡአ፡ የዐስየክ፡ ክሠተ፡፡**

σὺ δὲ ὅταν προσεύχη, εἴσελθε εἰς τὸ ταμεῖόν σου καὶ κλείσας τὴν θύραν σου πρόσευξαι τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ ἀποδώσει σοι.

Translation: “But whenever you pray, go into your house and shut the door. Pray to your Father who sees you in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you in public.” There is a translational problem in this verse. The Amharic and Ge’ez translations deviate from the Greek version. The Amharic translation reads “will reward you publicly” (likewise in Ge’ez). The Greek just simply says ἀποδώσει “will reward you” with no mention of publicness. Here again, the Amharic has evidently used the Ge’ez as *vorlage*.

**Matthew 6:7 በጸላያችሁም፡ ጊዜ፡ ነገር፡ አታብዙ፡ እንደ፡ አሕዛብ፡ በነገራቸው፡ ብዛት፡ የሚሰማላቸው፡ ይመስላችኋልና፡፡ ወሶነሂ፡ ትጹልዩ፡ ኢትዘንግዑ፡ ከመ፡ አሕዛብ፡ እስመ፡ ይመስሉሙ፡ በአብዝኖ፡ ነቢሶሙ፡ ዘይሰምዎሙ፡**

Προσευχόμενοι δὲ μὴ βατταλογήσητε ὥσπερ οἱ ἔθνικοί, δοκοῦσιν γὰρ ὅτι ἐν τῇ πολυλογίᾳ αὐτῶν εἰσακουσθήσονται.

Translation: “When you are praying, do not use vain repetitions as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words.”



Matthew 6:12 ይቅር፡ በለን፡ በኛ፡ ያለውን፡ እኛም፡ ደግመን፡ ይቅር፡ እንል፡ ዘንድ፡ ለኛ፡ የለቡቱን፡

ወጎድግ፡ ለን፡ አበሳን፡ ወጌጋየን፡ ከመ፡ ንሕነኒ፡ ንጎድግ፡ ለዘ፡ አበሰ፡ ለን፡

καὶ ἄφεσ ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν

Translation: “And forgive us our debts, so that we may forgive our debtors.” Here the Amharic mistranslates the Greek and the Ge’ez. In the Amharic forgiving others is considered as a result of being forgiven by God. But in the Greek (and in Ge’ez) the appeal is made for God to forgive on the basis that “we forgive others”. So, the translation should have been “and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”; we ask forgiveness “in proportion as” (ὡς) we have forgiven those in debt to us, a most solemn reflection.

Matthew 6:13 ወደ መከራም፡ አታግባን፡ ከክፉ፡ ሰውረን፡ እንድ፡ ያንተ፡ ነውና፡ መንግሥት፡ ኃይልም፡ ምስጋናም፡ ለዘላለሙ፡ አሜን፡

ወኢታብአን፡ ወስተ፡ መንሱት፡ አላ፡ አድጎነን፡ እምእኩይ፡ 13A እስመ፡ ዚአከ፡ ይእቲ፡ መንግሥት፡ ወጎይል፡ ወስብሐት፡ ለዓለመ፡ ዓለም፡ አሜን፡

καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥύσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

Translation: “And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, Amen.” The doxology in the second half of verse 13 (“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever, Amen”) does not exist in all Greek manuscripts.<sup>141</sup> As a result in some English translations we do not find this part. The Ge’ez version does have this sentence. We do not know whether the Greek text available to Abba Abraham had this phrase or not.

---

<sup>141</sup> “**The familiar doxology** closing the modern version of the Lord’s Prayer appears in a textual note in many translations because the earliest manuscripts of Matthew do not include it.” [bold in the original] Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999) 225.

Matthew 6:14 ለሰዎች ኃጢአታቸውን፡ ይቅር፡ ብትሉ፡፡ አባታችሁም፡ የሰማዩ፡ ደግሞ፡ ይቅር፡ አለላችሁ፡፡

እስመ፡ እመ፡ ኀደግመ፡ ለሰብእ፡ አበሳሰመ፡ የኀድግ፡ ለክመኒ፡ አብክመ፡ ዘበ፡ ሰማያት፡ አበሳክመ፡፡

Ἐὰν γὰρ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν, ἀφήσει καὶ ὑμῖν ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος·

Translation: “For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” The Greek παραπτώματα “trespasses” which is translated as ኃጢአታቸውን ‘their sins’ in Amharic is not part of the Lord’s Prayer. The Greek word παραπτώματα “trespass” is literally “falling to one side,” a lapse or deviation from truth or uprightness. The ancients sometimes used it of an intentional falling or attack upon one’s enemy, but “slip” or “fault” (Gal 6:1) is the common New Testament idea. So, the translation should have been መተላለፋቸውን ‘their trespass,’ for it is not in the power of humans to forgive sins.

Matthew 6:15 ይቅርም፡ ባትሉ፡ ለሰዎች፡ ኃጢአታቸውን፡ አባታችሁም፡ ኃጢአታችሁን፡ ይቅር፡ አይልላችሁም፡፡

ወእመ፡ ኢኀደግመ፡ አበሳሰመ፡ ለሰብእ፡ ኢየኀድግ፡ ልክመኒ፡ አብክመ፡ አበሳክመ፡፡

Ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀφήτε τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οὐδὲ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ἀφήσει τὰ παραπτώματα ὑμῶν.

Translation: “But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your sins.” It is correctly translated except that “trespass” is rendered as ኃጢአታቸውን “sin”. The Greek word means “trespass”; the Ge’ez አበሳሰመ means “trespass” or “sin”; the Amharic means “sin”.

Matthew 6:16 በጸማችሁም፡ ጊዜ አትጸውልጉ፡ እንደ፡ ግብዞች፡፡ እርሳቸው፡ ይጸወልጋሉና፡ ፊታቸውንም፡ ይቀጽራሉና፡፡ ሊታወቁ፡ ለሰዎች፡ እንደ፡ ጾመ፡፡ እውነት፡ እነግራችሁ፡ አለሁ፡፡ ዋጋቸውን፡ እንደተቀበሉ፡፡

ወሶበሂ፡ ትጸውሙ፡ ኢትኩን፡ ከመ፡ መድልዋን፡ እስመ፡ ይትመጸለው፡ ወይቄጽሩ፡ ገጾም፡ ከመ፡ ያእምሮም፡ ሰብእ፡ ከመ፡ ጾመ፡ አሜን፡ እብለክመ፡ ሐጉሉ፡ ዕሴቶም፡፡

Ὅταν δὲ νηστεύητε, μὴ γίνεσθε ὡς οἱ ὑποκριταὶ σκυθρωποὶ, ἀφανίζουσιν γὰρ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν ὅπως φανῶσιν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύοντες· ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν.

Translation: “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.” The Amharic goes in line with both the Greek and Ge’ez.

**Matthew 6:17** አንተ፡ ግን፡ በጸምኸ፡ ጊዜ ራስኸን፡ ተቀባ፡፡ ፊትኸንም፡ ታፀብ፡፡  
 አንተሰኬ፡ ሶብ፡ ትጸውም፡ ትእቅባለ፡ ርእሰክ፡ ወተነፀብ፡ ገጸክ፡  
 οὐ δὲ νηστεύων ἄλειψαί σου τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπόν σου νίψαι,

Translation: “But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,”

**Matthew 6:18** ለሰው፡ እንዳትታይ፡ ጸመኛ፡ መሰለህ፡ ነገር፡ ግን፡ ላባትህ፡ በምሥጢር፡  
 ለሚያይ፡፡ በምሥጢርም፡ የሚያይ፡ አባትክ፡ በግልጽ፡ ይሰጥካል፡፡  
 ከመ፡ ኢያሌምርክ፡ ሰብእ፡ ከመ፡ ጸምክ፡ ዘእንበለ፡ አቡክ፡ ዘበክዱን፡ ወአቡክ፡ ዘይሬኢየክ፡  
 በክዱን፡ የዐስየክ፡፡  
 ὅπως μὴ φανῆς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις νηστεύων ἀλλὰ τῷ πατρὶ σου τῷ ἐν τῷ κρυφαίῳ· καὶ ὁ πατήρ σου ὁ βλέπων ἐν τῷ κρυφαίῳ ἀποδώσει σοι.

Translation: “So that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who sees in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you in public.”

In the Greek and the Ge’ez God is portrayed first as the one “who is in secret”, then as the one “who sees in secret”; but the Amharic renders it twice as “the one who sees in secret” (cf. 6:4). The Amharic also adds “in public” at the end of the verse, unlike the Greek and the Ge’ez (cf. 6:6).<sup>142</sup>

**Matthew 6:19** በሳፅን፡ አትሰብስቡ፡ ለላንት፡ በምድር፡ ላይ፡፡ ትል፡ ወደሚበላው፡ ነቀዝም፡  
 ወደሚያነቅዘው፡፡ ሌቦኹም፡ ነድለው፡ ወደሚሰርቁት፡፡  
 ኢትዝግቡ፡ ለክመ፡ መዛግብተ፡ በምድር፡ ኀብ፡ ይበሉ፡ ወያማስኖ፡ ፃዪ፡ ወቀኑንቀኑ፡ ወኀብ፡  
 ይከርዩ፡ ሰረቅት፡ ወይሰርቁ፡፡  
 Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅπου σὴς καὶ βρῶσις ἀφανίζει καὶ ὅπου κλέπται διορύσσουσιν καὶ κλέπτουσιν·

<sup>142</sup> Note: Some Gee’z manuscripts add the word ከሠተ.

Transaltion: “For where your box is, there your heart will be also.” Here the word

ሣፅናችሁ “your box” corresponds exactly to the Greek ὁ θησαυρός σου “your treasure”.

See the point made in 6:19-20.

Matthew 6:22 የሥጋ፡ ሙብራት፡ ዓይን፡ ነው። ዓይንክ ጽሩ፡ ብትሆን፡ ሥጋክ፡ ሁሉ የበራ፡ ይሆናል።

ማኅቶቱ፡ ለሥጋክ፡ ውእቱ፡ ዐይንክ፡ እምከመ፡ ዐይንክ፡ ስፋሕ፡ ውእቱ፡ ከሁሉ፡ ነፍስትክ፡ ብሩህ፡ ወእቱ፡

Ὁ λύχνος τοῦ σώματός ἐστὶν ὁ ὀφθαλμός. ἐὰν οὖν ἦ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου ἀπλοῦς, ὅλον τὸ σῶμά σου φωτεινὸν ἔσται.

Translation: “The eye is the lamp of the body/flesh. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light.” The Greek word σῶμά “body” is rendered in some Ge’ez versions as ነፍስትክ “your soul”. However, this is not the case in all manuscripts; some manuscripts and the UBS edition read ሥጋክ “your body/flesh”.

Matthew 6:23 ዓይንክ ግን ታማሚ፡ ብትሆን፡ ሥጋክ ሁሉ የጨለመ፡ ይሆናል።

ባንተ ያለው፡ ብርሃን፡ ጨለማ፡ ከሆነ፡ ጨለማውስ፡ ስንት፡ ይሆን። ወእመሰ፡ ዐይንክ፡ ሐማሚ፡ ውእቱ፡ ከሁሉ፡ ጽልመት፡ ውእቱ፡ ወሶብ፡ ብርሃን፡ ዘላሳሌክ፡ ጽልመት፡ ውእቱ፡ ጽልመትክ፡ ሚመጠን፡ ውእቱ።

ἐὰν δὲ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου πονηρὸς ἦ, ὅλον τὸ σῶμά σου σκοτεινὸν ἔσται. εἰ οὖν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἐν σοὶ σκότος ἐστίν, τὸ σκότος πόσον.

Translation: “But if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how much will be the darkness?”

Matthew 6:24 አንድ፡ ባሪያ፡ ለሁለት፡ መገዛት፡ አይቻለውም። አንዱን፡ ጸልቶ፡ አንዱን፡ ካልወደደ፡ አንዱንም፡ አክብሮ፡ ሁለተኛውን፡ ካልናቀ፡ ለእግዚአብሔርና፡ ለከብት፡ ትገዙ፡ ዘንድ፡ አትችሉም።

አልቦ፡ ዘይክል፡ ለክልኤ፡ አግኢስት<sup>144</sup>፡ ተቀንዖ፡ እማእኮ፡ አሐደ፡ ያፍቅር፡ ወካልኦ፡ ይጽላእ፡ ወእማእኮ፡ ለአሐዱ፡ ይእትኤዘዝ፡ ወለካልኦ፡ የአቢ፡ ኢትክሉ፡ ለእግዚአ፡ ብሔር፡ ተቀንዖ፡ ወለንዋይ።

Οὐδεὶς δύναται δυοὶ κυρίοις δουλεύειν· ἢ γὰρ τὸν ἓνα μισήσει καὶ τὸν ἕτερον ἀγαπήσει, ἢ ἐνὸς ἀνθέξεται καὶ τοῦ ἑτέρου καταφρονήσει. οὐ δύνασθε θεῶ δουλεύειν καὶ μαμωνᾶ.

<sup>144</sup> Some manuscripts read አጋእስት.



However, some Ge'ez MSS (notably Zuurmond's D text) reverse the words "clothing" and "food", thus creating a text which is the same as the Amharic. Thus Abba Abraham very likely did not use the A text, but a text like the D text.

**Matthew 6:26** ወደ፡ ሰማይ፡ ዓፎኝ፡ ተመልከቱ፡ እንዳይዘሩ፡ እንዳያጭዱ፡ በጎታም፡ እንዳይከቱ፡ የሰማይም፡ አባታችሁ፡ ይመግባቸዋል፡፡ እላንተ፡ እጅግ፡ ክርሳቸው፡ አትሻልዋቸውም፡፡

ናሁ፡ ርእዩ፡ አዕዋፈ፡ ሰማይ፡ ዘኢይዘርእ፡ ወኢየአርር፡ ወኢይዘግቡ፡ ውስተ፡ መዛግብት፡ ወአቡክሙ፡ ሰማያዊ፡ ይሴሰዮሙ፡ አኮነ፡ አንትሙ፡ ትኄይስዎሙ፡ ፈድፋድ፡ ἔμβλέψατε εἰς τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὅτι οὐ σπείρουσιν οὐδὲ θερίζουσιν οὐδὲ συνάγουσιν εἰς ἀποθήκας, καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν ὁ οὐράνιος τρέφει αὐτά· οὐχ ὑμεῖς μάλλον διαφέρετε αὐτῶν;

Translation: "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

**Matthew 6:27** ማነው፡ ከላንተ፡ አስቦ፡ በቁሙቱ፡ ላይ፡ አንድ፡ ክንድ፡ መጨመር፡ የሚችል፡፡

መነ፡ እምኔክሙ፡ ዘይክል፡ ሐሊዮ፡ ወስኮ፡ አሐተ፡ እመተ፡ በዲቦ፡ ቆሙ፡፡ τὶς δὲ ἐξ ὑμῶν μεριμνῶν δύνάται προσθεῖναι ἐπὶ τὴν ἡλικίαν αὐτοῦ πῆχυς ἕνα;

Translation: "Who among you can by worrying add a single cubit to his height?" The Greek word ἡλικίαν is potentially ambiguous, referring either to height (stature) or length of life (age). Either makes good sense here, though probably "stature" suits the context better. Certainly anxiety will not help either kind of growth. In any case, both the Ge'ez and the Amharic convey unambiguously only the sense "height".

**Matthew 6:28** ለምንስ፡ ታስበላችሁ፡ በልብስ፡ እዩ፡ የምድረ፡ በዳን፡ አበቦች፡ እንዲያድጉ፡፡ አይደክሙ፡ አይፈትሉ፡፡

ወበእንተሂ፡ ልብስ፡ ምንተ፡ ትሔልዩ፡ ናሁ፡ ርእዩ፡ ጽገያተ፡ ገዳም፡ ዘከመ፡ ይፈራ፡ ኢይጸምዉ፡ ወኢይፈትሉ፡ καὶ περὶ ἐνδύματος τί μεριμνᾶτε; καταμάθετε τὰ κρίνα τοῦ ἀγροῦ πῶς αὐξάνουσιν· οὐ κοπιῶσιν οὐδὲ νήθουσιν·

Translation: “And why do you worry about clothing? Observe the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin.”

**Matthew 6:29** እላችሁም፡ አለሁ፡፡ ስለምንስ፡ እንኳ፡ በዚያ፡ ሁሉ፡ ክብሩ፡ ከርስዎ፡ እንዳንዳፋ፡ አላበሰም፡፡

እብላክሙ፡ ሰሎሞን፡ ጥቀ፡ በኩሉ፡ ክብሩ፡ ኢሰብሰብ፡ ከመ፡ አሐዱ፡ እምእሱ፡፡  
λέγῳ δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδὲ Σολομῶν ἐν πάσῃ τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ περιεβάλετο ὡς ἐν τούτων.

Translation: “Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.” περιεβάλετο can be translated as “did not clothe himself or “did not put around himself”.

**Matthew 6:30** የምድረ፡ በዳ፡ እንቁት፡ ዛሬ፡ የሚገኝ፡ ነገ፡ ወደ፡ እቶን፡ የሚጣል፡ እንዴሁ፡ የሚለብሰው፡ ከሆነ፡ እግዚአብሔር፡፡ እላንተንን፡ ሃይማኖት፡ የጎደላችሁ፡ አታሰቡ፡ እንጊዴህ፡

ርእዩ፡ ሣዕረ፡ ገዳም፡ ዮም፡ ሀሎ፡ ወጊሠመ፡ ውስተ፡ እቶን፡ ይትወደይ፡ ወእግዚአ፡ ብሔር፡ ከመዝ፡ ያለብሰ፡ እፎ፡ እንከ፡ ፈድፋደ፡ ለክሙ፡ ሕጹጸን፡ ሃይማኖት፡፡

**Matthew 6:30** εἰ δὲ τὸν χόρτον τοῦ ἄγρου σήμερον ὄντα καὶ αὔριον εἰς κλίβανον βαλλόμενον ὁ θεὸς οὕτως ἀμφιένυσσιν, οὐ πολλῶ μᾶλλον ὑμᾶς, ὀλιγόπιστοι;

Translation: “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you□□you of little faith?” The Ge’ez has the word **ርእዩ** “see” which is not found in the Greek and Amharic versions.<sup>145</sup> At first instance it might seem that the Amharic translation follows the Greek and not the Ge’ez, but this might not be the case. Some Ge’ez manuscripts do not have **ርእዩ**. Zuurmond suggests that the Ge’ez translator erroneously read εἰ δὲ τὸν as ἰδετὸς.<sup>146</sup>

**Matthew 6:31** አትበለም፡፡ ምን፡ እንበላለን፡ ምንስ፡ እንጠጣለን፡ ምንስ እንለብሳለን፡፡  
ኢትሐልዩ፡ እንከ፡ እንዘ፡ ትብሉ፡ ምንተነ፡ ንበልዕ፡ ወምንተነ፡ ንሰቲ፡ ወምንተነ፡ ንለብሰ፡

<sup>145</sup> Again some Ge’ez MSS lack **ርእዩ** which is a clear indication that the translator did not follow the A-text.

<sup>146</sup> Zuurmond, *Matthew*, 79.

## Matthew 7

I will not discuss the whole of chapter seven. There not many cases where the Amharic deviates from the Greek and the Ge'ez. As a result there is little point in giving every verse with its translation. I will only mention those verses which exhibit a clear deviation.

**Matthew 7:3 Ἀγροῖν: τὰ σπυρίαι: ὁ ὄφθαλμὸς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου: ἰδοὺ τὸ κάρφος: ἡ δὲ ἄβυσσος: ὁ ὄφθαλμὸς σου: ἴδου τὸ κάρφος:**

**ምንተ: ትኔጽር: ሐሠረ: ዘውስተ: ዐይነ: ቢጽከ: ወኢትሬኢ: ሠርዋ: ዘውስተ: ዐይነከ:**  
τί δὲ βλέπεις τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου, τὴν δὲ ἐν τῷ σῷ ὀφθαλμῷ δοκὸν οὐ κατανοεῖς;

Translation: “Why do you see the dirt in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the grass(?) in your own eye?”

Greek: first κάρφος “twig, straw, chip”, then δοκὸν “beam/log”.

Ge'ez: first ሐሠረ “(piece of) straw”, then ሠርዋ “beam”.

Amharic: first ጉድፍ “dirt, filth”, then እንቁት “grass(?)”. The Amharic has innovated compared with the Greek and Ge'ez; the sense “beam/log” (i.e. a large piece of wood) is absent in እንቁት. Again in verse 7:4.

**Matthew 7:4 እንዴት: ὁ ὄφθαλμὸς τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου: ἴδου τὸ κάρφος: ἡ δὲ ἄβυσσος: ὁ ὄφθαλμὸς σου: ἴδου τὸ κάρφος:**

**ወእፎ: ትብሎ: ለቢጽከ: ጎድግ: አውፅእ: ሐሠረ: እምዐይነከ: ወናሁ: ሠርዋ: ወስተ: ዐይነ: ዘኢከ:**<sup>147</sup>  
ἢ πῶς ἐρεῖς τῷ ἀδελφῷ σου, Ἐφες ἐκβάλλω τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σου, καὶ ἴδου ἡ δοκὸς ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ σου;

Translation: “How can you say to your brother, ‘Permit me to take the dirt out of your eye,’ while the grass is in your own eye?” Again, the Amharic has እንቁት where “log” would be expected.

<sup>147</sup> In some Ge'ez manuscripts the whole verse is missing.

Matthew 7:5 አንተ፡ ግብዝ፡ አስቀድመህ፡ አን[ቁ]ቱን፡ ካይንህ፡ አውዓ፡ ከዚያ፡ በኃላም፡ ታያለህ፡ እንቁቱን፡ ታወዛ፡ ዘንድ፡ ከወንድምክ፡ ዓይን፡ መድልው፡ ቅድም፡ አውፅእ፡ ሠርዌ፡ ዘውስተ፡ ዐይንክ፡ ወእምኔህ፡ ትኔጽር፡ ታውፅእ፡ ሐሠረ፡ እምዐይኑ፡ ቢጽከ፡

ὑποκριτά, ἔκβαλε πρῶτον ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ σοῦ τὴν δοκόν, καὶ τότε διαβλέψεις ἐκβαλεῖν τὸ κάρφος ἐκ τοῦ ὀφθαλμοῦ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου.

Translation: “You hypocrite, first take the grass out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the grass out of your brother's eye.” The Amharic word እንቁት is used to refer to various things: “grass” (6:30), “log” (7:4), “tree” (7:19). In verse 5 the Greek and the Ge’ez have “take the log ... take the speck ...” (or Ge’ez “straw”). The Amharic apparently uses the identical word እንቁቱን twice. This is hard to understand except as carelessness.<sup>148</sup> (Note, however, the misspelling above: አንቱን not እንቁቱን. Perhaps this is a different word?)

Matthew 7:7 ለምኑ፡ ይሰጣችኋል፡፡ እሽ፡ ታገኘማላችሁ፡፡ ደጅ፡ ምቱ፡ ይክፈትላችኋልም፡፡

ሰአለ፡ ወየሀቡክሙ፡ ኅሥሠ፡ ወትረክቡ፡ ጉድጉዱ፡ ወያርጎውክሙ፡

Αἰτεῖτε καὶ δοθήσεται ὑμῖν, ζητεῖτε καὶ εὕρησεται, κρούετε καὶ ἀνοιγήσεται ὑμῖν.

Translation: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.” Here and in verse 8 the Amharic adds the word ደጅ “door”, which is not present in the Greek or the Ge’ez.

Matthew 7:15 ተጠንቀቁ፡ ካሰተኞች፡ ነቢያት፡ የበግ፡ ለምድ፡ ለብሰው፡ የሚመጹባችሁ፡ ውስጣቸው፡ ግን፡ ነጣቂ፡ ጅብ፡

ተዐቀቡ፡ እምሐሳውያን፡ ነቢያት፡ እለ፡ ይመጽኡ፡ ኅቤክሙ፡ በአልባሰ፡ አባግዕ፡ ወውስጡሙሰ፡ ተኩላት፡ መሠጥ፡ እሙንቱ፡

<sup>148</sup> In the 1886 edition, instead of እንቁት twice, the text has first መሰሶ “post” and then ሰንጣቂውን “chip”.

Amharic differ here from the Greek. The Greek word ἤλθον “(the floods) came” is rendered as “to flood, to flow, to overflow” in Amharic and Ge’ez.

**Matthew 7:26** ይህንንም፡ ነገራን፡ ሰምቶ፡ የማያደርገው፡ ሰው፡ ሰነፍ፡ ሰው፡ ይመስላል፡፡  
ቤቱን፡ ሠራ፡ ባሻጭ፡ ላይ፡፡  
ወኩሉ፡ ዘይሰምዐኒ፡ ዘንተ፡ ነገርዮ፡ ወኢይገብር፡ ይመስል፡ ብእሴ፡ ኩብደ፡ ዘሐነጸ፡ ቤቶ፡ ዲቦ፡ ፍጻ፡

καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀκούων μου τοὺς λόγους τούτους καὶ μὴ ποιῶν αὐτοὺς ὁμοιωθήσεται ἀνδρὶ μωρῷ, ὅστις ὠκοδόμησεν αὐτοῦ τὴν οἰκίαν ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον·

Translation: “And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a lazy man, who built his house on sand.” In verse 24 we have ባደንጊያ፡ ላይ፡ ሠራ (lit. “on rock he built”), while in verse 26 we have ሠራ፡ ባሻጭ፡ ላይ (lit. “he built on sand”). In the Greek (and the Ge’ez) the two passages are structurally exactly parallel; here the Amharic has made a creative change of word order.

There is another interesting change that the Amharic translation made. The Greek μωρῷ and Ge’ez ኩብደ mean “foolish, mad” while the Amharic has ሰነፍ “lazy”.

**Matthew 7:29** ያስተምራቸው፡ ነበርና፡ ሥልጣን፡ እንዳለው፡ እንደ፡ ጻፎችም፡ አይደለም፡፡  
እስመ፡ ከመ፡ መኩንን፡ ይሚህርሙ፡ ወእኩ፡ ከመ፡ ጸሐፍቶሙ፡፡

ἦν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ οὐχ ὡς οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν.

Translation: “for he taught them as one having authority, and not as scribes.” The Greek and Ge’ez have “their scribes”. The Amharic translation simply says “scribes”.

5:44 ጸላታችሁን (today ጠላታችሁን)

6:1 ለርሳቸው (today ለእርሳቸው) (see Phonology)

These are some of the changes Amharic undergoes for the past two hundred years.

Compared with the Royal Songs the syntax of Abba Abraham resembles modern Amharic. It is an indication that Amharic has undergone various changes through time.

Let's see some examples from the Royal Song II:

አጎንም፡ ወዴትማ (“And where to now?) In moder Amharic it should be አሁንስ ወዴት.

ተመታኦ፡ በገናኸማ (“your harp has been played”) In moder Amharic it should be በገናህ ተመታ.

We do not find such sentence construction in Abba Abraham's translation. In the Royal songs the normal word order of modern Amharic: subject, object, verb is often not adhered to. But, in Abba Abraham's translation, though we encounter some odd sentence constructions, the text follows today's normal Amharic word order. Example:

በንጀራ፡ ብቻ፡ ሰው፡ እንዳይድን (4:4). In today's Amharic it should be written as ሰው፡

በንጀራ፡ ብቻ፡ እንዳይኖር ; but in both versions normal Amharic word order is followed.

### 6.3 Semantic Ambiguity

Translating the Bible is a challenging endeavor. It is not simply finding labels in the receptor language for biblical terms. Culture divides up reality differently.<sup>149</sup> This is clearly exhibited in Abba Abraham’s translation. Examples:

ፀጅ፡ አያስቀምጡ፡ ባረጁ፡ ጋኖች Matt. 9: 17 “neither do men pour *tej* into old *gane* (jars) ” In the Greek, men pour new wine into old wineskins. Both the drink and the container differ in a culture-specific way.

በንጆራ፡ ብቻ፡ ሰው፡ እንዳይደን (4:4) “man is not saved/healed by bread alone” where the Greek and Ge’ez read “man does not live on bread alone.”

#### 6.4 Ge’ez as Primary *Vorlage*

As the comparative study shows it is clear that Ge’ez was used in the translation process as the primary *vorlage*. This does not mean that Ge’ez was the only base text used by the translator.

#### 6.5 Conclusion

In this thesis we have presented the biography of Abba Abraham, a brief sketch of the language history of Amharic (in order to highlight the significance of the translation), a brief analysis of the language of the translation and finally a detailed comparison of Matthew 5-7 vis-a-vis the Greek and Ge’ez.

---

<sup>149</sup> The ‘cultural gap’ poses one of the biggest challenges to Bible translation. This might not be a big problem to Abaa Abraham because the Bible was part of the Ethiopian culture, long ago it was translated into Ge’ez.

Further studies can be done on this monumental translation. In the study of Amharic literary development Abba Abraham's translation of the Bible should not be neglected.

- Fabian, Dapila N. (February 1998) "The Need for Indigenization of Bible Translations for African Christians" *African Ecclesial Review* 40 (1)
- Fargher, Brian. (1996) *The Origins of the New Churches Movement in Southern Ethiopia, 1927-1944* (Studies of Religion in Africa, 16). Leiden: Brill.
- Fee, Gordon D. and Mark L. Strauss. (2007) *How to Choose a Translation for All Its Worth: A Guide to Understanding and Using Bible Versions*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Forslund, Eskil. (1993) *The Word of God in Ethiopian Tongues: Rhetorical Features in the Preaching of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus*. Uppsala: International Tryck.
- Getachew Haile. (1995) "Highlighting Ethiopian Traditional Literature". In *Silence Is Not Golden: A Critical Anthology of Ethiopian Literature*, Tadesse Adera & Ali Jimal Ahmed (eds.), 33-59. Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Girma Awgichew Demeke. (2009) *The Origin of Amharic*. Addis Ababa: Centre Français d'Etudes Ethiopiennes.
- Habte Mariam Marcos. (1990) "Scholarship on the Ethiopian Languages – Retrospect and Prospect". In *Silver Jubilee Anniversary of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies*, Richard Pankhurst and Taddese Beyene (eds.). Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Isichei, Elizabeth. (1995) *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present*. London: SPCK.
- Kassahun Sisay. (2009) "Old Amharic Linguistic Feature[s] in the Abu Rumi's Bible: Some Examples from The Gospel of John". Unpublished paper presented at 21<sup>st</sup> Annual ILS Conference, Addis Ababa University, June 26-27.
- Leslau, Wolf. (1995) *Reference Grammar of Amharic*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

- Littman, Enno. (1943) "Altamharisches Glossar". *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 20: 473-505.
- Maanga, Godson S. (2008) "Occasional Hurdles in Translating the Bible into the Changga Language: Focus on selected sections". *African Theological Journal* 31 (1): 44-69.
- Meyer, Ronny and Renate Richter. (2003) *Language Use in Ethiopia from a Network Perspective: Result of Sociolinguistic Survey Conducted among High School Students*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Mounce, William D. (1993). *Basics of Biblical Greek*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Nida, Eugene A. (1952) *God's Word in Man's Language*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- (1978) "The Book of a Thousand Tongues". In *The New Testament Student and Bible Translation*, ed. John H. Skilton, 80-124. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co.
- O'Grady, John F. (2007) *The Gospel of Matthew: Question by Question*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Richter, Renate. (1997) "Some Linguistics Peculiarities of Old Amharic Texts". In *Ethiopia in Broader Perspectives: Papers on the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, eds. Katsuyoshi Fukui, Eisei Kurimoto, Masayoshi Shigeta, 543-55. Kamigyo, Kyoto: Shokado Book Seller.
- Rubenson, Sven. (1998) "The Missionary Factors in Ethiopia: Consequence of a Colonial Context." In *The Missionary Factor in Ethiopia*, (Getachew Haile; Aasulv Lande and Samuel Rubenson (eds.)). Frankfurt: Peter Lang.
- Sandys-Wunsch, John. (2005) *What Have They Done to the Bible? A History of Modern Biblical Interpretation*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

- Smalley, William A. (1991) *Translation as Mission: Bible Translation in Modern Missionary Movements*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.
- Sundberg, Albert C. (2002) "The Septuagint: The Bible of Hellenistic Judaism". In *The Canon Debate*, Lee Martin McDonald & James A. Sanders (eds.), 68-90. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers.
- Sundkler, Bengt and Christopher Steed. (2000) *A History of the Church in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ullendorff, Edward. (1960) *The Ethiopians: An Introduction to Country and People*. London: Oxford University Press.
- , (1968) *Ethiopia and the Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Van Leeuwen, Raymond C. (2005) "Translation." In *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, Keiven J. Vanhoozer, (ed.). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic; London: SPCK.
- Wegner, Paul D. (1999) *The Journey from Texts to Translations: The Origin and Development of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- , (2006) *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible: Its History, Methods & Results*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic.
- Zuurmond, Rochus. (1989) *Novum Testamentum Aethiopice: The Synoptic Gospels (Edition of the Gospel of Mark)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH.
- , (2001) *Novum Testamentum Aethiopice: The Synoptic Gospels (Edition of the Gospel of Matthew)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH.

## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, it has not been presented for a degree in any other university, and that all sources of material used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

**Name**                    **Nebeyou Alemu**

**Signature**            \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**                    \_\_\_\_\_