

PAURASTYA VIDYĀPĪTHAM

PONTIFICAL ORIENTAL INSTITUTE OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Distance Education Programme

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SYRIAC DIPLOMA COURSE



Vadavathoor, Kottayam, Kerala

Course Material: Unit 1

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WELCOME

TO THE FASCINATING WORLD OF ARAMAIC!

Aramaic, also known as Syriac, is the door
to the precious riches of Syriac Christianity.

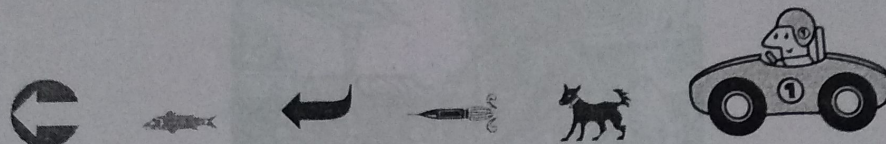
Syriac is one of the dialects
of the Aramaic language spoken by Jesus.

Syriac language is the medium through which the heritage of the early Jewish
Christian community is preserved.

Syriac language gives you access
to the Syriac Biblical version Pšitta,
the Writings of great Fathers like Mar Aprem, and great liturgical prayers
like Qudaša of Mar Addai and Mar Mari.

EAST SYRIAC ALPHABET

Look at these symbols! All these are directed from right to left!

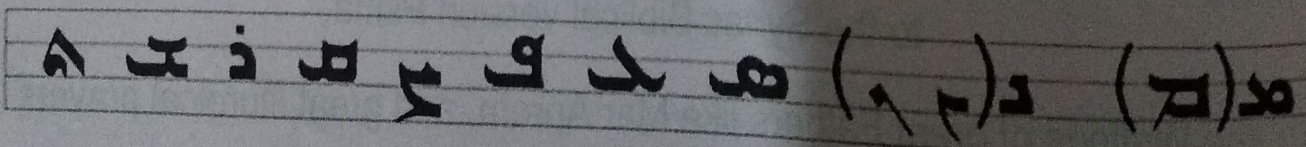
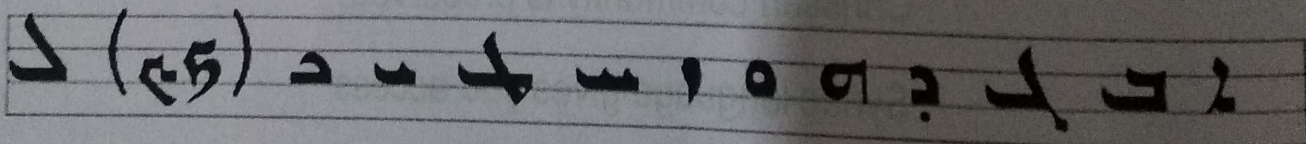


Syriac letters are written and read from right to left!

(The same principle is true about Semitic languages like Hebrew and Arabic.)

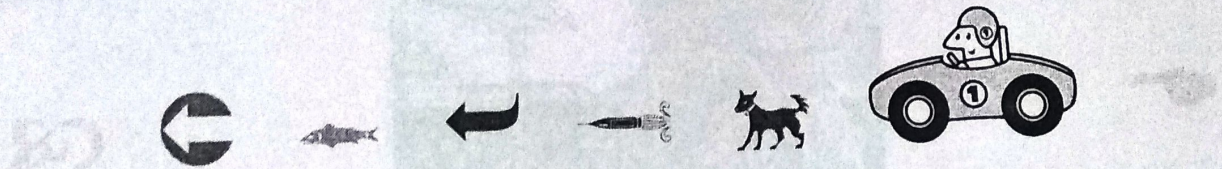
Here are the 22 letters of Syriac. Syriac language has three versions of the alphabets: Estrangela (the classical alphabet which is written without vowels), East Syriac (Madnhaya) and West Syriac (Serto). Here we prefer the East Syriac version of fonts. Later, we shall also learn the differences found in the Estrangela and West Syriac.

Please read from right to left!



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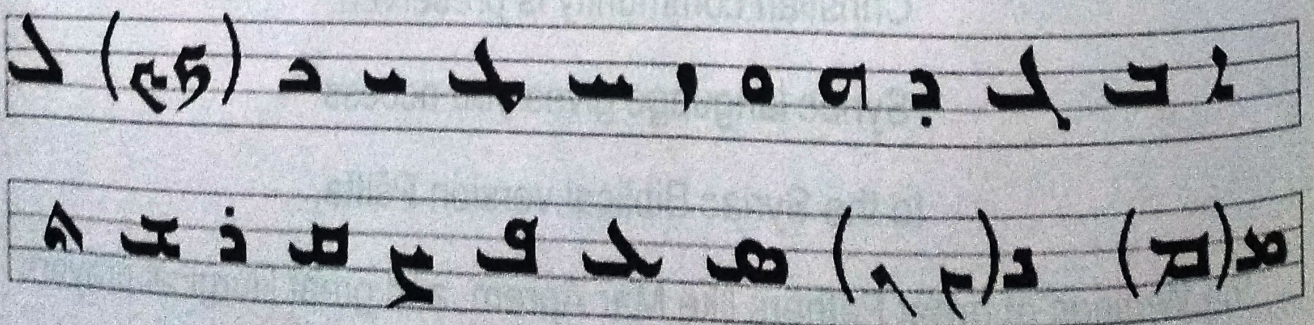


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Please read from right to left!



Dalath ܕ Gamal ܓ Beth ܒ Alap ܐ

Zain ܙ Waw ܘ Heh ܗ

Yodh ܝ Teth ܛ Heth ܚ

Noon ܢ Meem ܡ Lamadh ܠ Kap ܟ

Sade ܣ Peh ܦ Aeh ܥ Semkath ܥܘ

Taw ܬ Šeen ܫ Resh ܠ Qop ܩ

ܗ ܙ ܘ ܝ ܛ ܚ

ܝ ܛ ܚ ܙ ܘ

ܢ ܡ ܠ ܟ ܣ ܦ ܥ

ܥܘ ܬ ܫ ܠ ܩ ܬ ܩ

ܬ ܫ ܠ ܩ ܩ

Four sets of blank handwriting lines for practice, each consisting of a top line, a middle line, and a bottom line.



Transliteration of the Syriac Alphabet


ܐ h	ܕ d	ܓ g	ܒ b	ܙ z'
ܝ y	ܛ t	ܚ h	ܙ z	ܘ w
ܣ s	ܢ n	ܡ m	ܠ l	ܟ k
ܦ f	ܩ q	ܫ s	ܦ p	ܬ t'
ܬ t	ܬ t'			



There are naughty ones among
Among Syriac Alphabet!







Three letters have different shapes!


The letter 'Kap' has three forms. When it stands without touching any other letter it has the following shape:  When it is at the end of a word it has the following shape: 

When it is in between two letters it has the following shape: 








The letter 'Meem' has two forms:  

Usually it is written as . But when it is at the end of a word it has the following shape: 

The letter 'Noon' has three forms. When it stands without touching any other letter it has the following shape:  When it is at the end of a word and it is connected to the previous letter it has the following shape: 

When it is in the beginning of a word or between two letters it has the following shape: 

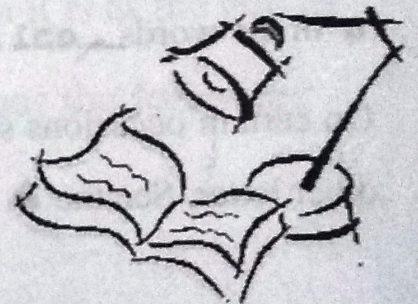
Therefore when we write two 'noons' continuously we write as follows:

-Sometimes we find a special form of writing the combination of  and . When  is written after  these two letters are combined. . See the combination of  and  at the end of this word.

Exercise 3: Transliterate the following Syriac words. (Write the corresponding English letters of the Syriac letters in the words.) Please note that you may put ' mark instead of ܐ and ' mark instead of ܘ.

ܡܠܟܘܘܬܐ	ܡܠܟܘܬܐ
ܡܠܟܐ	ܡܠܟܐ
ܡܠܟܘܬܐ	ܡܠܟܘܬܐ
ܡܠܟܐ	ܡܠܟܐ
ܡܠܟܘܬܐ	ܡܠܟܘܬܐ

Now it is time to read Syriac!



We need vowels to pronounce properly the letters in a word. (Please remember that the classical Syriac was written without vowels.)

There are **seven** Vowels in Syriac.

1. Zqapa: It is an open or long A. It is usually pronounced 'ā' as in Father. Zqapa is indicated by placing two points in a slant, one above the other, directly over the consonant.

Examples: gā ܓܐ̇ dā ܕܐ̇ bā ܒܐ̇ āh ܐܗ̇

2. Pthaha: It is a shortened A as in verbal, local, rental etc. Pthaha is indicated by placing one point over the letter and another point under it.

Examples: ga ܓܐ da ܕܐ ba ܒܐ ah ܐܗ

Words with Vowels

ܐܪܥܐ	ar'ā	Earth
ܫܠܡܐ	šlāmā	Peace
ܫܡܐ	šmā	Name
ܠܗܡܐ	lahmā	Bread
ܓܙܐ	gazā	Treasure
ܥܝܢܐ	'aynā	Eye
ܫܝܠܐ	hailā	Power
ܡܫܡܫܢܐ	mšamšānā	Deacon
ܦܓܪܐ	pagrā	Body
ܕܡܐ	dmā	Blood



3. Zlama Psheeqa: It is a shortened E as in egg, end, rent etc. Zlama Psheeqa is indicated by placing two dots side by side under the consonant.

Examples: ge ܓܝ de ܕܝ be ܒܝ e ܝ

4. Zlama Qashya: It is an open E as in bear, pear, they etc. Zlama Qashya is indicated by placing two dots in a slant one above the other, under the consonant.

Examples: gē ܓܝ̇ dē ܕܝ̇ bē ܒܝ̇ ē ܝ̇

Words with Vowels

ܓܝܢܐ	gensā	Family, race
ܒܝܫܡܐ	besmā	Perfume, incense
ܫܝܠܡܐ	helmā	Dream
ܥܝܬܐ	'ētā	Church

ܐܕܢܐ	ēdā	Feast
ܐܕܢܐ	ednā	Ear
ܪܓܠܐ	reglā	Foot
ܫܡܗܐ	šemḥa	Splendour
ܪܥܫܐ	rēšā	Head
ܬܫܡܫܬܐ	tešmeštā	Service
ܫܡܫܐ	šemšā	Sun

5. **Rwaha:** It is an **O** as in **oh**, **open** etc. **Rwaha** is indicated by placing a dot above the letter **Waw** (ܘ). Here the letter **Waw** has the function of a vowel and not a consonant. (ܘ).

Examples: go ܘܘ do ܘܘ bo ܘܘ o ܘܘ

6. **Rwasa:** It is **OO** or **U** as in **room**, **cool**, **put** etc. **Rwasa** is indicated by placing a dot under the letter **Waw** (ܘ). Here the letter **Waw** has the function of a vowel and not of a consonant. (ܘ).

Examples: gu ܘܘ du ܘܘ bu ܘܘ u ܘܘ

7. **Hwasa:** It is a long **ī**. It is pronounced as **ee** in **Bee**. **Hwasa** is indicated by placing a dot under the letter **Yod** (ܝ). Here the letter **Yod** has the function of a vowel and not of a consonant. (ܝ).

Examples: gā ܝܝ dī ܝܝ bī ܝܝ ī ܝܝ

Words with Vowels

ܬܪܘܢܐ	thrōnōs	Throne, altar
ܟܘܪܫܐ	kursyā	Chair, throne
ܫܠܘܠܐ	ḥlolā	Wedding



ܝܫܘܥ	išo	Jesus
ܡܫܝܚܐ	mšihā	Christ
ܩܕܫܐ	pārōqā	Saviour
ܫܠܝܚܐ	šliḥa	Apostle
ܦܘܡܐ	pūmā	Mouth
ܪܘܚܐ	rūḥa	Spirit
ܩܘܪܒܢܐ	qurbānā	Offering
ܩܘܕܫܐ	qūdāšā	Sacrament, Sanctification
ܝܕܐ	īdā	Hand
ܒܝܫܐ	bīšā	Bad, evil



Exercise 4: Write all the 22 letters, each with the seven vowels and their pronunciation as given in the model below.

ܐ	ܘ	ܝ	ܐ	ܝ	ܐ	ܝ	ܐ
ī	u	o	ē	e	ā	a	'

Exercise 5: Write all the Syriac sentences given below. This is to make you thorough with the Syriac alphabet. The sentences are from the Gospels and from the prayers of Qurbana. Please take special care to write exactly the vowels.

ܘܚܘܕܘܢܐ ܕܐܘܘܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܘܠܘܬܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ

Glory to God in the highest.

ܥܘܒܘܕܢܐ ܕܐܘܘܪܝܢܐ ܘܕܒܢܐ ܘܕܩܘܕܫܐ ܕܩܘܕܫܐ

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

ܡܢ ܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ

From eternity and forever, Amen and Amen.

ܡܢ ܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܥܘܠܡܐ

Let us pray peace be with us.

ܕܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ

Lord of all we praise you

ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܘܕܥܘܠܡܐ

Jesus Christ, we glorify you

ܕܢܩܬܘܗܢ ܡܢܫܡܢܬܢ ܕܦܘܠܕܝܢ ܘܗܘܐ ܩܕܫܘܗܢ ܩܕܫܘܗܢ ܕܢܦܫܘܗܢ

For you are the quickener of our bodies and gracious saviour of our souls

ܩܕܝܫܘܗܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܗܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܗܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܗܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܗܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܗܢ ܩܕܝܫܘܗܢ

Holy God, Holy mighty, Holy immortal, have mercy on us

ܒܘܠܘܫܘܗܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ

Blessed are the poor in spirit

ܕܕܒܠܫܘܗܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven

ܒܘܠܘܫܘܗܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ

Blessed are the merciful

ܕܕܒܠܫܘܗܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ

For they will receive mercy

ܒܘܠܘܫܘܗܢ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ

Blessed are the pure in heart

ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ ܝܫܘܒܘܢ ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ

For they will see God

[Empty box for writing]

ܒܠܘܓܘܨܘܒܘܢ ܠܝܫܘܒܘܢ ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ

Blessed are the peace makers

[Empty box for writing]

ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ

For they will be called children of God

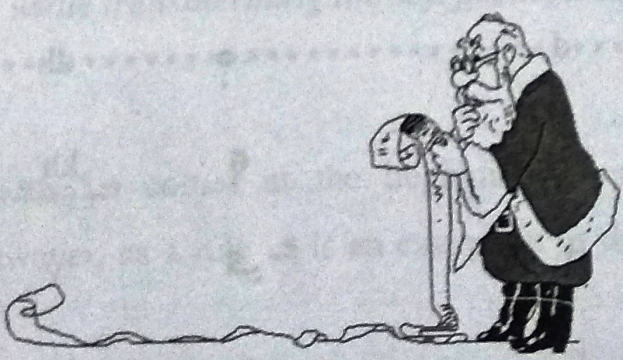
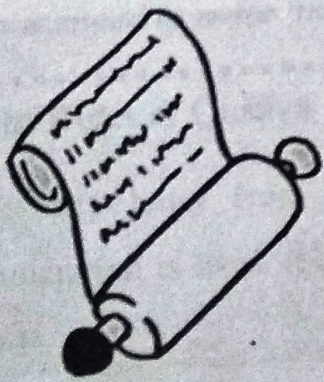
[Empty box for writing]

ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ ܕܝܫܘܒܘܢ

You are the light of the world

[Empty box for writing]

More Tips to Read Syriac



Learning to read and write is very important in the study of any classical language.

We have learned the letters of the East Syriac Alphabet. Before entering into the next unit, make it sure that you are able to read and write all these letters. Don't worry if you have any problem in distinguishing some letters, from one another. But you will make them sure by means of the continuous exercise. We have learned the vowels of the East Syriac Alphabet.