The website for the AENT (www.aent.org, accessed February 12, 2015) boasts some amazing claims:

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THE AENT IS AUTHENTIC
Popular English New Testaments come from Greek translations originally converted from Hebrew and Aramaic texts. Conversely, the AENT comes directly from Aramaic, the very language spoken by Jesus and his disciples.

THE AENT IS AUTHORITATIVE
Over 1,000 leading language scholars and Bible students have rigorously dedicated their unrivaled expertise to the 5th edition of the AENT. A wonderfully diverse tapestry of Jewish and Christian religious ideologists has collectively provided thousands of hours of unbiased peer review. Publishers, translators, editors, and contributors have passionately woven hundreds of years of study and research of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek into the AENT.

THE AENT IS AWESOME
Not only does the Aramaic English New Testament Bible render the Ancient Aramaic in a way that is easy for every English reader to understand, but it reveals nuances, poetry, and hidden codes of the New Testament that until now have only been available to Hebrew and Aramaic scholars.
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“...the most definitive English New Testament translation...” and “...thousands of hours of unbiased peer review.” “...hidden codes of the New Testament...” It all sounds fantastic, huh? A book you’ve just got to have, right?

But we must ask, “Are these claims true?” A friend loaned me a copy of this Aramaic English New Testament, Fifth edition (2012 Netzari Press LLC), by Andrew Gabriel Roth (referenced as AENT below). I wanted to compare the claims made on the website with the contents of the book itself. What follows are some notes I took while sitting down with it for a few hours. My frustrations will be evident.

Coming away, I believe I can align with Roth on many ideological fronts: Salvation in Messiah Yeshua alone. That Yeshua is YHWH in the flesh. That one of the terms of the Brit Hadashah is that Adonai write His Torah on the hearts of His people. That the “Oral Torah” of the rabbis is an ideology that arrives quite late on the scene. [One area in which I would differ from Roth is this: since a primary term of the New Covenant is that Adonai does the
writing, He therefore chooses those hearts upon which He is going to write! That is, Adonai is not like a foolish builder who begins but cannot finish; rather He finishes what He starts! In other worlds of dispute, you could say I lean “Calvinist” while Roth leans “Armenian”... but these do not constitute my problem with his book.]

I would also agree with Roth that researching the Jewish background to the New Testament is critical if we are to understand the nuances in Yeshua’s and the Apostles’ teachings and instructions. But whereas I see this background as historically anchored within a blend of Greek/Aramaic/Hebrew terminologies, Roth clearly wants to minimize Greek because for him it as a perversion of sorts. I do not share Roth’s commitment to privilege the Peshitta as the “original text.” Though I was attracted to the Peshitta Primacy claims many years ago, I subsequently studied ancient Aramaic formally, in various historical and dialectical situations, and investigated a number of other ancient Syriac texts. This helped me get a larger “feel” for the language and is various styles. I now read and hear the Peshitta New Testament as a product of 3rd-4th century Syriac Christianity, and a translation from Greek.

Here I judge the product against the advertised claims. Having met Andrew, probably nearly fifteen years ago during a Sukkot celebration, I do not question his faith in Messiah Yeshua. I recall a wonderful, contagious enthusiasm for the truth of the Gospel. In fact, Andrew’s interest in Aramaic was one of the spurs that drove me to study formally in college. I needed to search the matter out on my own, beginning with learning the language in an academically rigorous environment. So while I appreciate his passion for his ministry, I must challenge Roth’s work on two fronts. First, with respect to the quality of the translation, and second, in the presentation of a blend of history, midrash, and interpretation. While I have found several footnotes highlighting important doctrinal points with which I agree (none of which demand an Aramaic “original” to back them up), many of Roth’s comments exhibit a wild imagination that needs tempering. And sadly, though promising an “Aramaic English New Testament,” as a whole the work does not reflect a sold grasp of Aramaic as a Semitic language. The notes below assume readers can compare my references to the AENT (5th edition) with an actual copy of the book. I provide and organize according to page number and footnote for that purpose.

Since I believe there is indeed a place for solid research in Peshitta studies, I will begin with some recommendations for Roth if he genuinely wants to understand the Peshitta Bible.

**Recommendations for Roth**

- **Study** Aramaic seriously, in its various dialects. Take several courses in a rigorous, academic environment, where you have teachers who have done the same. Study the texts and history of early Syriac Christianity.

- **Engage** with the work of the top Aramaic Peshitta scholars in the world today. [George Kiraz and the whole team behind The Antioch Bible: The Syriac Peshitta Bible with English Transliteration, for example. I contacted the Syriac experts at Beth Mardutho (www.bethmardutho.org), and found that they played no part in Roth’s translation project.]

- **Start** with the Peshitta Torah. Let the Peshitta Torah and Tanakh inform your understanding of Peshitta NT terminology. This is one of the pillars for entering the world of the early communities that preserved the language and traditions of Syriac Christianity.

- **Drop** the anachronisms. Stick to the basic ideal described on p. 1012.
- **Provide** a commentary that understands the Peshitta for what it is: a Syriac Christian translation/explanation of the Greek originals. Help your readers to hear the voice of this ancient Christian community. Stop using the Peshitta as a puppet for anachronistic Hebrao-kabbalistic ventriloquism.

- **Drop** the desire to sound “Hebraic.” Either translate the Aramaic into English, or transliterate Aramaic into English, but take out all English transliterations of Hebrew words, which only confuse the reader who doesn’t know where one language ends and the other language begins. That is, don’t imply “Hebrew” when it’s clearly not in the text. If the Aramaic of the Peshitta is “the very language spoken by Jesus and his disciples,” as you claim, why modify it? On this note, why not use the same script (font) that the ancient community did? This helps represent that ancient community respectfully and accurately to your readers.

- **Thoroughly check** your Hebrew and Aramaic spelling. The horrendous errors I found (in the Fifth edition even!) demonstrate to me that no competent editor/s have been consulted.

- **Cut** out the sensationalist advertising and other outrageous claims. “Over 1,000 leading language scholars...”? See recommendation 7 above.

- **Don’t use** words you don’t understand. “Cognate,” “participle,” and “etymology” are some of the words you’ve used incorrectly.

- **Scrap** the “Peshitta Primacy” schtick; it’s simply does not stand. Peshitta studies are important and worthy of dedicated time and effort, but a big part of that is clarifying historical context. We all benefit from proper methodology.

- **Strip** out all the Kabbalah. There is no place for the “Sefirotic Tree” and “Ein Sof” in studying the Apostolic Writings. Letter mysticism like “Aleph-Tav” or gematria do not belong either.

- **Abandon** the “Aramaic = authentic Jewish mind; Greek = distorted Gentile mind” false dichotomy scheme. Study Greek, particularly the textual history of the LXX. A strong grasp of the historical, cultural, and linguistic importance of the Septuagint for the Jewish world of the late 2nd Temple era is critical.

**Some Sensational Claims**

The advertisements for the *AENT* on its website (www.aent.org, accessed February, 2015) are sensationalist to say the least. It sounds unbelievable, because it is, literally, not believable.

The main page says (cited here in **bold**):

“**It’s Accurate**”
- No, it’s not.

“**It’s Unique**”
- It certainly is, but for reasons other than those advertized.

“**It’s Reliable**”
- No, it’s not.

- 3 -
“It’s Authoritative - Peer Reviewed!”
- No, it’s not authoritative. And it may very well be “peer reviewed,” but it’s clear that the peers in question are incompetent in this arena and therefore do not qualify to judge Roth’s work one way or another. If Roth wanted genuine “peer review” he would engage scholars such as those creating The Antioch Bible.

Recall Roth’s fantastic claim, “Over 1,000 leading language scholars and Bible students have rigorously dedicated their unrivaled expertise to the 5th edition of the AENT.”

I spent less than a total of four hours flipping through the book, and my gut sinks when I contemplate the tremendous gap between the advertised claims and the actual product. I’d like Roth to provide the names of these “leading language scholars” so that I can chat with them about their so-called “unrivaled expertise” in ancient Aramaic. I’d be happy with two or three. [I shared some of Roth’s Galatians translation with a specialist in Syriac Christianity and the Peshitta New Testament. His reply: “Wow. Yes, that is just a brutal rendering of the Galatians text.”] Frankly, it all looks like a joke to me. But given it’s apparent popularity, I imagine Roth has done well with and has been encouraged by the success of this marketing project. I feel sad about all those who have spent their hard earned money on this book and have trusted its contents. And even more, I feel sad about the state of “scholarship” in the larger Messianic circles. The AENT is an indicator of our dire situation. Yeshua was not kidding when He warned us about the blind leading the blind.

Some Observations concerning the AENT, 5th Edition

1. Roth writes, “Since Hebrew and Aramaic have no vowels, two words spelled the same but pronounced differently can have two totally different meanings. In this case, the word in question is spelled gimel-resh-beyt-aleph (GRBA). Pronounced “gar-bah” the word is “leper” whereas with “gar-ah-bah” (same letters) means “jar maker”!” (p. xiv, on Matthew 26:6-7)

The fact is, we have no ancient evidence to corroborate this popular “jar maker” assertion. At best, we could say “Simon the Jar,” but that doesn’t make any sense at all. Simon is rightly called “the leper” in the narrative, but not because it’s his name, or because people went around calling him that after he was healed. Rather, so that the reader of Matthew’s Gospel (or Mark’s) will make the connection that this is the same leper that had been healed by Yeshua (Matt. 8, Mark 1) and had subsequently gone to the priests according to Yeshua’s instruction. He was a devoted follower of Yeshua, and the Gospel gives us a little glimpse into the history between them. Besides, the Peshitta tradition itself preserves the vocalization for “the leper.” Are the Aramaic-speaking scribes misunderstanding their own tradition? And if we want to go with Roth’s suggested re-vocalization (gerabah), then the word could also mean “wine-skin” or even “robe.” Perhaps it is really “Simon the wine-skin (maker)” or “Simon the robe (maker)”? No. “Simon, the leper” is correct.

2. Roth writes, “As many already know, the Hebrew and the Aramaic alap-beet (alphabet) contain 22 letters that are considered perfect, sacred and possessing great spiritual power as the vehicle for delivering YHWH’s original Word.” And, “...in Hebraic thought, there is a mystical linkage between the concept of letters and words and the Set Apart instructions they contain.” (p. xxiii)

How does anybody “know” this? Yeshua did not teach this way, neither did the Apostles. It’s
not the individual letters that are sacred. Other nations used the same letters! There is no “Hebraic thought” or “mystical linkage.” Rather, it’s the message that matters. The idea that each letter possesses “great spiritual power” has no place in our thinking about Yeshua or the Bible. Rather, “He upholds all things by the word of His power” (Heb. 1:3). All “power” is with the One Who is speaking and upholding the worlds.

Roth continues, (p. xxiv) “...[the Peshitta manuscripts] also preserve 22 books!” ... “The canon is precisely the same; only the way the books are counted (as separate entities) has been altered.”

That Roth counts twenty-two books in the Peshitta New Testament is significant because that’s how many letters there are in the Hebrew alphabet. It works out because he arbitrarily counts the Epistles of John and Revelation as one book, both epistles of Peter as a single book, and Jude and James (Ya’akov) as a single book. Paul’s letters are kept separate. So, whose numbering is this? The Apostles’ or Roth’s?

3. (p. 2) Why use “Yeshua,” when the Aramaic preserves no furtive patach? Rather, Yeshu. Also, why “the Mashiyach”? This would be a Hebrew pronunciation, not Aramaic. Why transliterate an Aramaic word into an English transliteration of a Hebrew word? Rather, Meshicha. And why “Yitz’chak”? The Aramaic is clearly Eeschaq. And why “Ya’akov” when the Aramaic is Yaqov? Why “Elohim” and not Elaha? Why (p. 3, note 8) “Ruach haKodesh” when the Aramaic is rucha d’kudsha? If this “original” was in Aramaic, as Roth claims, why not transliterate them into English directly from Aramaic? Why use Hebrew substitutes when we have “the original” words of the Apostles? Doesn’t Roth want us to trust the authenticity of the Peshitta?

4. Roth writes, “To vocalize the Name YHWH, breathe in slowly while saying “YAH”, then breathe out while saying “WEH.” (p. 4, n. 11)

This has nothing to do with Aramaic. This has nothing to do with Hebrew. This has nothing to do with Scripture. Not sure what it’s doing here.

5. Roth writes, “Additionally, yeshua (salvation) used 78 times is the passive participle of yasha (save or savior)...” (p. 4, n. 17)

That’s not what a “passive participle” is. And why no comment on Matt 1:21, where it is clear that the name Yeshua is explained by the verb “He will save”? In Greek we have a word play here between the name Ἰησοῦς Yaysous (Jesus/Yeshua) and the verb σώσει sosay (he will save). Most already recognize that in the Torah, names are often given along with a reason, with a lexical connection of some sort. And we don’t have to have a Hebrew Matthew to know that in this passage, the name Yeshua is directly connected with yoshi’a (He will save). However, the Peshitta is clearly not in this tradition. How do we know? Because the verb used to describe the reason for the name is utterly disconnected. The root for He will save here is from the word for life (אַנֵחַ), sounding nothing like Yeshua. Perhaps Roth recognized this and that’s why he offers no comment.

6. “The hybrid name Jesus (Je-Zeus) was coined within a culture where “Zeus” was the chief deity... See Yshua to Zeus in the Appendix.” (p. 4, n. 17)

This popular polemic has got to stop; it’s utter nonsense. The name “Jesus” does not in any way, shape, or form derive from or is a hybrid using the name “Zeus.” Ignorance of original languages is again evident. Not only in Acts 14:12-13, where Zeus is specifically named, but in 2 Maccabees, Philo, and Josephus (all of which were written in Jewish Greek) Zeus is
spelled Διός, Dios, starting with a delta. See also AENT, p. 350, n. 169, and p. 1058: “An etymological link evolved between Iesous, Zeus, and Jesus... ...there are many other factors that connect the Christian worship of Jesus to Zeus.” Roth imagines an “etymological link” because he has not received proper training to understand what this technical term actually means. Roth elsewhere explains the word Gospel to be “of Anglo-Saxon origin; ‘God’s-spell’” (p. 10, n. 46). This is a silly explanation. Actually, in Old English, “god” meant “good,” and “spell” meant “story.” Thus, the word “Gospel” is very accurate and appropriate for use among the disciples of Yeshua.

7. Roth writes, “Mitzrayin is the Aramaic form of Hebrew word Mitzrayim.” (p. 6, n. 25)

No. In his English translation, Roth uses “Misrayin,” while the Peshitta has Metzen. Again, he’s getting his various Hebrew and Aramaic agendas tangled up.

8. Roth writes, “In the Compendius Syriac dictionary Payne Smith lists the Aramaic gamtza as “parsnip” (a root vegetable), not as “locusts” (insects).” (p. 7, n. 32)

He must not have bothered to look that up, because contrary to Roth’s statement, Smith’s dictionary gives “the locust” as the very first meaning; only secondly “parsnip” (see Payne Smith, p. 509). Here’s the entry:

| מָכִית | pl. | m. | a) the locust; | מַגְתָּא | young locusts before the wings are developed. | b) | pastinaca agrestis, parsnip. |

9. Concerning the Peshitta of Matthew 7:6 יִתְלָון. Roth writes, “Tithlon (hang) was misunderstood as talon (to give)...” (p. 18, n. 88)

Unhappy with the Greek tradition, Roth translates the Aramaic as “You should not hang earrings on dogs...” This is incorrect. There are two distinct roots here which are Aramaic ה.נ.ג and ק.ל.מ (or ק.ל.ג). The dagesh in the second ח is an indication that this is from natal. If יִתְלָון should be read as “do (not) hang,” then there would be no dagesh. Cf: the actual Kab. Codex, that has the dot over both tav, indicating “give” rather than “hang.” Not only that, look at other verses where יִתְלָון occurs... always with a dagesh over the second tav, always meaning “y’all will give” (Rom 7:4 (where Roth has “yield”), 2 Cor 6:3, Eph 4:27, Col. 1:10 (yield), James 2:16). And why (p. xiv) is the vowel pointing so critical when it comes to יִתְלָון in Matthew 26:6-7, but here it is not? If Roth had received proper training in Aramaic studies, he would not have made this glaring error.

Another problem with the AENT translation here is that the preposition on the word “dogs” is a lamed. The verb “to hang on” uses a bet while the verb “to give to” uses a lamed. Everywhere in the Peshitta where the verb ק.ל.ג “to hang” is used, the preposition is, appropriately, a bet, meaning “to hang on (something)”. In Peshitta Matthew, that is 18:6 “a millstone hanging on his neck,” and 22:40, “on these two commandments hang the Law and
the Prophets.” But contrary to Roth’s translation of 7:6, the verb is קְרֵא “give,” and the preposition is a lamed, קֶלֶס to dogs.” It would be bad Aramaic to say “to hang to (something),” but this is what Roth suggests.

10. (p. 48-9, Matt. 16:19) - The Peshitta completely misses the import of the Greek perfect passive verb, and Roth misses it as well. The NASB rightly follows the original Greek: “...whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.” The point here is that Yeshua’s talmidim will have access to the storehouse of heavenly treasure (true Torah) and bring it to the earth in application or “halakhic” form. As Yeshua says, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Considering Roth’s note #81 on p. 16 he would likely agree.

11. Roth writes, “Gamala refers to a “heavy rope” rather than a “camel” which is also spelled gimel-meem-lamed-alap.” (p. 56, n. 199 Matt. 19:24)

First off, why is it that in other places Roth will find opportunity for wonderful midrash on word-play and gematria, due to the sacred significance of each letter? After all, these two words have identical spelling. But here (as in #1 above), we have an instance where Roth rejects one meaning in favor of the other. Yet he is in reality kicking against the pricks of the original Greek. If we look at Jewish sources, we don’t have any instance of this saying in Aramaic with the meaning Roth suggests here. However, the talmudic rabbis do pass on a story featuring an elephant going through the eye of a needle (Bavli, Berachot 55b, bottom). Not only that, but Yeshua Himself uses other memorable images to anchor his point. His frequent use of hyperbole is key: the unrepentant are likened to all manner of unclean animals: swine, serpents, wolves, etc... Later in the same Gospel (Matthew 23:24), Messiah parallels gnants and camels, just as here He parallels a rich man and a camel. How come at Matt. 23:24 Roth does not likewise insist that Yeshua is saying they swallow a “heavy rope”? But aside from these issues, perhaps the most important question to ask: Why would the very Aramaic speaking Christians who have preserved the Peshitta texts through all these generations continue to vocalize the word as “camel”? The Peshitta vocalization tradition itself reads “camel,” and not as “heavy rope” as Roth would like. A final note: the earliest Syriac Christian suggesting the “heavy rope” reading is Eeshua bar Bahli’ in the 10th century. We have no data from ancient Aramaic demonstrating this meaning.

12. (p. 146 Luke 1:6) Roth renders כַּהֲנָה הָיָה כֹּצְעַקָה as “in ritual purity ... In Separateness and Righteousness” Why expand the two words into three? In his footnote Roth explains why “ritual purity” is preferred for קֵרְעָה, because kanota sounds like the Aramaic word for priesthood, kahnota. This is imaginative midrash, and beyond the duty of the translator. “Righteousness” or “uprightness” is best. In the Peshitta OT, קֵרְעָה is used to translate Hebrew words based on the root כִּנֹּה, like כִּנֹּה (Ps. 5:10, Job 42:7) or כ (Prov. 28:2). But “ritual purity” in Hebrew is from the root קָרָא. The Peshitta OT renders words based upon כֹּרַע into Aramaic words based upon the root כֹּרַע כֹּרֶה. This sounds nothing like “priesthood.” Imagine the following verses, taking Roth’s suggestion: “Blessed are they that are persecuted because of ritual purity” (Matt 5:10), or “What shall we say then? That the nations who were not running after ritual purity, found ritual purity, even the ritual purity that is from faith” (Rom. 9:30).

13. Roth writes, “A hidden message is revealed within the names, decoded here as... ...Luke in particular enjoys employing this way of communication... Such Hebraisms were lost when Hebrew names were Hellenized and the text translated into Greek.” (p. 150, n. 29)

This idea of hidden codes is tantalizing. But these names were not “translated into Greek” as Roth says. Rather, they were transliterated, just as they were into Aramaic. Even in his
transliterations into English, Roth is not consistent: ספניא should be Phanu’eel, not “Peniel.” Later, in Luke 2:41, Roth transliterates the Aramaic ספניא as Paskha, when it clearly should be Petzka. Instead of faithfully transliterating the Aramaic, Roth chooses to go with the Hebrew word behind it. In so doing, he covers up the fact that the Peshitta has strange spellings for many “Hebrew” words, demonstrating that the Peshitta NT is not the work of knowledgeable, first century Jerusalem-based Jews. Instead, it reflects a later Aramaic dialect of Syria.

14. (p. 250 John 6:37-40) Roth leaves out “to me” (translating רחליה) in v. 37, and he leaves out “but I will raise him up on the last day” at the end of v. 39.

15. Roth writes, “Astaphanos in Greek or “Stephen” in English is a translation of the Hebrew Tzefania, the name of the prophet Zephaniah in Tanakh ... The Aramaic transliterates his Greek name here, even though...” (p. 318, n. 76)

This is simply not true. The Tanakh has צפניה; which the LXX transliterates as Σοφονίας Sophonias and the Peshitta OT as ספניא. Rather, the Peshitta of Acts 6:5 correctly transliterates the original Greek. Stephanos means “wreath, crown” in Greek, and the Peshitta adds a prosthetic aleph for the sake of the initial “st” cluster. It is clearly not the same as Tzefania as Roth claims. Again, making claims based upon similar sounding words is not the work of a translator, but of one who is making up meanings as the associate words in their mind.

16. (p. 326) The word “Gaza” (Acts 8:26) comes from Syriac גazaar, which demonstrates dependence upon Greek. How do we know? Because only in Greek is this initial ‘ayin גazaar Hebrew word transliterated with the letter gamma, rendering Gaza instead of Semitic ‘Aza. Both Tanakh גazaar and even the Peshitta OT גאזא spell ‘Aza with an ג. But the Peshitta NT uses גazaar, Gaza, with a gimmel, following exactly the Greek Γαζά, with a gamma. If the Peshitta was not dependent upon Greek, it would have spelled this word with an ג, according to the proper Semitic spelling found in both Tanakh and even Peshitta OT.

17. Roth writes, “...disputing with those Yehudeans who knew Greek...” and, “Rav Shaul obviously doesn’t have the strong command of Greek necessary to address the more advanced and complex concepts of the Malchut Elohim...” (p. 330-1, n. 124 Acts 11:29)

This is ridiculous. I can only assume Roth has never seriously studied Greek, or the letters of Paul in Greek. Paul’s Greek is excellent. Secondly, Paul is not “Rav Shaul.” He would not let anyone call him “Rav” or “Rabbi.” Not only that, but the title “Rav,” in the manner suggested here, wouldn’t even come on the scene until much later, after the rise of rabbinic Judaism and well into the post-70 era. So calling Paul “Rav Shaul” is not only anachronistic but reflects a muddy methodology. See Roth’s comment on p. 917 “...Greco-Roman Greek New Testament writers twisted Rav Shaul into an anti-circumcision Apostle to the Gentiles.” This kind of polemic is fueled by Roth’s ignorance of the original Greek Apostolic Writings and of history.

18. Roth writes, “This Greek term was transliterated back into Aramaic for the benefit of the Jewish followers of Mashiyach.” (p. 138, n. 137 Acts 11:26)

OK, Roth admits that the Aramaic word here is a transliteration of the Greek word for “Christians.” However, he fails to explain it. Why would this Greek term serve as a “benefit” for “the Jewish followers of Mashiyach”? What we see here is another example of the Peshitta NT’s dependence upon Greek. Nothing more, nothing less. The reason the Peshitta has קרא揆יה is because it is looking at a Greek text.

19. Roth writes, ““Y’shua Hanozri Wumelech HaYehudim” John is the only one who
transliteration the Hebrew portion of the sign literally. . . Here Yochanan records the Hebrew sign as having an acrostic above Y’shua’s head that spells “YHWH,” the first letter of each word.” (p. 294, n. 222)

Roth says that this shows that the Hebrew would have spelled out the name YHWH, taking the initial letter of each word. I recall hearing this claim many years ago. But this teaching is not truthful. First off, if the sign was originally Hebrew, the Peshitta of John offers us a translation, not a transliteration as Roth states. Second, if you render the Peshitta’s phrase back into Hebrew you would not get the vav/waw needed to spell out Y-H-W-H. Finally, a point like this would have been important for the Evangelists, but they never make it. And as far as the use of “Hebrew” in the NT, when it says, “Hebrew,” it is referring to what scholars today call Aramaic. Roth conflates these two languages, just as he confuses translation from transliteration. The supposed “acrostic” on the sign above the cross is another example of imaginative midrash at play. It is not sound scholarship and should not be taught as if it were the truth.

20. (p. 338, Acts 12:4, n. 139) Paskha? But Aramaic reads קסחה, Petzkha (see #13 above). Why would faithful Jews, preserving the “original” Jewish Gospel, be talking about something called Petzkha? In the original Greek (in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts, etc...), we find the word πασχα pascha, which precisely captures the pronunciation of the Aramaic word. By covering the Peshitta's Petzkha with Pascha, Roth again favors the Greek’s accurate transliteration over the straight Peshitta text.

21. Roth writes concerning the ones from Judea in Acts 15:1, “...teaching of... Ebionites, or “Messianic Pharisees”...” (p. 348, n. 165 Acts 15:1)

How does he know they are Ebionites or Messianic Pharisees? There is no data for this claim. Luke gives no indication that these teachers are believers in Messiah. Roth’s translation: “unless you are circumcised in the manner of Torah...” On the contrary, the Peshitta actually reads, “unless you are circumcising...” Strangely enough, the Aramaic (נורא מנה הממשיח) has an active participle here... (cf: John 7:22). Perhaps Roth is unconsciously influenced by the Greek text here, because he missed this nuance in the Aramaic.

22. (p. 350) I agree with n. 167 to a degree... although the rabbinic ideology called “Oral Law” or “Oral Torah” was not yet invented.

23. Roth writes, “...saying that, You should be circumcised and guard the religious customs, something that we did not command them...” (p. 350 Acts 15:24)

Here Roth renders the Greek namosa as “religious custom,” though most of the time he’ll translated as “Torah.” Why do these supposed Hebraic-Aramaic speaking Jews use a foreign, Greek word nomos when talking about something as foundational to their identity as the Torah? Because they were comfortable speaking Greek, and the Peshitta is a translation from the Greek into the Syriac dialect, that’s why. Moreover, for this important verse Roth fails to point out that the earliest Greek texts do not have this phrase. Here too, we see that the Peshitta NT is a translation from a later Greek manuscript tradition that had been glossed by a scribal hand. The original Greek reads, “and have confused you, upsetting your minds by what they said” (NET Bible), no mention of circumcision or Torah/“religious custom.”

24. (p. 390-91 Acts 27:9)

The Greek says simply, “the fast”; but the Peshitta has יהוהו דתולא אדוהודא דתולא יהוהה “the day of the fast of the Jews.” This is an interpretive gloss. The simplicity of the original Greek reflects
knowledge of the day, whereas the Peshitta adds information to explain it to the readers.

25. Roth writes, “...the underlying foundation of Calvinism is that we all “have” a “sinful nature” however no such concept is found in Scripture, only a nature of man or ‘human nature.’” (p. 412, n. 50)

I don’t know what Roth is trying to parse out here. He affirms a “sinful predisposition” but not a “sinful nature.” Perhaps he understands “freedom from sin” in a manner that does not imply prior slavery. Perhaps he imagines a “salvation” for people that does not imply their need of rescue. If he doesn’t think people have a sinful nature and that Scripture does not teach that people have a sinful nature then he needs to explain the “all, only, and every” used in Genesis 6:5: ...and every intent of the thoughts of his heart are only evil, every day, as well as a whole lot of other passages. Scripture says we “were dead in trespasses and sins...” and in need of a Deliverer, One to create us anew; to give us a new heart, to give us His Ruach Hakodesh... The whole history of mankind is that of sinfulness. No one born has ever been without sin. No one, that is, except for Yeshua. So the data is clearly contrary to Roth’s statement. See also Roth on p. 827 “…it remains up to the individual in his or her own moment in time and personal choice to turn from sin...” Now this is a statement that cannot be backed up with Scripture. God does the choosing; Abraham, Israel, Moses, Aaron, David... right down the line. Yeshua chose His disciples. Does the creature choose to be created? Does the baby choose to be born? Did Lazarus, or the young man, or the young girl, choose to be resurrected? But this line of questioning has nothing to do with the AENT translation project.

26. Roth translates, “And the fruits of righteousness are sown in fertile land by them who make peace.” (p. 433, n. 17 James 3:18)

Roth reads the Aramaic ש(Layout} as “fertile land,” but offers no textual support for taking this word as anything other than “peace.” It’s use as “cultivated land” occurs only in late Syriac sources, and stems from the primary meaning “peace.” This is Roth’s anachronistic, midrashic imagination at play (cf: p. 340, n. 141 on Acts 12:20).

27. Roth translates, “But behold! When those who did not follow righteously the truth of the Good News, said I to Peter, to the eyes of them all, ‘If you who are Yehudeans, live as Arameans; why do you urge the Gentiles who have joined themselves to Yehuda to live as Yehudeans?’ For if we who have a Jewish nature ourselves, and not those who are from Gentile sinners.” (p. 562 Galatians 2:14-15)

This is a nonsensical translation (if it would even merit the term) and horrible English. There are multiple points here that demonstrate incompetency in Aramaic. He reads singular forms as plurals, and creates a paraphrase that is quite different than the Peshitta text. Roth does not discern between שְׁנֵא (sg. determined form of Jew) and שְׁנָא (Jews, Judeans). Rather, “If you (sg.) being a Judean are yet living Arameanly, and not Judeanly, why do you force people to live Judeanly? For we are Judeans from nature and not from gentile sinners.” But even this literal translation doesn’t really make sense. That’s why we need to look to the original Greek here as well.

28. (p. 563, note 15 Gal. 2:14)

Roth attempts to explain the presence of the word awngaleyon, the Aramaic transliteration for the Greek word for “Gospel,” by saying “it reflects the harsh reality of First Century Israel under Roman occupation.” This is a poor explanation, even silly. Greek translations of Scripture had been in circulation among the Mediterranean diaspora for centuries, and Jews
spoke Greek even in Israel. There are many, many Second-Temple era texts which were written in Jewish Greek. This was due neither to any “harsh reality” nor “Roman occupation.” If there was a better word to use than “euangellion,” then Paul would have certainly used it. But more than that, in this instance Paul is writing to the Galatians; he writes in Greek and cites the Greek Tanakh, and there is no anxiety concerning this matter. On p. 1012, n. 118 Roth writes, “...Philo’s veneration of the LXX would have been met with sharp resistance in Israel.” I would like to see his evidence for this claim. We have all manner of documented disputes between Jews, but language “primacy” doesn’t seem to have been one of them. If it was an issue, it would have likely been only among a minority, fringe group. Even the Dead Sea Scrolls library had Scripture in Greek. The early rabbis had no problem with the Greek Torah either, and several midrashim stem from rabbis interpreting Hebrew words from Tanakh as if they were Greek.

29. (Galatians 4:25)

The Peshitta spells “Arabia” as ארביה, with an aleph, because the translator does not know it should be spelled with an ‘ayin (א), something a Jewish scribe would have known. Here, the Peshitta is simply transliterating the Greek word into Syriac, without knowledge of the actual Semitic spelling. This is an example of a Greek to Aramaic translation rather than a supposed “original” Aramaic. Roth completely misses this.

30. Roth translates, “Therefore you stand in the liberty of the Mashiyach, liberty and not subjugation, turning from the yoke of servitude.” (p. 570, Galatians 5:1)

Roth’s translation is horrible. Instead, the Peshitta says, “Stand therefore, in that freedom which Messiah has freed us, and do not again be come subjugated in a yoke of slavery.” Again, Roth does not discern between verbs and nouns or between verb tenses and roots. It looks to me that his translation technique does not involve proper analysis of grammar and syntax.

31. (p. 570, note 60)

I agree with basic gist, with some fine tuning. His translation from Aramaic is inaccurate. תתגזרון should be “if you will be circumcised,” but Roth renders as “if you are circumcised...”

32. (Eph 2:12)

Roth fails to see that this phrase is a direct transliteration from Greek καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν “strangers to the covenants”, ξένοι = הגרים (with a prosthetic aleph to soften the initial “ks” consonant cluster), and διαθηκῶν = הברית. Two more Greek words transliterated into Syriac.

33. (p. 578-80) Roth’s English of Ephesians 2:14-15 is off. Roth finishes v. 14 with “...and the enmity, by his flesh;” and then begins v. 15 with “And in his flesh (the) enmity...”

This is either poor editing, poor translation, or both. By the “Fifth Edition” I would think things like this would have been resolved. Apparently none of the “thousands of hours of input from experts” included a reading of AENT Ephesians.

34. Roth writes, “...the Greek, which confuses the Two with the same word “kurios”... ...the original Jewish nature of the older Aramaic text.” (p. 504, n. 14)

This is not confusion. Rather, the Peshitta is interpreting the Greek text. In fact, the “original Jewish nature” of the text is here for us in the Greek. And why would Roth say, in the next note (n. 15), that parsopa is an Aramaic term? This is definitely another Greek term
transliterated into Aramaic. No less than thirty-five times this renders the Greek word πρόσωπον, proswpon.

35. “The word for “leaven” here is makhmae, the cognate in Hebrew of which is chometz.” (p. 506, n. 18 1 Cor. 5:7)

No. First off, the Peshitta has חמא כ chamira here, not makhmae. Is Roth looking at the Aramaic text printed in his own book? Second, this is not what “cognate” means. See #38 below.

36. Roth writes about “Rav Shaul,” and “Rabbi Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel…” (p. 506, n. 21)

Anachronisms... see repetitions also at p. 600, n. 1, p. 710 “grandson of the great Rabbi Hillel” - Hillel was not called Rabbi, Rabban, or “the great” by the rabbis - this is strictly Roth’s embellishment; and only in the (very late) Bavli is Gamaliel said to be of the lineage of Hillel. Jewish scholars outside of rabbinic apologetics understand this is an attempt of the later Babylonian rabbis to anchor their “family tree” in heroes from the past.

37. Roth writes, “Recall that the first attribute (sefira) - Keter - ...” (p. 600, n. 2)

This medieval Kabbalah has no place in reading the Apostolic Writings. See also mention of “the Sefirotic Tree and Metatron” p. 601, n. 4. In notes 1 and 4 here Roth writes, “...more about the revelatory (mystical) aspects of Colossians is available in Ruach Qadim by Andrew Gabriel Roth...” and “Here is one of the most stunning mystical parallels in all of Paul's writings! . . . Paul is showing a very clear understanding of the Sefirotic Tree forming the spiritual blueprint of man, or Adam Qadmon (Metatron)...”

This is an example of what I call ventriloquism. The Peshitta is the puppet through which Roth voices inappropriate and anachronistic terminology. He imposes later rabbinic concepts expressed in Hebrew (though metatron is a Greek word) upon a Christian Syriac text that is itself a translation from Greek.

38. Roth writes, “Apostle Paul often uses araza (mystery), the Aramaic cognate of the Hebrew “sod,” to reveal elements of the Kingdom of Heaven.” (p. 603, n. 7)

Roth misuses the word “cognate” here and elsewhere. See p. 66, n. 226; p. 506, n. 18. He clearly does not understand what it means. I was happy to find that on p. 146, notes 14 and 15 his use of the term is appropriate.

39. (p. 666)

I don’t know if this is serious or funny. Roth’s “translation” of the Aramaic of Revelation begins on p. 666! Was this on purpose? For you gematria/numerologists out there, what say you? Also, n. 4, discusses the Alap-Taw, which “holds a universe of meaning.; each Hebrew/Aramaic letter holds many specific values...” This Hebrew letter-mysticism is nonsense, and has no place within the Body of Messiah. See my article “Seven Steps to the ‘Aleph-Tav’ Bible” on the TorahResource Blog.

40. Roth writes, “...context demands the word “innocent” as the preferable reading.” (p. 692, n. 55 Revelation 15:2)

Why is this preferable? The context has not changed. In his English translation of Peshitta Revelation and Epistles of John, Roth consistently renders the verb to mean “victorious”
...except this one place. There are several other instances of the verb ἀθώος used in the Peshitta Revelation, and they all mean “victorious.” Of the 27 places I found this verb in the Peshitta New Testament, there is no other place in the AENT (aside from Romans 3:4 “pure,” which is a synonym) where Roth renders ἀθώος as “innocent.” Roth does not grasp the legal background to this terminology, and again denies the validity of the Jewish LXX tradition.

41. (p. 710) Roth discusses “recent scholarship” but fails to cite his source appropriately. Israeli scholar Israel Yuval should have been named, with all necessary citation information, which in this case is p. 107, cf: 121, n. 39. Moreover, the date is wrong. Roth says 2000, but it is actually 1999. This aside, Roth still misunderstands Yuval’s point! It was not the Gamaliel of Acts that was said to write the parody, but Gamaliel II of Yavneh.

42. (p. 711-13) More spelling issues. In these pages, Roth repeatedly misspells “alma” as אלהים. But this word is not spelled with an aleph, but with an ayin, and should be אלהים. In the Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14, it is אלהים, which Roth also misses. What’s more, the Greek παρθένος is consistently printed as παρθένος. Even an introductory class in Greek would have helped here, teaching him that a final sigma is appropriate: παρθένος. Finally, Roth conflates the words alma (virgin) and alma (world), drawing on gematria, another form of letter mysticism. Perhaps “leper” and “jar maker” are mystically interconnected as well, since they are spelled the same? (see #1 above). Even if we put aside Roth’s glaring and repeated spelling errors, these words are not related. Those who have studied Semitic philology know that they come from different roots.

43. (p. 803) Here Roth focuses on the importance of the Greek word τέλος telos in Romans 10:4, 1 Tim. 1:5, and 1 Peter 1:9, and I agree with his statements. But since he is committed to Peshitta primacy, Roth is careful to comment that the Aramaic has the same meaning as the Greek. If his argument is based directly upon the Aramaic, why does he provide English renderings of all three verses, even to the extent of inserting the Greek word telos into his citations for his readers? Can’t the Aramaic stand on it’s own? It cannot stand on it’s own. The Peshitta for 1 Peter 1:9 does not even use the same word as the other two verses to translate telos. Roth didn’t catch it. This is evidence of the original Greek influencing Roth’s reading of the Peshitta.

44. Roth writes, “[The Karaites’] name is likely derived from the Hebrew karet, or “to cut out,” as in cutting away the oral traditions that they felt were added to Torah.” (p. 1011, n. 116)

Roth’s ignorance of Hebrew is showing yet again, and here I’m actually embarrassed for him. The name “Karaites” comes from the Hebrew root קַרְטָה, qara’ “to call, to read.” Yet Roth tells us it’s from קָרַט, karat, “to cut.” He has obviously never read anything in Hebrew about the Karaites, but is entirely dependent upon English translations. Then he is “reverse engineering” the English into imagined Hebrew roots. This is an error in method that disqualifies Roth from authoring a translation, and also shows that the “thousands of hours” of input from experts was in vain. Not one of these participants is qualified to produce a translation. The blind leading the blind. Similar midrashic fantasies are found on p. 865, where a particularly comical one is offered. “…in this case the word is qayamta, the middle word is yam (sea)...” Here Roth finds special significance in the detail that the root נֶפֶן “to stand” has the letters yod-mem, “sea.”

45. Roth writes, “We know that the Greek language presents immense challenges to recovering original Hebrew and Aramaic thought, so why go through that when a well attested to ancient tradition has survived from the apostolic age in the sister language of the
Torah and in the dialect in which Y’shua himself taught?” (p. 1061)

How do we “know” this? Roth is preaching to the Aramaic Primacy choir, none of whom have sufficient grasp of the language to be able to point out to him the language blunders peppered throughout the text of this “Fifth edition.” In fact, Jewish Greek is wonderful, and God’s perfect choice for bringing the Gospel to the world. I can see why Roth asks, “so why go through that?” Is Greek too difficult? If his grasp of Aramaic vocabulary, grammar, and syntax has been found wanting, I imagine his Greek would be much worse, especially given his disdain for it. But if he’s not going to learn Greek, then at least he could spend some serious time sharpening his Aramaic rather than working as an apologist for the Peshitta translation and trying to sell it as “the original.” It is not the “original.”

46. Roth discusses the “613” mitzvot, “Taryag” (248+365) as if this concept can be projected back into the first century (pp. 846-864). Not only is this an anachronism, but even the medieval rabbis could not agree upon which commandments belong on the list and which did not. That being said, the question “how much Torah do Christians already keep?” is a good one to ask, because it’s positive, looking for common ground. This makes Roth’s other statements about a “Torahless Christianity” (p. 412, n. 50) sound polemical.

47. Roth states that “’Persons’ of Trinity ... is polytheism” (p. 846). While I understand that “Trinity” is a term that does not occur in the Bible, just because someone says they are a “Trinitarian” does not mean they are a polytheist.

48. Roth’s discussion of the Khabouris Codex (pp. 892-893) fails to engage the important work of Dr. Bruce Metzger, who has demonstrated this to be a late translation, not “original.” Metzger gives details concerning claims about the Peshitta, similar to Roth’s, that were made back in the 1950’s. See especially “The Saga of the Yonan Codex,” in Chapter Nine of his book, Reminiscences of an Octogenarian (Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

49. Roth believes in the kabbalistic idea of “Tikkun,” accessing “hidden knowledge,” (982) and the “PaRDeS” interpretive scheme (p. xxi). Again, these teachings and concepts are not only anachronisms when looking at 1st century Jewish worlds (although some sectarian groups did even then pride themselves on possessing hidden knowledge), but have no place in our discussions of Torah and of the Gospel of Yeshua.

These are some of the reasons why, contrary to his published claims, Roth's Aramaic English New Testament is not AUTHENTIC, not AUTHORITATIVE, and not AWESOME. The choice to use these adjectives to describe this product, along with the claim that “Over 1,000 leading language scholars and Bible students have rigorously dedicated their unrivaled expertise to the 5th edition of the AENT,” demonstrates the dearth of sound historical, grammatical exegetical skill and expertise among its producers.