

Isho'dad of Merv

Isho'dad of Merv (fl. around 850 CE) was bishop of Hedatta, a city on the Tigris. According to medieval lists of Catholicoi of the Apostolic Church of the East, he was considered for the office of Catholicos under Al-Mutawakkil because of his great learning. Eventually, Theodosius was appointed instead of Isho'dad in 853.

Isho'dad was educated in a prosperous period when scholars in the Abbasid Empire, including Syriac speaking Christians, immersed themselves in Greek learning and science. Isho'dad abbreviated, transformed, and handed down Greek and Syriac exegetical knowledge of late antiquity in the Syriac language. Many of his commentaries are written in a highly abbreviated style, which points to a readership interested in pieces of concise academic information. His writings also include excerpts of older traditions which eventually replaced the longer original texts in the process of daily exegetical work. His biblical commentaries belong to a group of roughly contemporary writings such as Denḥa (Leonhard 2011), Isho Bar Nun, and Theodore bar Koni (including material that is no longer in existence). These writings are based on similar methods and the same sources (cf. Hofstra 2004). Isho'dad joined this group of authors' high appreciation of Theodore of Mopsuestia's exegetical heritage. However, Isho'dad's approach also set specific priorities. In opposition to Theodore, Isho'dad accepted the

books of Job and Song of Songs in his biblical canon and composed commentaries to them.

Isho'dad's commentaries offer a scholarly collection of biblical exegesis and philology. They attest to different translations of biblical texts. Isho'dad may have used a well annotated copy of the Syro-hexapla. He could have had access to Jewish traditions in oral conversations (Lund). Yet his references to biblical variant readings ("the Hebrew" or "the Greek" etc.) are collected only from older Christian exegetical writings (Leonhard 2001; ter Haar Romeny). Isho'dad read those works in the Syriac language.

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See also → Isho bar Nun; → Syro-Hexapla;
→ Theodore bar Koni