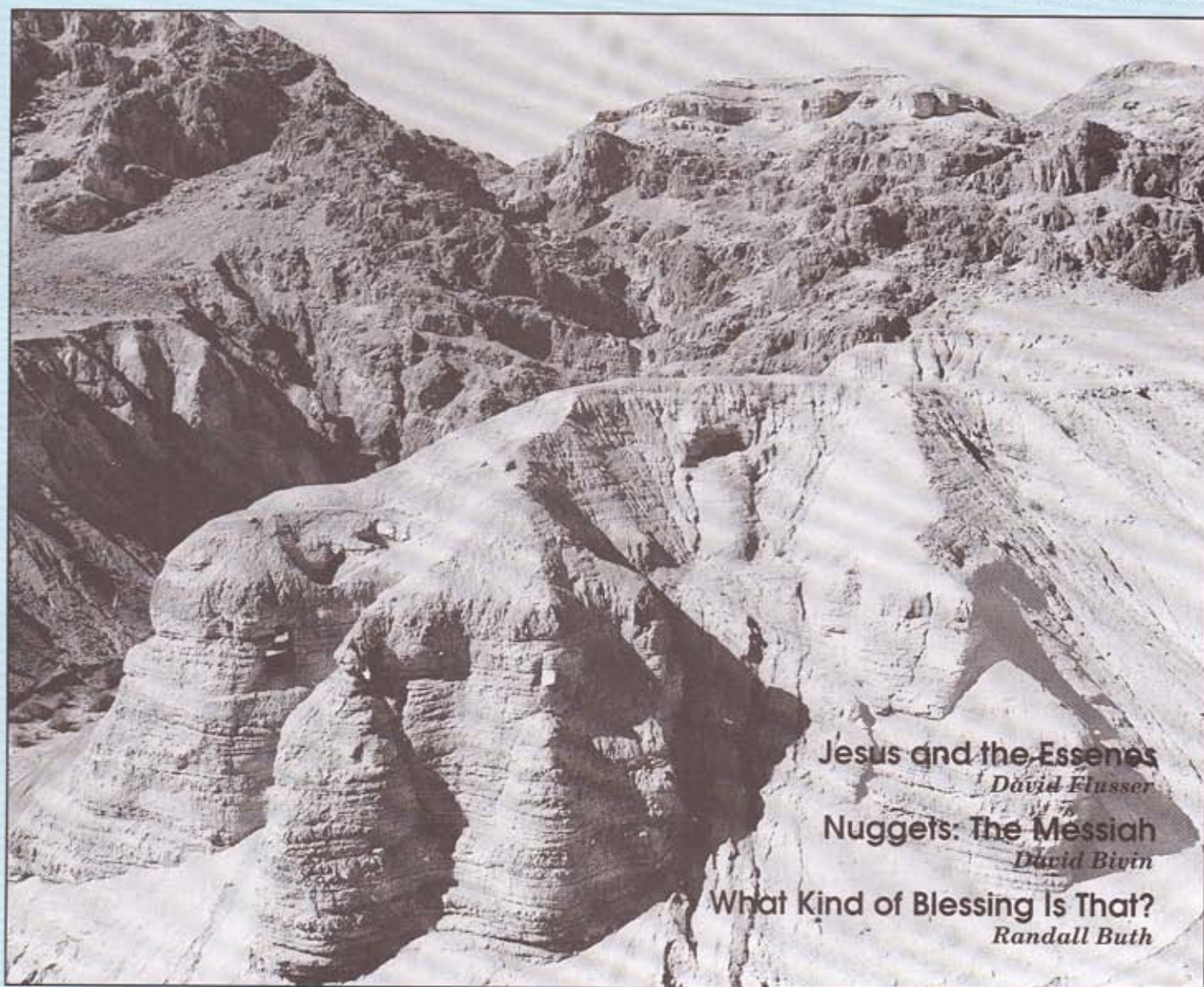


מנקודת ראות ירושלמית

Jerusalem Perspective

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David Flusser

Nuggets: The Messiah

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Readers' Perspective



Many thanks for sending me the sample copy of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. I devoured it with great interest.

It has seemed to me for some time that we have cut ourselves off at the roots by ignoring our heritage from Judaism and

the significance of the language, traditions and attitudes of the times which formed the context for Jesus' teachings. I was not aware of your work and am delighted to have the opportunity to learn more about such matters.

— A new subscriber in Calgary, Alberta, Canada

In a recent edition of Ministries Today, I read an excerpt from JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE called "Which Bible Translation?" by Dr. Ray Pritz [JP, July/August 1989]. I found the article very interesting, however I would like to comment on one point.

In discussing idioms you wrote, "Where American English-speakers might describe a proud person as having a 'big head,' in Holland it would be said that he 'walks in front of his shoes.'"

That is not quite correct. The saying in Holland would be: Hij loopt van verwaandheid naast z'n



schoenen. A literal translation is: "He walks in conceitment next to his shoes," or in better English: "He is so conceited he is walking beside his shoes."

Another funny idiom is about laughing. "He's laughing his head off" is quite an acceptable idiom in the United States. Translated into Dutch this would mean a literal separation of the head from the body. The Dutch instead say: "He laughed himself to death." But no one ever thinks of the man as actually having died.

— A reader in San Clemente, California, U.S.A.

Thank you for putting me straight. Your idiom about laughing reminds me of an experience an uncle of mine had when speaking to a group in Japan. He began his address by saying he was "tickled to death" to be there, and there was a gasp from the audience. His interpreter had translated: "He scratched himself till he died." Literal? Very. Accurate? Not at all.

— Ray Pritz

I truly thank God for your magazine. I can hardly wait till the next issue gets to me because it is so full of jewels. I know that a stone goes through a long process of formation before it becomes a beautiful gem. I realize also the endless hours of work that you have to go through in order to produce these jewels.

— A reader in Downey, California, U.S.A.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE welcomes the opinions of readers, and we will use this column to share as many of our readers' comments and questions as possible. JP reserves the right to edit all letters for length and clarity.

Jerusalem Perspective

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Editor Jeffrey Magnuson

Contributing Editors

Kevin Patterson, David Pileggi

Editorial Staff Assistant

Stephen Schmidt

Design Jeffrey Magnuson

Design Consultants Richard

Sears, Yael Avi-Yonah Goldfarb

Artwork Phil Crossman,

Margaret Dickinson, Yael Avi-

Yonah Goldfarb, Kay Wilson

Contributing Scholars

Prof. David Flusser, Dr. Robert

L. Lindsey, Prof. Shmuel Safrai,

David Bivin, Dr. Randall J. Buth, Dr. Weston W. Fields, R. Steven Notley, Mendel Nun, Dr. Ray Pritz, Halvor Ronning, Chana Safrai, Dr. Brad H. Young

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Cover photo:
Cave IV area
on ridge near
Essene settlement
at Qumran.
(Courtesy of the Israel
Government Press Office)

Jesus and the Essenes

The Essenes' favorite name for themselves was "the sons of light." In the synoptic Gospels the term appears only in Luke 16:8, and the reference is not very flattering. Was Jesus making an ironic reference to the Essenes?

by David Flusser

There is a vast difference between the approach of the Essenes toward unbelievers, and that of Jesus and his disciples. The Essenes practiced extreme separatism, particularly forbidding economic relations with outsiders. Whoever wanted to follow Jesus, however, had to live in brotherly love with the outside world and not withdraw from society. This emphasis on relations with others not only guaranteed Jesus' followers friendship with outsiders, but helped open non-believers' hearts to Jesus' message of love.

The Dead Sea Scrolls have demonstrated that the Essenes' favorite name for themselves was "the sons of light." In the synoptic Gospels that term appears only in Luke 16:8, and a close examination of the text indicates that Jesus did not use "sons of light" to refer to his own followers, but rather to refer to the Essenes themselves.

I believe that Jesus' parable of the unjust steward (Lk. 16: 1-9) can best be understood as an attempt to teach his disciples not to behave like the Essenes. He further emphasized his warning not to emulate the Essenic separatism in his application of the parable as recounted in Luke 16:10-12.

Traditional Interpretations

The parable of the unjust steward has generally been understood as a commendation of the steward's foresight. I. Howard Marshall expresses such an understanding in his commentary, *The Gospel of Luke*:

Having wasted his master's goods during his stewardship, he finally proceeded to falsify the accounts of the master's debtors by reducing the amounts owed in order to obtain their goodwill ... it is

not the steward's dishonesty but his foresight in preparing for the future which is commended, and Jesus was prepared to draw lessons (usually by contrast) from the behavior of sinful men. (Eerdmans, 1978, p. 614)

Recent interpreters have tried to justify the steward's actions to harmonize them with Luke 16:8 where the master applauds the steward's cleverness. There is no need for this, however, since the steward is explicitly designated as dishonest.

The usual interpretation of Luke 16:9 seems to suggest that Jesus was simply teaching his followers to give alms when he said, as the *New English Bible* translates it, "Use your worldly wealth to win friends for yourselves." That explanation is improbable, however, because the giving of alms was such a basic part of Jewish life that emphasizing its importance to a Jewish audience would have been superfluous.

Hebraic Translation

I would translate Luke 16:9 "Make friends for yourselves of [the men who possess] the mammon of unrighteousness." There are two important points which lead me to this translation. The first concerns the Greek word ἐκ (*ek*) which immediately precedes "the mammon of unrighteousness." I believe *ek* is a Hebraism in this context, that is a too-literal translation of a Hebrew word into Greek.

It was not normal Greek to use ἐκ (*ek*) in the sense of "by means of," and *ek* in the sense of "from" does not fit the context. מִן (*min*, from), the Hebrew equivalent of *ek*, can be found in biblical Hebrew in the sense of "by means of" (e.g., Prov. 3:9), however *min* had lost that sense by Jesus' time. In that period, when one wanted to express "by means of," the preposition בְּ (*be*-, in, with) was used, and in order to say "by



David Flusser, one of the founding members of the Jerusalem School, is Professor of Early Christianity and Judaism of the Second Temple Period at the Hebrew University. An internationally distinguished Bible scholar, he is noted for his work on the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes, and first-century Judaism. He is a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and his publications include *Jesus* (1968) and *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (1988). He was awarded the Israel Prize in 1980 by the State of Israel for his work.

means of mammon,” one would say בִּמְמוֹן (be-ma-MON). In the Second Temple period בִּמְמוֹן (mi-ma-MON — that is מִן plus בִּמְמוֹן) in this context could only mean “from [the men who possess the] mammon.”

The other central point leading to my translation concerns the phrase “wealth of unrighteousness,” which is actually a technical term used by the Essenes to mean the “wealth of outsiders.” These expressions were used interchangeably in Essene literature — for example הוֹן הָאֵסֶה (hon ha-MAS, wealth of oppression) in the Manual of Discipline 10:19, and הוֹן אֲנֵשֵׁי הָאֵסֶה (hon an-SHE ha-MAS, wealth of men of oppression) in Pesher Habakkuk 8:11. The latter passage speaks of a wicked priest who “robbed and amassed the wealth of men of oppression,” showing that הוֹן אֲנֵשֵׁי הָאֵסֶה (hon an-SHE ha-MAS, wealth of men of oppression) refers

to the wealth of the outside world.

We are dealing in Luke 16:9 with a teaching that contains Essene terminology and refers to the Essene world. When Jesus said “the mammon of unrighteousness,” he meant “the men who possess the mammon of unrighteousness,” and that was what his listeners understood. “Make friends by giving alms” would have seemed a very oblique interpretation to Jesus’ original audience. Moralizing of that sort was a stylistic feature of sermons in the Middle Ages and after, but was not common in Jesus’ period, and such empty sophistication would have repulsed Jesus’ audience.

Matthew 5:3 also is similarly mistranslated in such a way as to make Jesus seem a moralizing preacher of the Middle Ages. The *New English Bible* translates this beatitude: “How blest are those who know their need of God.” This translation

does not fit the Greek (or the Hebrew behind it), as I show in my articles, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...” and “Some Notes to the Beatitudes” (*Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, pp. 102–125), and such an expression would have seemed strange and been almost incomprehensible.

Furthermore, if Jesus believed that money was evil, then his command to use it or give it to others would be immoral. Jesus did not think that money was intrinsically unrighteous or evil. Jesus’ other saying about mammon, “No man can serve two masters” (Mt. 6:24), merely means that it is forbidden to be a slave to mammon.

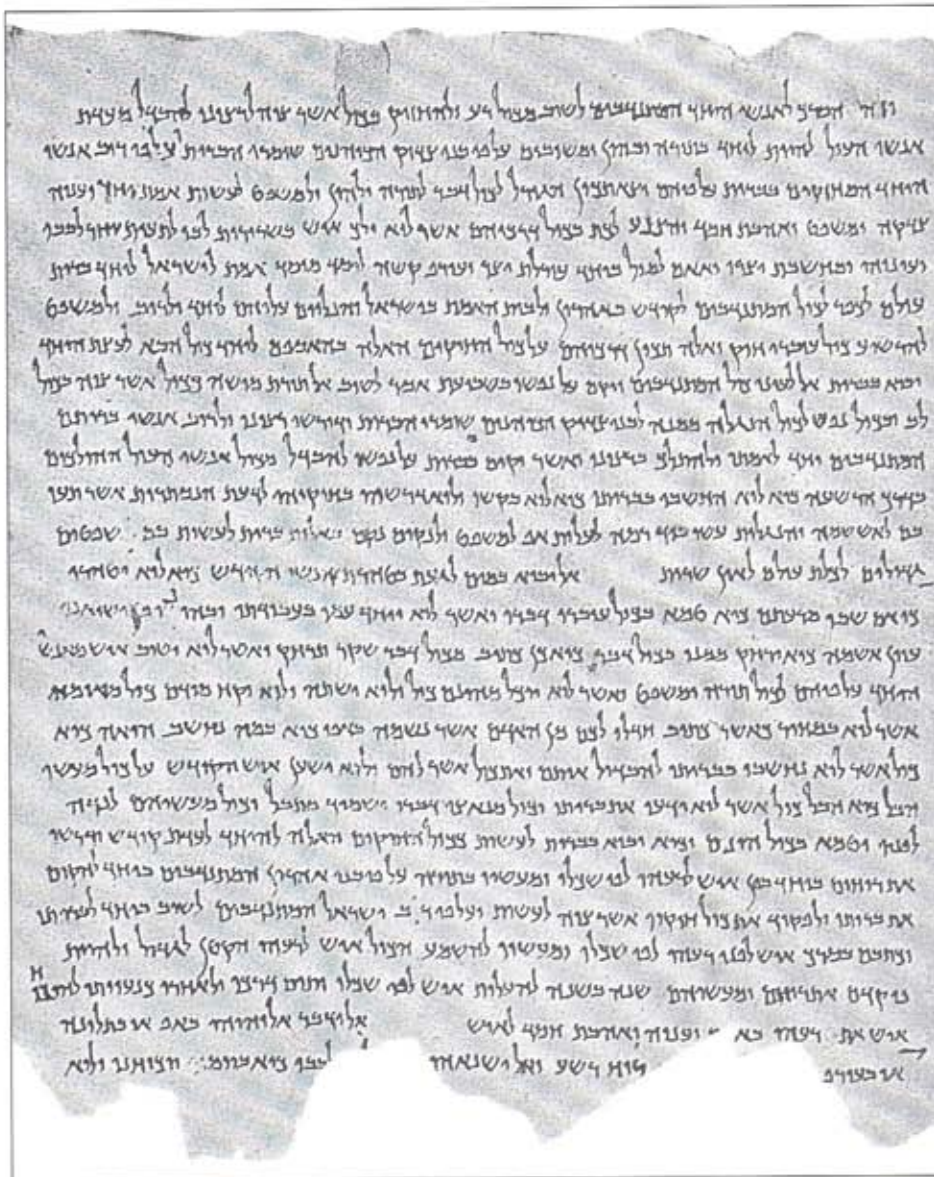
Essenes were forbidden to accept anything from outsiders on credit or enter into a partnership with them (Manual of Discipline 5:14–20; Damascus Document 13:14–16). Yet even among them, it was not money (הוֹן, hon) that was considered evil, but the involvement with outsiders which money led to.

Intentional Discrepancy

In grappling with the meaning of Jesus’ words, we must understand something about the usual style of parables. The parables of Jesus and the rabbis often are characterized by an

Column V of the Qumran Manual of Discipline.

(Courtesy of the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum)



intentional discrepancy between the moral approach contained in the parable, and its message: although a parable may deal with practical expediency, its meaning will be religious and ethical. Therefore the characters of parables are not differentiated as righteous and sinners, but as clever (φρόνιμοι, *phronimoi*) and foolish (μωροί, *mōroi*).

Jesus created characters in some parables who are not only amoral but even immoral — the prodigal son, the dishonest judge, the Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the laborers in the vineyard and our dishonest steward. He used these characters to heighten the initial impact of the parables upon his hearers.

As in other parables, Jesus did not deal specifically with the morality of the dishonest steward, but with his clever behavior (φρονίμως ἐποίησεν, *phronimōs epoiēsen*). Jesus taught that his followers should be clever in their daily lives in the same way that the wicked steward in the parable proved to be clever: “For the sons of this world are more clever [φρονιμώτεροι, *phronimōteroi*] in dealing with their generation than the sons of light.”

But what kind of cleverness was Jesus recommending? An examination of terminology associated with the Essene community at Qumran will help us understand the original import of Jesus’ parable.

Essene Terminology

Luke 16:8–9 presents two technical terms used by the Essenes: “sons of light” and “mammon of unrighteousness.” Because the former appears nowhere else in the synoptic Gospels, while the latter has a specific meaning in Essene writings, it is very likely that Jesus intended these terms to be understood according to their Essene connotations.

The Essenes believed that God had divided mankind into two camps: members of their sect were the true “sons of light,” while everyone else belonged to the condemned, wicked and sinful “sons of darkness.” Thus the Essenes had to separate themselves as far as possible from everything outside their community, and of course this included avoiding the wealth of the sons of darkness. This extreme economic separatism was also rooted in the ritual aspect of daily life, for their ritual purity did not permit them to come in contact with the impure wealth of the outside world:

No member shall be united with him
[the outsider] in his work or in his

wealth, lest he defile the member with guilty iniquity, but distance shall be kept from him in every matter ... no member shall eat from any of their property nor drink from it, nor take anything from their hands except by payment ... and all their deeds are filthiness before him [God] and uncleanness is in all their wealth. (*Manual of Discipline* 5:14–20)

The term מָוֶן (*ma-MON*, mammon, wealth) does not appear in the Hebrew Scriptures, but it was the normal word used during the Second Temple period and in rabbinic literature for “wealth.” The Dead Sea Scrolls, written in a classicized Hebrew (a style that mimics biblical Hebrew), usually used the biblical word for wealth, הוֹן (*hon*), but there are exceptions where we find the word *ma-MON*. These exceptions show that the terms *hon* and *ma-MON* are interchangeable in the Dead Sea Scrolls. “The mammon of unrighteousness,” therefore, was the term the Essenes used for the wealth of those who did not belong to their exclusive sect.

Sectarian Separatism

The Essenes’ detachment contrasted sharply with the teaching and example of Jesus. No member of the Essene community was allowed to take food or drink from outsiders, or accept anything from them without paying for it. Jesus, however, said to those whom he sent into the world:

Whatever house you enter ... remain in the same house eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. ... Whenever you enter a town, and they receive you, eat whatever is set before you. (Lk. 10:5–8)

Jesus preached a universal love which was to be expressed even to sinners. Those who wanted to follow him were to live in brotherly love with the outside world and not isolate themselves from others. This emphasis on relations with others not only guaranteed Jesus’ followers friendship with outsiders, but also would open the non-believers’ hearts to Jesus’ message of love.

Two pieces of evidence support the view that Jesus intended his followers to have business and financial contact with outsiders in order to reach them with his

(continued on page 13)

We are dealing in Luke 16:9 with a teaching that contains Essene terminology and refers to the Essene world.

מָשִׁיחַ – Messiah

Lesson 23

by David Biyin

The word “messiah” arouses great emotion in the hearts of Jews and Christians alike. In Lesson 23 we examine the background of this Hebrew word.

For those readers who have been following our series of Hebrew Nuggets, there is only one new letter to learn in the word מָשִׁיחַ (*ma-SHI-ah*, messiah). This is the letter הֶּ (*het*), the last letter of מָשִׁיחַ. *het* is the eighth letter of the Hebrew alphabet. As we have mentioned before, Hebrew letters also serve as numbers, and so the numerical value of *het* is eight.

ma-SHI-ah is composed of three syllables. The first contains the consonant מֶ (*mem*) and the vowel אֶ (*ka-MATS*). Together they are pronounced *ma*.

The second syllable, which is accented, begins with שִׁ (*shin*) and is followed by the vowel symbol אֵ (*hi-RIK*), Hebrew’s long “e” sound pronounced as the “i” in ski. This is followed by יָ (*yod*). As we explained previously (see Lesson 20), a *yod* following *hi-RIK* does not influence pronunciation and therefore is in effect silent. In JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE’s transliteration system (see page 15), both *hi-RIK* followed by *yod* and *hi-RIK* without *yod* are transcribed *i*.

הֶ – *het*

The final syllable of *ma-SHI-ah* contains the new letter הֶ (*het*). The *het* is a guttural, that is a letter whose sound is produced in the throat. It is a voiceless guttural produced by retracting the tongue root into the throat, and is related to the אֶ (*A-yin*) in the same way that the unvoiced *p* is related to the voiced *b*.

Israelis of oriental extraction — immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Arabic-speaking countries — pronounce the *het* sound properly as a guttural. However

many Israelis of European extraction pronounce the *het* like *ch* in the Scottish *loch* or the German *ach*.

The *het* is a sound not found in the English language, therefore in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE’s system of transliteration *het* is represented by the symbol generally used by linguists: *h*, an *h* with a dot under it.

Under the הֶ (*het*) we see the vowel symbol אֵ (*pa-TAH*). Normally, a Hebrew vowel is pronounced after the consonant that carries its sign. Here, however, the *pa-TAH* is pronounced before the *het*. When a *het* is the last letter of a word and follows *hi-RIK* plus *yod*, the *pa-TAH* is added as a “helping vowel” and is pronounced before the *het*. This is one of the rare exceptions in Hebrew where a syllable begins with a vowel.

Remember that in the name ישוּעָ (*ye-SHU-a*, Jesus), the *pa-TAH* also was pronounced before the אֶ *ayin* under which it appeared (see Lesson 4).

Etymology

Messiah is another of the many Hebrew words that have entered the English language. It is an anglicization of the Latin *messias*, which is a transliteration of the Greek *messias* (*messias*), a transcription of the Aramaic מָשִׁיחָא (*me-shi-HA*), which is a translation and shortening of the Hebrew מָלֶכְךָ הַמָּשִׁיחַ ([*ha-ME-lek*] *ha-ma-SHI-ah*), “the [King] Messiah.”

The word *ma-SHI-ah* means “anointed with oil” and appears thirty-nine times in the Hebrew Scriptures. In one instance it refers to a shield “anointed” or “rubbed with oil” (II Sam. 1:21). Everywhere else, *ma-SHI-ah* refers to a king or priest (I Sam. 24:6; Is. 45:1), or to the one chosen for such an office (II Sam. 16:6). Anointing with oil was an act of consecration or dedication, and kings and priests were appointed by being anointed with oil (I Sam. 16:13). **JP**

In our next lesson we will continue our examination of the word מָשִׁיחַ.

What Kind of Blessing Is That?

by Randall Buth

And Simeon blessed them [the parents of Jesus] and said to Mary his mother, "Behold this child is destined for a falling and rising of many in Israel for a sign which is refused and a sword will go through your soul so that the thoughts of many will be revealed." (Lk. 2:34-35)

A translator faces several puzzles in the first verse of this passage. What kind of blessing did Simeon give? Was the direct speech addressed only to Mary and unrelated to the blessing? If the quotation is part of the blessing, what kind of blessing is it?

We continually need to refine our understanding of Gospel passages by viewing them together with what is known of their original cultural setting. In some cases a more informed understanding can be communicated easily in a translation, and a good translation will reflect that fuller, culturally appropriate understanding. We will look at two examples of this: a simple one in Luke 2:28-32, and a more difficult one in Luke 2:34-35.

Blessing in the Jewish Culture

The Hebrew word בֵּרַךְ (be-ra-KAH, blessing) is used in five different ways in Jewish culture:

1. One way of blessing is to praise God. Psalm 34:1 reads: "I will bless the LORD at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth." "Bless" in this sense was usually translated in Greek as εὐλογέω (eulogeō), "to speak well of," as in Luke 24:53: "And they were always in the temple blessing God." Praising God for his gift of food — grace over meals — is another such blessing.

2. When God does something good for someone, this too can be described as blessing. An example of this is found in Genesis 17:20: "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: behold I hereby bless him, and I will cause him to be fruitful and multiply."

3. A third kind of blessing is the expression of a wish or prayer that good things will happen to someone. We find this sort in Numbers 6:23: "Say to Aharon and his sons, 'Thus you shall bless the people of Israel,

say to them: 'May the LORD bless you and keep you...'"

4. A sub-category of type number three is a blessing used socially as a greeting or farewell. Ruth 2:4 provides an example of this type of blessing: "And Boaz came from Bethlehem and said to the harvesters, 'The LORD be with you.' And they said to him, 'The LORD bless you.'" Also see, for example, Genesis 47:7 (on meeting), and 47:10 (on leaving).

5. A slightly different kind of blessing is the making of a prophetic wish or prayer over someone. The content of such a blessing is not always positive, and can sometimes be described as a curse. Genesis 27:6-12 illustrates the use of blessing as a prophetic prayer: "And Rebecca said to Jacob her son, '...and take it to your father to eat so that he may bless you before he dies.' And Jacob said to Rebecca his mother, '... perhaps ... I will bring a curse on myself and not a blessing?'"

Simeon's Blessing

Simeon took him in his arms and blessed God and said, "Now, O LORD, you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your promise..." (Lk. 2:28-29)



Randall Buth received his doctorate from U.C.L.A. in the field of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. Dr. Buth is a member of the Jerusalem School, and a translator and consultant with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Africa.

מְתַרְגֵּמַן (me-tur-ge-MAN) is the Hebrew word for translator. The articles in this series present insights into the Gospels that affect the translation process, and show how a knowledge of the Gospels' Semitic background can provide a deeper understanding of Jesus' words.

As noted above, in Jewish culture the word “bless” can be used to praise God. In this passage, however, Simeon does not begin with a statement about God and his greatness, but with a statement about his own death. Because of this, some may have understood the verbs “blessed” and “said,” in Luke 2:28 to refer to two different speeches. According to this view, Simeon’s “blessing” is not quoted in the text, but the continuation of speech, “the saying,” is included and quoted. The words of verses 29–32 therefore are not seen as a blessing nor considered the content of the verb “blessed” used earlier in verse 28.

The idea that Simeon “blessed” and Simeon “said” refer to two different speeches finds support in the fact that both “blessed” and “said” are main verbs. In Greek, when one wants to use two verbs to

smoothly refer to the same event, especially a speech, one of the verbs will be put in a participle form. If Luke intended “blessed” and “said” to refer to the same speech event, he likely would have constructed one or the other as a participle: “blessing he said” or “he blessed saying.” Since he did not do that, one might conclude that he referred to two different speeches.

But before we can reach a conclusion on this point, we must examine the speech patterns of the Jewish community in Simeon’s day. What understanding of “he blessed and said” would be most simple and natural? Two facts are necessary as background.

In the Hebrew Bible, the verb for “bless” regularly occurs with the word for “say.” For example, in Genesis 14:19 we read: “And he blessed him and he said, ‘Blessed is Abram to God most high. . . .’” Genesis 27:27 contains the same combination: “And he blessed him and he said, ‘See! The smell of my son is like the smell of the field which the LORD has blessed him with. May God give you dew from heaven. . . .’” The Septuagint translates these in a word-for-word manner as “he blessed him and he said” (εὐλόγησεν αὐτὸν καὶ εἶπεν, *eulogēsen auton kai eipen*). Thus, in Jewish Greek one might expect to find “bless and say” together as two main verbs, even though only one speech event is intended.

It is also important to recognize that blessings can cover a wide range of activity. In reference to God, anything he does can be a reason for praising and blessing him. This fits the context of Luke 2:28–32 in which the recognition of the baby’s future role in salvation is certainly an item worthy of praising God. Jewish practice even specified that God should be praised for both the good and bad in life, a concept expressed in Job 2:10: “Shall we accept good from God and not accept the bad as well?” Later in the Mishnah the rabbis state the same principle: “A man is obligated to bless God for what is bad in the same way that he blesses God for what is good” (Berachot 9:5).

The usual pattern in the Hebrew Bible is that when “bless” and “say” are used together, a quotation follows which is the blessing. Examples of this are found in Genesis 9:1; 14:19; 24:60; 27:27–30; 35:9–10; 48:3–4, 15–16. It is very difficult to find any place in the Hebrew Bible where the idiom “blessed and said” is used without being followed by a blessing, praise, greeting or prophecy.

One possible exception is II Kings

Jacob's Blessing.
(Yael Avi-Yonah Goldfarb)



10:15: "And he [Jehu] went from there and found Jehonadab son of Recab coming to meet him and he blessed him and said to him, 'Is your heart with me the way my heart is with you?' And Jehonadab said, 'Yes and yes. Give me your hand!' And he gave him his hand and brought him up into the chariot." This is a greeting, but it is not clear if the quotation is different from the greeting. Should we assume that the word "bless" refers to a standard greeting like "Peace be upon you," and that the quotation is the separate content of the conversation? If so, we should translate: "And he [Jehu] went from there and found Jehonadab ... and he [Jehu] greeted him. Then Jehu asked him, 'Is your heart with me the way my heart is with you?'"

However, it is possible to read the following quotation as part of the blessing. We could then interpret II Kings 10:15 as being an extended "blessing-greeting," which includes a quoted speech and cites the most important part of the extended greeting.

As a result of this survey, we can safely conclude that a normal contemporary Jewish understanding of Luke 2:28–32 would have been that Simeon's speech in verses 29–32 was a blessing. This has been recognized by almost all commentators. A clear English translation of Luke 2:28 therefore would follow the general lines of the *New International Version*: "Simeon took him in his arms and praised God saying..."

Who Gets Blessed?

And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold this child is destined for a falling and rising of many..." (Lk. 2:34)

Our examination of Luke 2:28 provides useful background for understanding Luke 2:34, where we meet extra complications. Different persons are explicitly mentioned as the recipients of the speech. First the parents are mentioned as "them," then Mary is mentioned. Because of this, the English reader naturally assumes that the blessing was different from the saying, an assumption shared by most commentaries. Three different understandings are possible:

1. Simeon greeted the parents and then spoke to Mary the words of Luke 2:34b–35.

2. Simeon said a blessing over the parents and then spoke to Mary the words of Luke 2:34b–35.

3. Simeon spoke the words of Luke 2:34b–35 over the parents with special reference to Mary.

Walter Bauer's standard dictionary of New Testament Greek lists "to greet" as the meaning for the word *εὐλογέω* (*eulogeō*) in Luke 2:34. According to this understanding, Simeon greeted the parents — "Hello, how are you? Peace be upon you." — and then spoke a word to Mary. Such a meaning for "bless" is not found in secular Greek, but it does occur in the Hebrew Bible (I Sam. 13:10; II Kings 4:29, 10:15). However, it is not likely that Luke 2:34 would refer to a simple greeting, because it is mentioned in verses 27–28 that Simeon had met the parents already. There are other meanings of "bless" that fit the context better.

The idea of speaking a prayer over someone as a prophecy is fairly common in the Hebrew Bible. In Genesis 49:1–28, various blessings are described both as prophecies and blessings. Jacob-Israel tells what will happen to his sons "in the last days," and what follows is a long poetic passage of prophecy. When the prophecy is finished, it is described as a blessing: "And this is what their father spoke to them and he blessed them, each one according to his blessing he blessed them."

If we interpret Luke 2:34–35 as a "prophetic blessing," two details may surprise us. Verses 34b–35 include some unpleasant, negative ideas, which do not correspond to our normal idea of "blessing." Additionally, the introduction to the blessing seems to switch from "the parents" to "Mary." However, instances of both of these seemingly strange circumstances are found in the Hebrew Bible.

In the prophecy-blessings referred to in Genesis 49 we find several very negative elements. For example, the "blessing" over Simeon and Levi says, "for in their anger they killed a man and of their own accord they hamstrung a bull. Cursed is their anger for its savagery, and their wrath because it is harsh. I will scatter them among Jacob, I will disperse them among Israel." Thus, within Jewish culture both positive and negative "blessings" could be given to a person. This is related to the additional use of "blessing" as a euphemism for "cursing," as in Job 1:5 and 2:8.

There is also an example in the Hebrew Bible of a change of addressee when giving a blessing. In Genesis 48:9 Jacob-Israel asks Joseph to bring his two sons so that he

The idea of speaking a prayer over someone as a prophecy is fairly common in the Hebrew Bible.



**The Presentation
in the Temple.**
(Rembrandt)

can bless them. The text says that when the children are brought and Jacob-Israel puts his hands on them, "...he blessed Joseph and said, 'May God ... bless the youths...'" (48:15). In verse 20 the text repeats, "And he blessed them that day..." The reference to Joseph in verse 15 means that the blessing over Ephraim and Manasseh was intended as a blessing for Joseph — the grandfather was blessing his son by blessing his grandchildren.

This background makes it easier to understand Luke 2:34–35. The quotation sounds like a blessing-prophecy, so it is natural to connect it to the words "blessed" and "said" in 2:34. However, the addressee of "bless" is "them," but the addressee of "say" is "Mary." This probably means that the blessing-prophecy was spoken over both parents, but that it had special relevance for Mary.

Commentary Recognition

Commentators generally have interpreted the blessing in Luke 2:34 as being separate from what was said to Mary, although a few have seen the connection between "bless" and "say." A. Loisy commented on this in his 1924 book, *L'évangile selon Luc* (p. 123). He thought that Luke's source probably said, "Simeon blessed them and said to them," but that Luke changed the second "them" to "Mary" because the prophecy had particular emphasis for her.

Loisy's recognition that "bless" and "say" belong together can be appreciated, though the speculation about the source being different is unnecessary. There is no way to know whether Luke or Luke's source first said "blessed them and said to Mary."

In *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (1978), I. Howard Marshall wrote, "Having 'blessed' God for the coming of the child, Simeon now prays for God's blessing upon his parents in view of what lies ahead for them, and especially for Mary to whom he particularly addresses his words. Or possibly he simply declares them to be blessed by God" (p. 121). This is a somewhat ambiguous statement, reflecting the ambiguous nature of the Greek text. Marshall does not elaborate further, but proceeds to discuss the meaning of blessing. Joseph Fitzmyer also comments on this passage in *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX* (1981, p. 427), calling both of Simeon's words "blessings over Jesus."

Translation Suggestions

All three interpretations of Luke 2:34 may honestly be used by conscientious translators:

1. If "bless" is taken as "greet," then one could either use an out-of-place reference to greetings, or follow Genesis 24:60 where a blessing is said over Rebecca when bidding her farewell. Thus Luke 2:34 could be translated: "Simeon bid farewell to/greeted the parents and prophesied over Mary..."

2. If "bless" and "said" are interpreted as two different blessings, then one should follow most standard English translations: "Simeon said a blessing over the parents and then said to Mary..."

3. If "bless" and "said" are interpreted as the blessing in 34b–35, then one could translate: "Simeon spoke a prophecy over the parents which had a special meaning for Mary..."

Translators are forced to make hard decisions which determine the meaning of a text, though this task can be softened if one is allowed to list alternative possibilities in a footnote. I tend to favor the third interpretation of Luke 2:34 because of the difficulty in finding an example of "bless and say" in the Hebrew Bible where the blessing is distinctly different from the saying. JP

International Synoptic Society Chapters

We are excited to announce the formation of local chapters of the International Synoptic Society. Now you can become actively involved in the continuing research of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research.

Chapters serve as a forum for those interested in discovering more about the life and words of Jesus and their Hebraic heritage. Once or more each month chapter members meet in the informal environment of a home to exchange views on current research presented in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. In addition, members form groups to learn biblical and modern Hebrew together, share study resources and pursue their own Gospel investigation. Chapters sometimes host regional ISS seminars or coordinate Jerusalem School study tours to Israel.

For information about how you can start or join a local chapter, please write to ISS Chapters, Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, P.O. Box 31822, 91317 Jerusalem, Israel. It only takes you and one other person who is interested in studying the words of Jesus to form a chapter of the International Synoptic Society.

Each JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE will include discussion suggestions based on that issue's articles to serve as a guide for ISS chapter meetings.

Suggested Discussion Questions:

1. Prof. Flusser sees the passage in Luke 16 as Jesus' warning to his disciples not to behave like the Essenes, but to have social and economic contact with outsiders. Does this seem correct to you, and if not, what interpretation seems more likely and why?

2. Do you agree with Jesus' approach toward outsiders, or did the Essenes have a point in distancing themselves from unbelievers? Can you find scriptural justification for the Essene position? What are the implications for your lifestyle?

3. What is a blessing? Who can do it and what is the dynamic behind it? How can you make use of the Jewish concept of blessing in your own life? (See also an earlier article on blessing, JP, Jan. 1988, pp. 1-2.)

4. What is the importance of attempting to recover the original words of Jesus, and how can it help modern readers? JP

No two scholars ever share identical views on every question, and this is certainly true among the scholars of the Jerusalem School.

JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, in reporting the work of the Jerusalem School, would not want to give the impression that scholars of the School are required to adhere to a party line. Although there is considerable agreement regarding foundational elements in their view of the synoptic Gospels, the members of the School are still formulating and refining their collective approach.

For example, Prof. Flusser accepts Dr. Lindsey's solution to the synoptic problem — that Luke rather than Mark was written first — yet not all the School's members are wholly convinced of this conclusion. However, it can safely be

Views of the Jerusalem School



Dr. Robert Lindsey, Prof. David Flusser, Prof. Shmuel Safrai.

said that all members of the School understand the necessity of first translating the Greek text of the

Gospels into Hebrew or Aramaic, and then examining that Semitic equivalent in its first-century cultural and linguistic context.

Comparing the resulting Semitic back-translation with the epigraphical and literary remains from the Second Temple period is an essential feature of the Jerusalem School's methodology.

All members of the School use this methodology because they have found that it works: it clarifies the meaning of Jesus' words, often when the Greek text is unclear or reflects bad Greek.

Underlying the research of the Jerusalem School is the assumption that Jesus probably taught in Hebrew, or at least that the original biography of Jesus was written in Hebrew. —David Bivin



Stephen Schmidt, editorial assistant to *JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE*, received his B.A. in Computer Science from Potsdam College in New York and an M.Div. and M.A. in Biblical Literature from the School of Theology at Oral Roberts University.

The Gospels and Rabbinic Judaism: A Study Guide by Rabbi Michael Hilton with Fr. Gordian Marshall, OP. Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing House, and New York: Anti-Defamation League B'nai B'rith, 1988. 169 pp., \$9.95.

by Stephen Schmidt

The fact that the Gospels were written primarily by Jews and should be interpreted in light of Jewish thought probably raises no eyebrows among readers of *JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE*. It will also come as no surprise that there are remarkable similarities between the Gospels and certain passages in rabbinic literature — studying one can only help enliven and inform the other. This is the premise of *The Gospels and Rabbinic Judaism*.

Based on studies held for lay audiences over the years by a Dominican priest and a Jewish rabbi, this book focuses on seven themes particularly relevant to Jewish-Christian dialogue today: The Great Commandment, the synagogue, the parable, halachah, the Sabbath, divorce and forgiveness. Viewing the topics from theological, historical, halachic (legal) and literary perspectives, the New Testament and rabbinic texts are examined side-by-side to show similarities and differences in the two sources and in the attitudes taken by Jews and Christians to these issues. The authors' purpose is to draw the two groups together to learn from each other as "equals in front of God, equals in front of each other."

Throughout the book Hilton and Marshall offer valuable advice for interfaith study. For example, rabbinic passages are replete with biblical quotations, and it often is useful to look up those verses to see the broader picture. In certain cases, the citation's context is more important to the discussion than the actual quote itself, although the authors warn that the sages were not opposed to pulling phrases from the Torah with absolutely no connection to their contexts. Since there generally is no indication as to when the context will be important, the reader is advised to look up each reference to see which is the case.

Along the same line, the authors cau-

tion Christian readers not to be too concerned about meanings attributed to biblical passages which do not seem apparent from the text itself. Since the rabbis held every word of Torah to be divinely inspired, they considered that there was greater truth to be gleaned from the words than could be provided by a superficial reading. This method of interpretation, known as *midrash*, meaning to seek or inquire, is frequently employed to derive deeper revelation, answer detailed questions or solve complicated problems. For the same reason, significance often is attributed to repeated or seemingly inconsequential words and phrases in Scripture. Every syllable uttered by God is essential, so the reader should not be surprised to learn of great principles and traditions built on single words or apparently trivial phrases.

Hilton and Marshall's approach in comparing the Gospels and rabbinic sources is colored by an acknowledged predisposition toward redaction criticism. They state that historical accounts described in the Mishnah and Talmud "clearly contain various legendary elements," and specific details and numbers may be interpreted as allegorical rather than factual. Similarly, "in approaching the reading of the Gospel texts, the reader is advised not to regard them as mainly a record of historical fact.... Rather, each Gospel presents the understanding of one person or group of the significance of Jesus in his own life, the essence of Jesus as understood and accepted by those who believed in and followed him." The authors state, for example, "We cannot assume that because Matthew says Jesus was critical of Pharisees calling themselves Rabbi, that this is exactly what happened." When there is a difference in detail among the Gospels, Hilton and Marshall conclude that it is because they were compiled in different settings and therefore reflect different concerns.

The authors' aim is to determine from the texts how the Church and the early rabbis reacted to the issues under consideration. Hilton and Marshall readily admit that no effort is made to determine the exact meaning of the original saying or

situation. When dealing with the Gospels, therefore, the "historical Jesus" is actually considered irrelevant to the discussion.

This is not to suggest that *The Gospels and Rabbinic Judaism* is of little value to those holding a higher view of the Gospels. The book is a study guide, and overlooking some possibly objectionable assumptions, it contains much information the reader will find useful in his own research. It is particularly distinguished by the wealth of rabbinic quotations drawn from a wide range of Jewish literature that parallel and illuminate many Gospel passages.

In addition, the authors provide a brief description of the relevance, background and personalities involved whenever a new rabbinic text is introduced. This is invaluable in order to see how closely related the

text is to Jesus' times and sayings. To further clarify matters, a glossary is included explaining the various Hebrew terms and rabbinic literature cited, and each chapter concludes with a list of questions designed to initiate dialogue.

Overall, *The Gospels and Rabbinic Judaism* is a commendable introduction for those wishing to explore the rabbinic background of the life and teachings of Jesus. The reader may not agree with all the viewpoints or conclusions offered by Hilton and Marshall, but the book stimulates thought and serves as a guide to further study. In the process, it presents an opportunity for Christian and Jewish laypeople to enter together into "the study of sources and how we today can respond in their light to problems affecting both communities." JP

Jesus and the Essenes

(continued from page 5)

message. The first is the term "wealth of unrighteousness," which clearly refers to the possessions of all those outside the Essene covenant. The second is derived from Jesus' saying, "The sons of this world are more clever in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light" (Lk. 16:8). Their behavior was clever in that they kept economic contact with others and were even prone to act fraudulently in order to win friends who could offer help in the future. Thus they dealt with their own generation in a far more clever way than the sons of light who refused to associate with outsiders. In this way Jesus warned his adherents against the path of sectarian detachment — he viewed the economic separatism of the sons of light as a foolish and even dangerous convention.

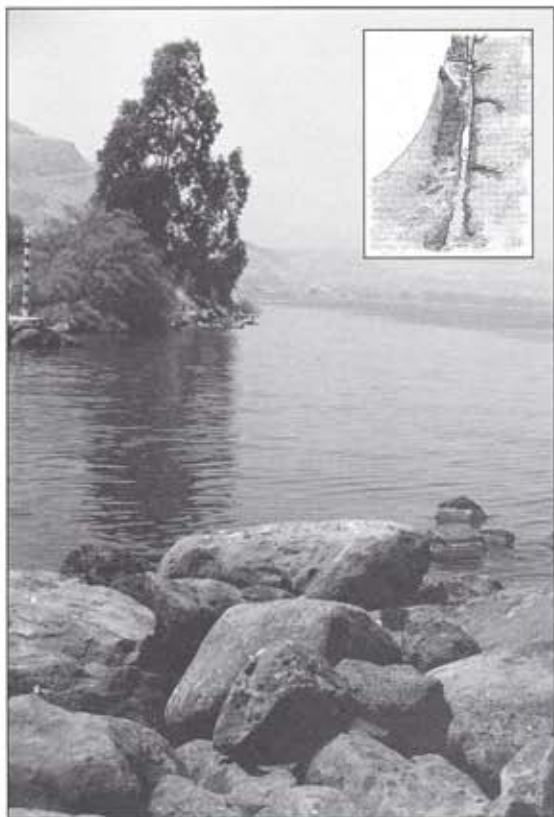
This is not to say that Jesus recommended acting dishonestly. He praised the way the sons of this world handled others, but opposed their amoral opportunism. The contrast between Jesus' ethics and the amoral character of some of the heroes of his parables was intended as a "shock therapy" for his audience. JP

Condensed and adapted from Judaism and the Origins of Christianity, a collection of Prof. Flusser's articles edited by Dr. Bradford Young, copyright © 1988 by The Magnes Press.

In part two of this study, Prof. Flusser looks at Jesus' application of the parable of the unjust steward, and proposes a new interpretation in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other early sources.

Readers of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE may purchase *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* for only US\$54.00 (including postage from Israel by surface mail — allow 7–10 weeks for delivery).

This hardcover, 725-page book regularly sells for US\$73.00. Orders should be mailed directly to The Magnes Press, P.O. Box 7695, 91076 Jerusalem, Israel, and checks should be made out to "Magnes Press." To receive the special price, readers must mention that they read about the book in JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.



(Photo by Max and Hilla Jacoby)



Perhaps Jesus left his hometown of Nazareth and went down to the Sea of Galilee because of its natural beauty. As the rabbis said: "The Lord has created seven seas, but the Sea of Galilee is his delight." To this day the area is certainly one of the most beautiful in Israel.

The Sea of Galilee

As you follow the road Jesus must have travelled between Nazareth and Capernaum, you see the grey limestone descending from the ranges of Lower Galilee to a line of cliffs overlooking the sea. Cool breezes off the Mediterranean sweep through the open valleys and down into the sea basin, colliding with the hot westward winds off the Trans-Jordan Desert. Thus, even though the Sea of Galilee is a small inland lake, it is prone to sudden violent storms.

Jesus spent much of his ministry in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee. It was to the residents of the towns and villages bordering the lake that Jesus first preached, and he called his disciples from among the lake's fishermen. There were dozens of towns and villages around the lake in the time of Jesus, so he would have had little difficulty in finding an audience here.

You can still see remnants of ancient houses, synagogues, wharfs and bathhouses. Sitting on the shore of the lake today, it is not difficult to imagine that earlier, more simple life of fields and roads and boats which is reflected in the Gospels. **JP**

Devotions Along the Way

by Halvor Ronning

One day, Jesus and his disciples were out on the Sea of Galilee in a large boat. A terrible storm descended on the lake, and although they were experienced fishermen, the disciples panicked.

Despite the storm, Jesus was sound asleep in the back of the boat. The disciples awakened him and said, "Master, Master, we are perishing!"

What do we learn from this panic of the disciples? What had happened is that the storm which was outside had found its way inside — it had entered into the disciples.

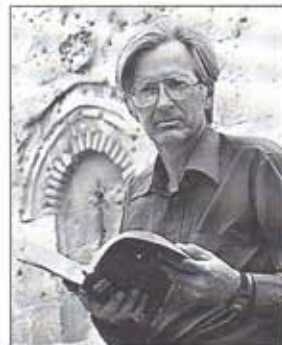
In contrast, Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and

the raging waves. His command had an immediate effect: the storm subsided and the sea became calm. He projected the peace that was inside him into the situation around him.

Like those early disciples, we often find ourselves on stormy seas and discover that our inner peace has blown away with the first breeze. But we must not allow the storms we confront to force their way inside us. When we find ourselves in situations where there is frustration, tension or trouble, and we feel we're in danger, the challenge is to be so full of God's Spirit that we can communicate the same calm and poise Jesus projected on

the Sea of Galilee.

In that small way we can be followers of our master. **JP**



Halvor Ronning, a 25-year resident of Israel, is a licensed Israeli tour guide. He is a member of the faculty and academic committee of the American Institute of Holy Land Studies, and a member of the Jerusalem School's Board of Directors. "Devotions Along the Way" presents some of the devotional material he regularly shares with pilgrims to the Holy Land.

A New Addition to the Jerusalem School

Our Macintosh IIcx computer has finally made *aliyah* — immigrated to Israel. After some travail and a wait of several months, one of the most powerful personal computers is now being used in Jerusalem to further the work of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research.

We particularly would like to thank Gerald McPhillips of Culpeper, Virginia, who donated the Macintosh IIcx, color monitor and Hewlett Packard printer through Dwight Pryor and the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies. We also would like to express our appreciation to the following, all of whom contributed to our equipment fund in the past months:

A. Harvey and Amerette Anderson, Herman Bilenko, Steve and Julie Bivin, Walli Callaway, Frank and Nislanie Chalmers, George W. Everett, Tom Farrington, Joseph and Helen France, Mary Lou Goetz, John and Susan Gulbseth, HaKeshet, Inc., Robert and Valerie Henning, Leland and Jean Hooker, Maryedith B. Mattox, Greg Nazarian, Martin N. Nielsen, Mr.

Transliteration Key

Hebrew & Aramaic Consonants

א — ^h (silent)
ב — b
ב — v
ג — g
ד — d
ה — h
ו — v
ז — z
ח — h (voiceless guttural — no English equivalent)
ט — t
י — y (or silent)
כ — k
ך — k (like ch in the Scottish loch — no English equivalent)
ל — l

מ — m
נ — n
ס — s
ע (voiced guttural — no English equivalent)
פ — p
ף — f
צ — ts (like ts in nets)
ק — k
ר — r
ש — sh
ס — s
ת — t
*This is the form of the letter when it appears at the end of a word.

Vowels

(The consonant א, a silent letter, is

used here above or before each vowel as a point of reference.)

א — a (like a in father; rarely like o in bone)
א, א — a (like a in father)
א — e (sometimes like e in net, sometimes like e in hey, and sometimes somewhere in between)
א, א — e (like e in net)
א, א — i (like i in ski)
א, א, א — o (like o in bone)
א, א — u (like u in flu)

א — e (sometimes barely audible like e in happening, at other times as long as e in net; also can be silent, in which case we transliterate with nothing)

Diphthongs

א — ai
א — oi
א — ui

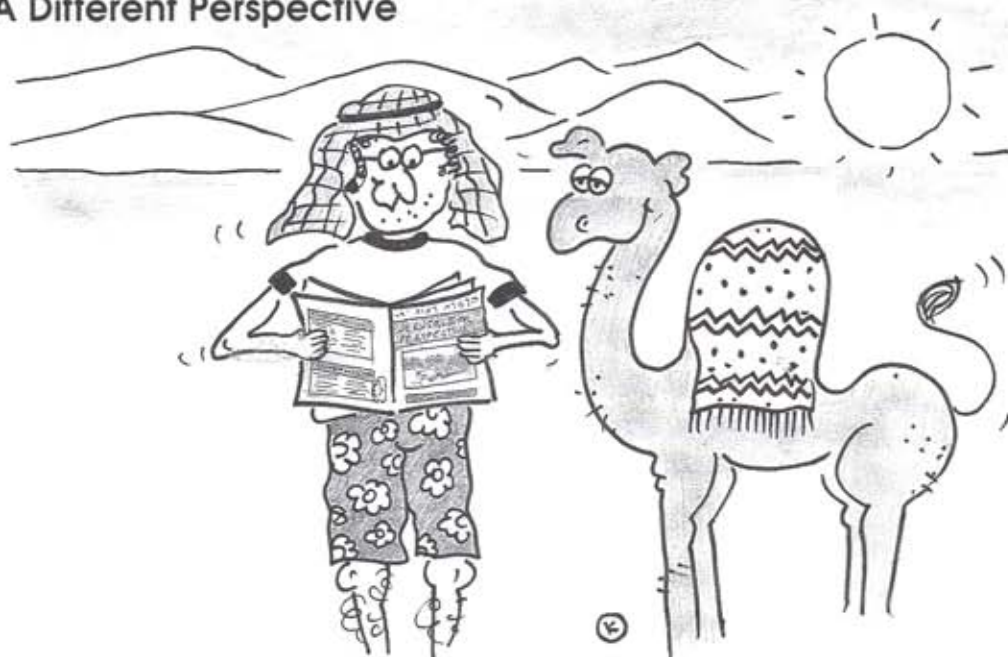
Greek

Greek words are transliterated according to the Society of Biblical Literature system.

and Mrs. Orla Pedersen, Dan Pierce, Marion Redding, Rachel Rodriguez, Tak and Susan Tisdale, William and Mae Vance, Jon Westland, Armida M. Widrig, Dr. Marvin and Pauline Wilson, Doris E. Winters, Jack and Billie Wisecarver.

We also are very grateful to the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research and Dr. William Bean, our associate in the United States who coordinated the effort to raise the necessary funds to pay Israeli customs. Dr. Bean and his tour group transported the equipment to Israel. JP

A Different Perspective



"I don't know where I would be without JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE. It is a constant guide and companion in my spiritual wanderings."
— A searching reader near Nowhere, Sahara.

The Jerusalem School

The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (מכון ירושלים לחקר האונגליונים הסיופטיים) is a consortium of Jewish and Christian scholars who are studying Jesus' sayings within the context of the language and culture in which he lived. Their work confirms that Jesus was a Jewish sage who taught in Hebrew and used uniquely rabbinic teaching methods.

The Jerusalem School scholars believe the first narrative of Jesus' life was written in Hebrew, and that it can be successfully recovered from the Greek texts of the synoptic Gospels. The School's central objective is to retrieve the original biography of Jesus. This is an attempt to recover a lost document from the Second Temple period, a Hebrew scroll which, like so much Jewish literature of the period, has been preserved only in Greek.

As a means to its objective, the Jerusalem School is creating a detailed commentary on the synoptic Gospels which will reflect the renewed insight provided by the School's research. Current research of Jerusalem School members and others is presented in the pages of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, the School's official popular voice.

The Jerusalem School was registered in Israel as a non-profit research institute in 1985. Its members are Prof. David Flusser, Dr. Robert L. Lindsey, Prof. Shmuel Safrai, David Bivin, Dr. Randall J. Buth, R. Steven Notley, Dwight A. Pryor, Mirja Ronning, Halvor Ronning, Chana Safrai and Dr. Bradford H. Young.



International Synoptic Society

Readers of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE are encouraged to become members of the International Synoptic Society. Many of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE's readers are as interested as the scholars of the Jerusalem School in the exploration of Jesus' biography. By becoming a member of the International Synoptic Society, you will be instrumental in helping us all to better understand the words of Jesus.

Membership dues promote the research of the Jerusalem School. The goals of the Society are to:

- Publish the research of the Jerusalem School, especially the *Jerusalem Synoptic Commentary*.
- Present technical research in a condensed and popularized form.
- Support new research into the synoptic Gospels.

Annual membership in the Society is:

- Regular — £60 or US\$100 (or equivalent in other currency)
- Fellow — £180 or US\$300
- Sponsor — £300 or US\$500
- Patron — £600 or US\$1000

- Lifetime membership — £3000 or US\$5000. A member who reaches a total of \$5000 in annual memberships will automatically become a lifetime member.

Members of the Society will receive a beautiful certificate of membership, and three times each year a reconstruction by the Jerusalem School of one of the stories in the conjectured Hebrew biography of Jesus. Major publications of the Jerusalem School will be inscribed with the names of Society members, and all current members will receive a free subscription to JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE.

Checks should be made payable to "Jerusalem School" and designated "ISS." U.S. members can receive a tax-deductible receipt by sending their dues via the Jerusalem School's U.S. affiliate, the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429.

