

# Jerusalem Perspective

A Monthly Report on Research into the Words of Jesus

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## The Mary & Martha Story

**W**e devoted an article in our previous issue to Dr. Robert Lindsey's theory concerning the process of Gospel transmission. It is his view that although the original Hebrew version and the first Greek translation of Jesus' biography have both been lost, and none of the synoptic Gospels preserves the original text in its entirety, the three synoptic Gospels together preserve all or nearly all of the stories in the original work.

Years before Matthew, Mark and Luke were written, most of the stories in the *Life of Jesus* were arranged topically. Consequently, the synoptic Gospels do not always preserve the original contexts in which Jesus' words were spoken. In order to understand the Gospel accounts correctly it often is necessary to recombine those passages which originally stood together.

Dr. Lindsey's research indicates that it is possible to recover many of the original stories by rejoining passages which, though now found scattered in the Gospel texts, are connected thematically and linguistically.

One of the "longer" Gospel stories Dr. Lindsey has suggested is the following. It is drawn from Lk 10:38-42, Mt.6:25-34=Lk.12:22-31, Lk.12:16-20 and Lk.16:19-31.

### The Full Story

He entered a village, and a woman named Martha welcomed him to her home. Her sister Mary seated herself at the Lord's feet to listen to his teaching. But Martha was irritated because of all the preparations that had to be made, and she went to him and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to help me."

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תְּמַלִּיךְ מַלְכוּתְךָ

## Thy Kingdom Come - part 1

by Bradford Young

**P**robably no other aspect of Jesus' teaching has been so greatly misunderstood as the Kingdom of Heaven. Certainly, few themes are more essential for understanding Jesus. Many Christians wrongly view the Kingdom as either "heaven" or a future monarchy that God will establish. Both of these popular interpretations are remote from Jesus' thought.

### Establishing the Kingdom

Jesus' words, "Thy Kingdom come," express a wish or desire. The Greek form of the verb "come" in this passage, ἐλθέτω (*el-THE-to*), does not have an exact equivalent in English. It has the connotation of

"may it be" or "let it be." However, when dealing with the words of Jesus one must always ask, what was the meaning of the saying in Hebrew? In this instance, the meaning of what Jesus said in Hebrew becomes crucial.

Nowhere in the Gospels do we read about the Kingdom that "comes." In Hebrew, one normally would not speak about the "coming" of a kingdom. One would use the verb להמליך (*le-ham-LIK*) with the noun מלכות (*mal-KUT*, kingship, kingdom). This is the Hebrew word used of Solomon when he was made king over all Israel and this word is related to the idea of the eternal Davidic Kingdom (I Chron-

icles 28:4-5). The particular form of the Hebrew verb means "to make someone king," or establish a reign.

This phrase from the Lord's Prayer, therefore, can be reconstructed as תְּמַלִּיךְ מַלְכוּתְךָ (*tam-LIK mal-kut-KA*), "May you continue establishing your Kingship...." It is parallel to the entreaty that follows: "May your will be done in heaven and on earth." The concluding elements of the next phrase, "in heaven and on earth," delineate the scope of God's rule: His Kingship is limitless.

### Growth of the Kingdom

God establishes his reign in heaven and earth. Biblical Hebrew emphasized the *kind* of action and not the time of action. In later Hebrew the time factor became more important, but the emphasis of this petition is not temporal. The em-

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## Thy Kingdom Come

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phasis is upon the dynamic force of God's eternal Kingship being realized as his will is done in heaven and earth.

A process is taking place. This also can be clearly seen in Jesus' growth parables, which speak about the gradual progression of the Kingdom movement.

### Miraculous Redemption

Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom must be seen in light of his entire message. Jesus and his disciples clearly attributed specific meaning to the term "kingdom." When accused of casting out demons by Beelzebul's power, for instance, Jesus explained, "But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). How could the Kingdom be a future event if Jesus could speak of it as having already arrived?

The idiom "finger of God" is an allusion to the redemption of Israel. This expression is rare in the Hebrew Scriptures, appearing only twice. When the Egyptian magicians, confronted by Moses' mighty miracles, stood powerless before Pharaoh, they declared, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). One also reads in Exodus 31:18 that God gave Moses two tablets of stone, written by the "finger of God." By using this expression to connect the

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## Gospel Translation

Due largely to the influence of the Septuagint, the second-century B.C. Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, most Hebrew words came to have a fixed translation in Greek. δέω (DE-o) and λύω (LU-o), for instance, the Greek verbs used in Matthew 16:19, are the standard translations in the Septuagint for the Hebrew words קָרַן (?a-SAR, bind) and הִתִּיר (hi-TIR, loose).

An original Hebrew word might have many shades of meaning, and the Greek translator usually could convey only one sense of the Hebrew word. However, because the standard translation became fixed, Greek translators often employed it even when the Hebrew word it translated appeared with an obviously different meaning.

Such a method of translating is a blessing in disguise for modern scholars trying to recover a Hebrew text which has survived only in Greek translation. It simplifies the process of putting the Greek back into Hebrew. But this literal translating is anything but a blessing for the unfortunate English reader who must struggle with Hebraisms such as "bind" and "loose," not realizing that in addition to their literal Hebrew meaning, these words can mean "forbid" and "permit."

Kingdom of Heaven to his casting out of demons, Jesus related the miraculous redemption from Egypt to his miracles.

### The Lord Reigns

The first time the Kingdom concept appears in Scripture is in the song of victory which the people sang after crossing the sea and viewing the defeat of Pharaoh's army. They proclaimed in triumph, "The LORD reigns for ever and ever" (Exodus 15:18).

As Professor David Flusser has pointed out, the Greek translators of the Septuagint took care to render the verb of this verse into the present tense, employing the Greek present participle βασιλεύων (ba-si-LEU-on, reigning). The Aramaic translations of this verse also reflect the sense that God now reigns eternally. This is also the context of the verse in the biblical text. The Lord established his reign by redeeming

When the Greek translator of the original Hebrew *Life of Jesus* translated the Hebrew words קָרַן (?a-SAR) and הִתִּיר (hi-TIR) literally into Greek, he was employing the traditional method of translation. Almost 1600 years later, the translators commissioned by King James, generally still using the word-for-word method of translation, rendered that same expression from Greek into English. Thus a beautiful Hebrew idiom was perpetuated in our English Gospels.

English translators of the synoptic Gospels often transfer into their English translations Hebraisms imbedded in the Greek text, making no conscious effort to recover the Hebrew behind the Greek. Such translations can become clogged with literalisms such as "he set his face to go" (Luke 9:51), "son of peace" (Luke 10:6), "lay these sayings in your ears" (Luke 9:44), "destroy" and "fulfill" in "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

The Jerusalem School's assumption that most of the material in the synoptic Gospels originated in Hebrew, allows one to recognize the Hebrew idioms behind the Greek.

his people. Exodus 15:18 is a reference to God's eternal kingship, which was demonstrated in the miraculous deliverance of his people from their pursuing enemies.

Jesus saw the realization of God's reign in his teaching and miracle-working career. The disciples saw it too, and they were told to proclaim while teaching and healing that the Kingdom had arrived (Matthew 10:7). The Revised Standard Version renders this verse, "And preach as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" However, the Greek word for "is at hand," ἤγγικεν (EN-gi-ken), is in the perfect indicative which denotes completed action. A better translation would be, "The Kingdom of Heaven is here."

This article is condensed from Dr. Young's *The Jewish Background to the Lord's Prayer*, published by the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies (\$4.95 ppd.), P.O. Box 293040, Dayton, OH 45429.

We begin the study of the Hebrew word for lampstand, **מְנוֹרָה** (*me-no-RAH*). *me-no-RAH* is a feminine noun. It appears thirty-six times in the Hebrew Scriptures in the singular and another six times in the plural, **מְנוֹרוֹת** (*me-no-ROT*). Menorah is one of many Hebrew words that have entered the English language. Therefore, we can refer to this word by its English spelling, *menorah*, rather than by its transliteration, *me-no-RAH*.

### History

A menorah, along with a table for the bread of the Presence, stood in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle built by Moses. The six branches and central shaft of the menorah were made from one huge piece of pure gold (Exodus 25:31). The menorah served as a stand for seven oil lamps, also fashioned from gold. In the Temple built by Solomon there were ten *me-no-ROT* of gold. The "Second Temple," built by Herod, contained only one menorah.

The Roman general Titus completed the siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. He looted the Temple and carried its vessels, including the menorah, to Rome to be displayed in a triumphal procession marking the suppression of the rebellion in the province of Judea. This victory march was immortalized in the bas-relief of an arch of triumph constructed in the *Forum Romanum*.

After the destruction of the Temple, the menorah became the most common motif in Jewish pictorial art. A menorah patterned after the one on the Arch of Titus appears at the center of the emblem of the State of Israel between two olive sprigs and above the word **יִשְׂרָאֵל** (*yis-ra-EL*, Israel).

### mem

The first letter in the word **מְנוֹרָה** is **מ** (*mem*). It is the thirteenth letter in the Hebrew alphabet, and represents the Hebrew "m" sound. In

# Hebrew Nuggets

our system of transliteration, *mem* is transliterated "m." Under the **מ** of **מְנוֹרָה** are two vertical dots, the vowel symbol *she-VA* which we learned in Lesson Ten. Pronounce this vowel (the "e" as in net) as softly and quickly as you can.

## Lesson Twelve

### *me-no-RAH*: מ - mem

The Hebrew word **מְנוֹרָה** (*me-no-RAH*) is spelled with four consonants and three vowel symbols. One consonant and two vowels have been learned previously. The remaining vowel and consonants are new and will be introduced in this and the following lessons.

### Other Words

The introduction of *mem*, together with the vowels and consonants we learned in previous lessons, allows us to read many more words, including the following:

• **מָה** (*mah*), "what." Remember that the *pa-TAH*, the short line under the *mem*, is pronounced as the "a" in the word father, and that the *he* is silent at the end of a word unless it has a *ma-PIK* (see Lesson 11).

If an Israeli doesn't hear what someone has said, he will say "מָה?" However if he hears, but is startled or surprised by what he hears, he will exclaim "מָה, מָה, מָה?" (uttered as quickly as possible).

In the reading practice of Lesson Three we encountered the word **יֵשׁ** (*yesh*, there exists). **מָה יֵשׁ** (*mah yesh*, literally, "What is there?"), used frequently in colloquial Hebrew, means "What do you want?" or "What happened?"

• **מֵאוּסָה** (*me-AH*), "one hundred." Remember that the *tse-RE*, the two

dots under the *mem*, is pronounced almost like the "e" in the word net, and that the *ka-MATS*, the small T-like symbol under the *VA-lef*, is pronounced like the "a" in the word father.

• **מול** (*mul*), "opposite." Remember that the symbol **וּ**, *shu-RUK*, is pronounced like the "u" in flu.

### Doubling

Another word we can now read is **שְׁמוּאֵל** (*she-mu-EL*), "Samuel." There is a dramatic story recorded in I Samuel 3 about the young Samuel. Four times in one night the LORD called to Samuel, "שְׁמוּאֵל, שְׁמוּאֵל" each time doubling the boy's name.

Hebrew speakers tend to repeat words or phrases, especially at times of high emotion. In Genesis 22:11 the angel of the LORD shouted "Abraham! Abraham!" just as Abraham had taken a knife to kill his son. In Exodus 3:4 God called out, "Moses, Moses," and warned him to keep away from the burning bush. When Elisha was dramatically separated from Elijah and saw him ascending to heaven, Elisha cried out, "My father! My father!" (II Kg. 2:12). Later the king of Israel, Jehoash, used that same exclamation as he wept over the dying Elisha (II Kg. 13:14).

We also note this doubling in the synoptic Gospels, perhaps an indication of their Hebraic origins. Jesus patiently addressed a fretting host, "Martha, Martha" (Lk. 10:41), or an overconfident disciple, "Simon, Simon" (Lk. 22:31). On the Lake of Galilee in the midst of a storm, the disciples cried out to Jesus: "Master! Master! We are lost!" (Lk. 8:24). The five foolish maidens who were locked out of the banquet cried, "Lord! Lord! Let us in!" (Mt. 25:11). On the Day of Judgment those excluded from the rewards of the righteous will cry out, "Lord! Lord!" (Matthew 7:22).

In our next installment, we will learn more about the sounds contained in **מְנוֹרָה**.

## The Mary & Martha Story

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"Martha, Martha," the Lord replied, "you are *worried* and disturbed about many things; only one thing is important. Mary has chosen what is better, and what she has chosen will not be taken away from her."

Then he said to his disciples, "I tell you, do not be *worried* about your life [literally "*soul*"], what you will have to eat and drink; nor about your body, what you will have to wear. Isn't life [literally "*the soul*"] more than food, or the body more than clothes?

"Look at the birds, they don't sow or reap or *store* in *granaries*, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you more valuable than they are? Can any of you add a single cubit to your height by *worrying*?

"And why are you *worried* about clothing? See how the wild flowers grow. They don't work to make their clothes. I tell you, even Solomon in all his splendor was not dressed like one of these.

"If this is how God clothes grass in the fields, which is here today and tomorrow is used to stoke an oven, how much more can he be expected to clothe you, O men of little faith?

"So don't be *worried*, asking, 'What are we going to eat or drink, or what are we going to wear?' [Don't be like the heathen] for the heathen chase after these things — your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things — but more than anything else, desire the Kingdom of Heaven and His salvation [literally "*righteousness*," a Hebrew synonym for "*salvation*"], and all these things will be yours as well. So don't be *worried* about tomorrow. Tomorrow will *worry* about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

"The field of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to *store* my grain.'

"This is what I will do," he said. 'I will tear down my *granaries* and build bigger ones, and in them I will *store* all my grain and *goods*. Then I will say to myself [literally "to my *soul*"]: 'You have enough *goods* laid aside to last you for many years. Take life easy. Eat, drink and be merry.'"

"But God said to him, 'You fool! Tonight you will die [literally "your

*soul* will be demanded from you"]. Then who will have what you have prepared?'

"There once was a rich man. He dressed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. A poor man named Lazar used to be placed at his gate. He was covered with sores. And as he lay there, longing for a few scraps that fell from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores.

"Finally the poor man died and the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell where he was in torment, he saw in the distance Abraham with Lazar in his bosom.

"'Father Abraham,' he cried out, 'have mercy on me and send Lazar to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in agony in this fire.'

"But Abraham said, 'My son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things [literally "*goods*"], while Lazar received bad things. So now he is here being comforted and you are in agony. And besides, between us a great chasm has been firmly fixed so that those who want to cross from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross from there to us.'

"Then I beg you, Father,' he said, 'to send Lazar to my family because I have five brothers. Let him warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets. Let them listen to them.'

"No, Father Abraham,' he said, 'if someone from the dead goes to them they will repent.'

"He said to him, 'If they will not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone comes back from the dead.'"

## The Connections

The preceding story has been created by combining four passages found in different parts of the Gospels. Notice the key words in italics. *Worry* ties the first two fragments — the incident from Lk. 10: 38-42 and the teaching from Mt. 6:25-34=Lk. 12:22-31. The first parable is linked to the second fragment by the words *store* and *granaries*. The word *soul*, appearing here in two of its Hebrew meanings, also unites the second and third frag-

ments. *Goods* helps to confirm that the two parables should be joined together. The theme of the death of a rich man who clings to wealth is emphasized in both parables.

Notice also Jesus' rabbinic use of doublets: two small doublets, "birds" and "flowers," appear in the main body of his teaching, and two parables conclude his teaching. To the Jewish audience of that day, this was the most convincing method of teaching, because Scripture says, "By the mouth [evidence] of two or three witnesses a thing will be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16).

The two concluding parables belong to this context because they illustrate the two principal concerns mentioned in the second fragment (Matthew 6:25-34=Luke 12:22-31). Jesus exhorted his disciples not to worry about the concerns of everyday life — food and clothing, each of which is mentioned in the parables. Both parables are about rich men whose main concern is for this world's goods. One has an abundance of grain, the other is finely attired.

## Longer Context

Jesus taught that only "one thing" is important. Without the longer context we would not know what it is. The second fragment makes it clear that the "one thing" is to desire above all else God's rule and salvation in our lives and in the lives of those around us (Matthew 6:33=Luke 12:31).

Dr. Lindsey's discovery also makes it possible to see Jesus' teaching style. Like a typical first-century rabbi, Jesus did not deliver formal sermons, but as he traveled the country with his disciples he commented upon situations such as Martha's anxiety or the widow's contribution of two small coins (Lk. 21:1-2). Jesus typically used such incidents as springboards for his teaching, prefacing his remarks with "I tell you," and concluding with a pair of parables to illustrate and confirm the teaching.