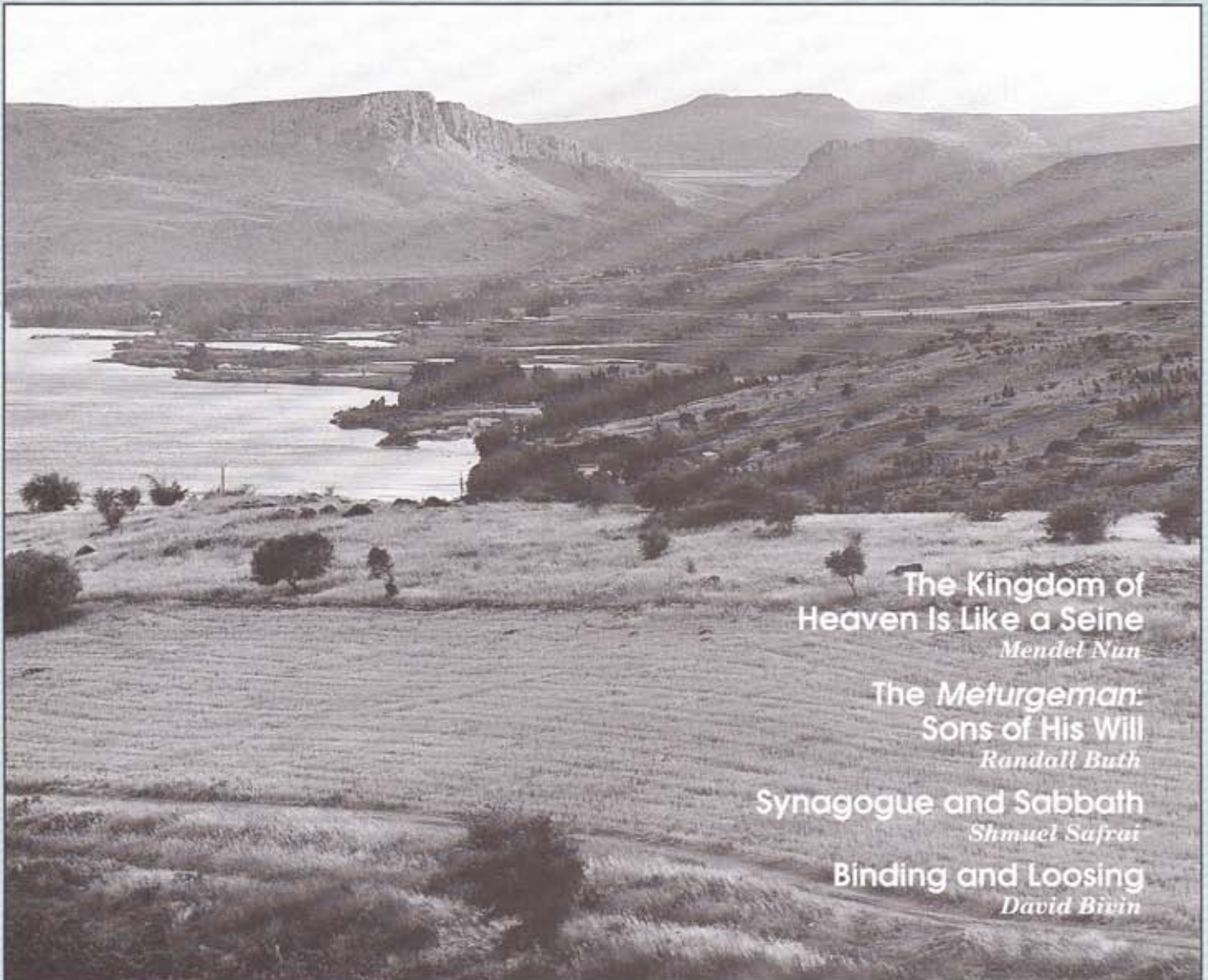


מנקודת ראות ירושלמית

# Jerusalem Perspective

November/December 1989  
Volume 2, Number 11



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A Bimonthly Report on Research into the Words of Jesus





*In a previous issue of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE you stated that it is wrong to say grace by blessing the food. You claimed that one does not bless anything or anyone except God. But what about Proverbs 30:11 which implies that it is a sin if you do not bless your parents?*

—A reader in Madrid, Spain

In the article you refer to ("Did Jesus Observe the Oral Torah: Blessing," January, 1988), we stated that blessing the food before a meal is an example of how a lack of knowledge of Jewish custom has led Christians to misunderstand an act of Jesus.

In this particular case it has led to the development of a Christian practice which, though perhaps not harmful in itself, has no foundation in Jesus' own practice or teaching. This misunderstanding also has led to consecrating or blessing the bread and wine used in the communion service, as well as other "holy objects."

But we overstated the case in saying that "one does not bless anything or anyone except God." In the context of taking a loaf of bread before beginning a meal, the blessing can only be a blessing directed toward God. However, as you suggest, one can find examples in Scripture of people blessing people. Isaac blessed Jacob (Gen. 27:27-29), for instance; and Jacob, in turn, blessed his twelve sons (Gen. 49:28). (Compare also Rom. 12:14, I Pet. 3:9.) **JP**

*I appreciate your publication as it usually presents complex issues in a way the average person can understand. However, I feel uneasy about all the textual criticism you are doing. Do the scholars of the Jerusalem School agree with Bultmann that the Gospel accounts are not historically accurate but were added to and changed by later redactors, and that one needs to get behind these myths to understand the real Jesus?*

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

Both the Jewish and Christian members of the School take very seriously the stories in the Gospels. Rudolf Bultmann wrote in 1926, "We can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus." We certainly do not agree with Bultmann in this, nor do we share his view that the miracles of Jesus are merely literary devices to convey some central moral or ethical theme.

Bultmann insisted that it is impossible to reach the historical Jesus through the Gospels, but our whole approach contradicts this. We believe that not only is it possible to see and understand Jesus from the Gospels, but that we can even see him better when we read the Gospel accounts through the eyes of their first Jewish readers.

The most serious handicaps generally suffered by Christian New Testament scholars studying the words of Jesus are a lack of fluency in rabbinic Hebrew and an unfamiliar-

(continued on page 14)

*Cover photo:  
The Plain of  
Gennesaret at the  
northwest corner of  
the Sea of Galilee  
where most of the  
stories from Jesus'  
ministry occurred.  
(Photo by David Harris)*

## Jerusalem Perspective

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# The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like a Seine

by Mendel Nun

**T**he dragnet or seine is the oldest type of fishing net, and its use was once the most important fishing method on the Sea of Galilee. In the Hebrew Scriptures and the Talmud it is called *הֶרֶם* (*HE·rem*), and in Greek *σαγήνη* (*sa·GE·ne*), from which the word seine is derived. Sources such as Egyptian grave paintings dating from the third millennium B.C.E. suggest that this fishing method was widely used in ancient times throughout the countries of the East.

The seine is a 250 to 300-meter-long piece of netting three to four meters high at its wings and eight meters high at the center. The foot rope is weighted with sinkers, and the head rope has cork floats. The net is spread a hundred meters or more from the shore and parallel to it, and hauled in by a team of as many as sixteen men with towing lines attached to each end. Once the hauling begins, the motion must be continuous. As long as the net is advancing, the fish face the net trying to escape rather than swimming away from it. However, if the pulling motion were even briefly stopped before the net reached the shore, the fish would escape.

## Personal Experiences

The seine was used in the Sea of Galilee until the 1950s, and my experiences in the early days of modern Jewish fishing on the Sea of Galilee have given me some practical insight into its use. In the early morning our crew would assemble to arrange the heavy net

on the stern of the boat, and hurriedly sail off to "catch" a good fishing area. Half the crew would be put ashore with the first towing line, and the boat would sail out until it reached the end of this line, turn and sail parallel to the shore until the net was spread. The boat then returned to shore with the remaining half of the crew who would alight and take the end of the second towing line, leaving the boat on the shore.

Next the two teams harnessed themselves to the towing lines and pulled the net toward the shore, moving towards each other as they pulled. The sinkers had dragged the foot rope to the bottom, and the net had formed a semicircular wall that advanced to the shore with its lower edge at the bottom of the lake. The fish do not swim over the net even when its top is well below the surface of the water. They dive to the bottom in their attempt to escape to deeper water.

The whole operation would take an hour or more, after which the fish that had been caught were sorted, the net rearranged in the stern of the boat and the



Mendel Nun

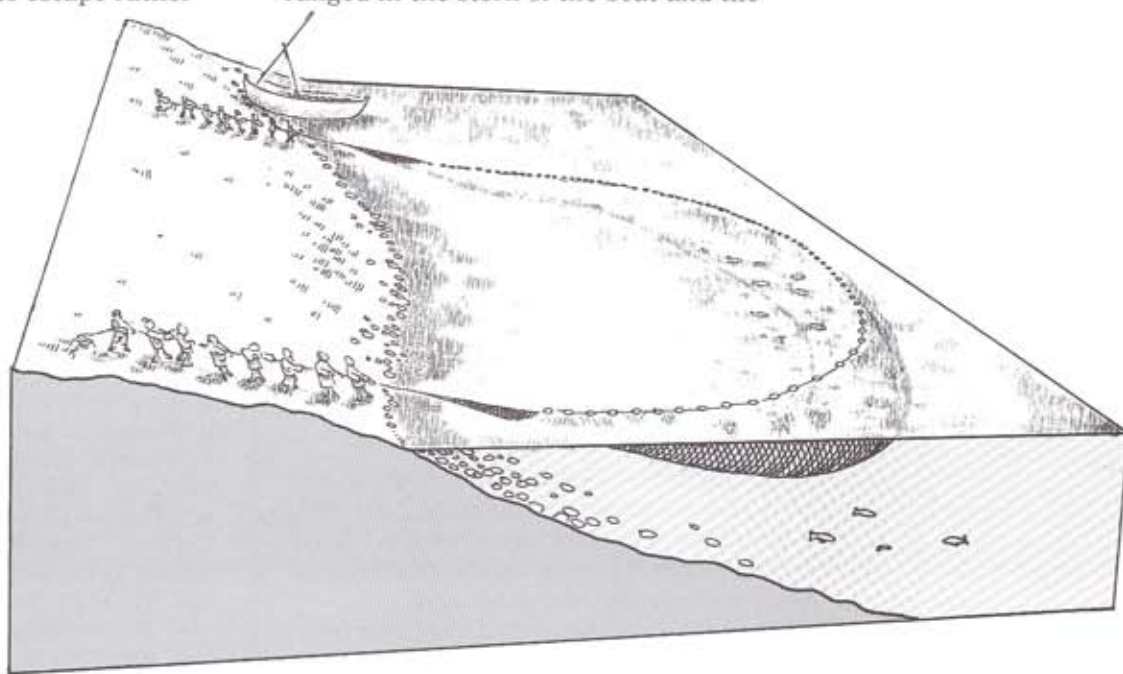
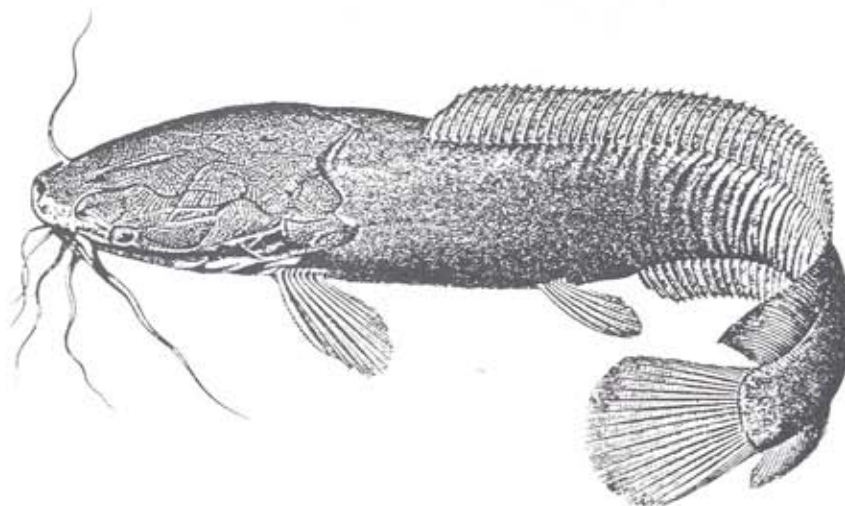


Illustration by Phil Crossman

Diagram showing how a seine is used by a fishing crew.





A catfish, *clarias lazera*, the "bad fish" referred to in Matthew 13:48.

work begun again at another location. This would be repeated as often as eight times during a day's fishing. In the 1940s a fishing crew using a seine could catch 200–300 kilograms of fish in each drag, as much as 2–15 tons in a day.

In summer, the catch would be placed in a perforated wooden box that was trailed behind the boat to keep the fish alive. Because of the weight of the net and the relatively large crew, fishing with a seine required a large boat — usually about eight meters long and two and a half meters wide. Interestingly, these are the dimensions of the ancient boat from the time of Jesus that was discovered in the mud of the lake in 1986, near Magdala.

## Parable of the Seine

In the New Testament, the seine is once called by its Greek name *σαγήνη* (*sa-GE-ne*). Jesus used it allegorically to describe the Kingdom of Heaven: "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a seine which was spread in the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore and sat down and sorted the good fish into baskets, but threw the bad away" (Mt. 13:47–48).

This closely fits the manner in which the seine is used. It is spread out in the water and pulled to the shore, catching all kinds of fish which the fishermen later sort on the shore. The "bad" ones refer to the scaleless catfish, forbidden in Scripture and therefore not even offered for sale.

There is only one part of this description in Matthew which is not applicable to the seine. The words "when it was full" sug-

gest a period of waiting for the net to fill and that the net was hauled in only after it was completely full of fish.

## Biblical References

The seine is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures nine times, more often than any other fishing method. In Habakkuk 1:14–15 we find a reference to seine fishing which is generally translated inaccurately. Correctly translated the passage should read: "You have made the righteous like fish in the sea, like sea

creatures that have no ruler. He [the evildoer] has caught them all with a hook, hauled them up in his seine, gathered them in his trapnet. That is why he rejoices and is glad."

The prophet Ezekiel refers three times to a "place to spread seines" — 26:5, 26:14, 47:10. Seines laid out on the ground to dry were a recurring picture in fishing villages. The Talmud calls the fishermen of Tiberias *הַרְמֵי סַבְרִיָּה* (*ha-ra-ME te-ver-YAH*, the "seine men" of Tiberias), after their main piece of equipment (Jerusalem Talmud Pesahim 30d).

An ancient tradition preserved in rabbinic literature (Babylonian Talmud Bava Kamma 81b; Tosefta Bava Kamma 8:18) mentions the exclusive fishing rights given by Joshua to the tribe of Naphtali, entitling them to "set seines" along the entire shoreline of the Sea of Galilee. To enable them to exercise this right, a strip of land at the southern tip of the lake belonging to the tribe of Gad was added to the lot of Naphtali. **JP**

Both of Mendel Nun's latest publications may be ordered from JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE: *The Sea of Galilee and Its Fishermen in the New Testament* (64 pp., 82 illustrations, \$6.00 plus postage and handling: \$2.50 by air or \$1.00 by sea) and *The Sea of Galilee: Newly Discovered Harbours from New Testament Days* (31 pp., 48 illustrations, \$4.00 plus postage and handling: \$2.00 by air or \$1.00 by sea). If ordering by sea mail, allow 45-60 days for delivery.



# A Life on the Kinneret

by David Pileggi

For the last four decades, Mendel Nun (pronounced *noon*) has produced a steady stream of articles, monographs and books about the Sea of Galilee — called in Hebrew יַם כִּנְרֵת (*yam ki-NE-ret*, Lake Kinneret). Ancient harbors, water levels and fishing techniques are just a few of the subjects detailed in Nun's work. His research has focused largely on the lake in late antiquity, and his 1964 book, *Ancient Jewish Fisheries* [in Hebrew], won the prestigious Ben-Zvi Prize.

Born into a Zionist family in Latvia, Nun began to learn Hebrew at five, and decided to immigrate to Palestine as a teenager. After many difficulties, he eventually received a student visa and left for Palestine in September, 1939, shortly before the Baltic Republics were invaded by Stalin. Following the imposition of Soviet rule, no one was allowed out of Latvia, and in 1941 the Republics were seized by Nazi Germany. All the Latvian Jews, including most of Nun's family, were subsequently rounded up and murdered.

Nun spent what he remembers as a wonderful year at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, but a year was enough for him and he headed to the Galilee to put his Zionism into action. Joining his brother at Ein-Gev, a young kibbutz on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, he immediately went to work in the settlement's fledgling fishing industry.

Soon Nun began researching the history of his new trade and surroundings, and realized that he was using essentially the same techniques that Peter, James and John employed two thousand years earlier. Learning Arabic, Nun interviewed many experienced local fishermen about their fishing practices. Help sometimes came from other quarters. When Nun needed antiquarian books, Teddy Kollek often brought them from London. Kollek, who is now mayor of Jerusalem, was one of the founding members of the kibbutz, and when

he was not busy elsewhere he and Nun fished together on the lake.

After Israel's independence in 1948, Nun began to publish his findings about the ancient Jewish fishing industry, as well as the lake's history and archaeology. Nun often had university professors, such as Shmuel Safrai, advise him and check his work, but when it came to the maritime history of the lake, Nun was a pioneer.

Fishing was a dangerous business between 1948 and 1967 when the Syrian army often fired at boats in the northeast corner of the lake, which was one of the best fishing areas. The kibbutz's boats frequently came under fire and Nun lost a number of friends to Syrian army snipers. After the Syrians were pushed away from the lake in the 1967 Six Day War, Israelis could fish freely in the whole of the lake.

There is another side to Nun — the amateur archaeologist. After an ancient harbor was discovered at Kursi in 1970, Nun began to systematically search for the many ancient harbors that once graced the lake. The fruit of his years of searching can be found in his latest English work, *The Sea of Galilee: Newly Discovered Harbours from New Testament Days* (Kinnereth Sailing Co., Kibbutz Ein-Gev, 2nd ed., 1989). Another of his important discoveries was the Byzantine monastery and church at Kursi, ancient Gergesa (cf. Mk. 5:1).

In recent years, the economic importance of fishing has declined for Ein-Gev. Tourism instead has taken its place. Nun is now treasurer of the Kinnereth Sailing Company, which transports thousands of tourists and pilgrims across the lake every year. Asked if the kibbutz plans to eventually give up fishing altogether, Nun shakes his head and explains that the settlement is too conscious of its links with the ancient past to ever do that. And he proudly acknowledges that Jesus and his disciples are a part of that past. **JP**



**Mendel Nun in 1952 at the height of his fishing days.**



# The Sons of His Will



Randall Buth received his doctorate in 1987 from U.C.L.A. in the field of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures. Dr. Buth earned his M.A. in 1975, at the Institute of Holy Land Studies in Jerusalem. He is a translator and consultant with Wycliffe Bible Translators in Africa.

by Randall Buth

**C**hristmas brings many carols and cards containing the words from Luke 2:14, "Goodwill to men" and "Peace to men of goodwill." The angels praised God with words that in English may sound like a politician wishing us to "Have a nice day." Most of us sense that these words reflect something deeper, but why did the angels use such seemingly innocuous words?

## Variants

The manuscript history of Luke 2:14 is split between *εὐδοκία* (*eu-do-KI-a*, favor) and *εὐδοκίας* (*eu-do-KI-as*, of favor), the Greek possessive form of the word. English translators had to choose which of these variants they would translate. The King James Version's "good will toward men" reflects the first variant, and J. B. Phillips' "among men of goodwill" translates the second variant.

Like Phillips, almost all modern translators since the King James Version have opted for *εὐδοκίας* (*eu-do-KI-as*, of goodwill) because it is textually the stronger reading. Textual critics are almost unanimous in preferring it because it is attested by the best Greek manuscripts, and because it is the more difficult reading. One of the principles of textual criticism when judging variant readings is that if all other factors are equal, the most difficult version is to be preferred.

It is not easy to translate either form of this Greek word because it did not exist in classical Greek nor even in the Hellenistic

With this issue we begin a new series entitled "The Meturgeman." In Hebrew מְתוּרְגֵּמָן (*me-tur-ge-MAN*) means translator, and refers specifically to the sages in rabbinic times who translated the synagogue Torah readings into Aramaic or Greek for the assembled congregation.

It is important that a translator understand both his text's originating and target cultures, because communication requires a background of shared cultural information. This is why it is vital to understand the Hebraic background to Jesus' life and teachings.

A translator's sensitivity to the culture from which he is translating can lead to a fresher, clearer understanding of the text. In the coming months Dr. Buth will present insights into the Gospels that affect the translation process, and show how a knowledge of the Gospels' Semitic background can provide a deeper insight into Jesus' words.

*koine* Greek. In "Jewish Greek" texts such as the Septuagint that are translations of Hebrew originals it usually has the sense of "God's grace or favor" or "God's will." More rarely, it can have the sense of "man's preference or will." Thus one would expect this Lukan passage to mean, "on earth peace for men of [God's] favor" or "on earth peace for men of [God's] will."

"Men of goodwill" is unlikely on theological grounds because of its suggestion of human merit. The translation "with whom he is pleased" might also be understood to imply that God's peace was given only to those who

deserved it. Furthermore, prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls many scholars who postulated a Hebrew original for this passage argued that the expression "men of favor," the literal translation of Luke's Greek words, is not possible in Hebrew.

## Thanksgiving Scroll

It was the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran that brought about a new understanding of the Lukan expression. As scholars read the documents that the Dead Sea sect left behind, they encountered various Hebrew expressions that were equivalent to Luke's "men of favor," such as בְּנֵי רִצְוֹנוֹ (*be-NE re-tso-NO*, the sons of his favor) and בְּחִירֵי רִצְוֹן (*be-hi-RE ra-TSON*, the elect of favor). These idioms refer to the "saved community," as in the Qumran Thanksgiving Scroll 4:32-33: "... that they may know all of his [God's] deeds in the power of his



might and the multitude of his mercies upon all the sons of his favor." The phrase "sons of his favor" describes the people who have received divine grace, the community of believers.

The people who produced the Qumran scrolls believed that they were living in the last days just before God would send his Messiah and set up a new world. They believed there would be a great war between the "sons of light" and the "sons of darkness." The "sons of his favor," of course, were the sons of light.

The Greek translation of Ben Sira gives examples (Ben Sira 15:15; 39:18) of רצונו (re-tso-NO, his favor) being translated in Greek by εὐδοκία (eu-do-KI-a) or εὐδοκίας (eu-do-KI-as) without the personal suffix, just as we find in the Lukan text. Therefore Luke's text, in either of the variants, is an acceptable translation of the Hebrew רצונו, which is רצונו with the personal suffix "his." Also, Joseph Fitzmyer has pointed out in his *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Scholars' Press, 1974, pp. 101-104) that the ancient Coptic translation of Luke 2:14 contains the pronoun "his," suggesting the possibility that ancient translators were able to understand that Luke's intention was "peace to the sons of his favor."

## Salvation

Bible translators now have evidence that "men of his favor" could have been used in Hebrew in pre-Christian times. This evidence decisively tipped the scales in favor of the Hebraic understanding of Luke 2:14, that "men of favor" should be translated "the saved people of God." There is no longer any reason to use the English phrases "Goodwill to men," "men of goodwill" or even "men with whom God is pleased" when translating Luke 2:14. The original text made a distinction between the saved and the unsaved — "... on earth peace for God's people."

But שָׁלוֹם (sha-LOM, peace), like רָצוֹן, (ra-TSON, favor, grace), is a common synonym in Hebrew for "salvation." (See "Hebrew Nuggets," JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, December 1988.) What sense does it make for the angels to declare "Salvation to the saved"? Here "peace" refers to the Messiah. The long-awaited Messiah had come to those who longed for his coming. As Simeon said as he took Jesus in his arms, "My eyes have seen your salvation" (Luke 2:30).

God sent an angel to announce the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem (Luke 2:11). At that announcement an army of angels began to praise God. They praised him because that birth meant salvation for the whole earth. The Messiah that people like Simeon longed for had come. Thus the angels sang, "Salvation for the saved." Their song of praise has the whole world for its scope, but it came first to those who were already the recipients of God's grace. JP



The left edge of column III and all of column IV of the Qumran Thanksgiving Scroll. The last word in line 32 of column IV and the first word of line 33 (just before the tear) form the expression be-NE re-tso-NO, the sons of his favor which has contributed to a new understanding of Luke 2:14.

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



# Synagogue and



Shmuel Safrai, one of the senior members of the Jerusalem School, is professor of Jewish History of the Mishnaic and Talmudic Period at the Hebrew University.

by Shmuel Safrai

*And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up and on the Sabbath he went to the synagogue, as it was his custom, and stood up to read. And there was given to him a scroll of the prophet Isaiah and he unrolled the scroll . . . and he rolled up the scroll and returned it to the hazzan [the leader of the synagogue service] and sat down . . . and he began and said to them. . . . (Luke 4:16–21)*

**T**he detailed description found in these verses provides substantial information about synagogue life and customs in the early first century C.E. An examination of this passage will help us understand Jesus more clearly and accurately. This account in Luke's Gospel agrees with other contemporary and especially rabbinic sources. Together they provide a complete picture of the synagogue in that period.

## Sabbath Services

Luke states that Jesus came to the synagogue as he was accustomed to on the Sab-

bath, and indeed it seems that during the Second Temple period the synagogues were open only on the Sabbath and not also during the week as today. The synagogue is mentioned often in Second Temple and post-Second Temple period literature. In the New Testament alone the synagogue is mentioned about fifty times. It is also mentioned quite often in rabbinic literature, in Philo, Josephus and in other contemporary sources. In all of this vast literature, there is not even a hint that the synagogue served as a communal meeting place for worship, for the reading of the Torah and for prayer on any day other than the Sabbath or a festival day.

Certain sources explicitly state that the Jews met in the synagogue only on the Sabbath. For instance Philo, a mid-first century C.E. Jewish writer, says in *De Vita Mosi* (II, 215–216) that during the time of Moses it was customary for Jews to meet on the Sabbath day for study and adds: "From then until today Jews meet on the seventh

day to study the Torah of their fathers." In the *Hypothetica* (quoted in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* VIII, 12–13) Philo tells of the custom of the people "to come together in one place on those Sabbaths and while sitting together in the sanctity of the place . . . to listen to the reading of the Torah." Philo also reports that the Therapeuts, a Jewish group in Alexandria in Egypt, "pray twice a day in their own rooms and only on the seventh day do they come together to the communal holy place (σεμνείον, *sem·NE·on*, i.e., the synagogue) where the elder speaks words of wisdom to them" (*De Vita Contemplativa* 30–31).

## Synagogue Reading

The visit of Jesus to the synagogue is connected with the reading of the Torah and the Prophets. Luke does not specifically mention the reading of the Torah but states "and he stood up to read." "Stand-



*The remains of a first-century synagogue discovered in the excavations at Gamla on the Golan Heights. Note the stone benches along what was once the western wall of the synagogue and the entrance to the right of the small tree in the background. (Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)*



# Sabbath

ing up" in relation to "reading" is found frequently in the Mishnah and always refers to the reading of the Torah.

The final duty of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement was the reading of the Torah. When he was given the Torah scroll the High Priest "stood to receive it and read it standing" (Mishnah Yoma 7:1). The king, who read from the Torah in the Temple court on the Feast of Tabernacles following each sabbatical year "stood to receive [the Torah scroll] and read while sitting." However, it is related that during the Feast of Tabernacles in 62 C.E. King Agrippa II "stood to receive [the scroll of the Torah] and read while standing" (Mishnah Sotah 7:8). Although the king was permitted to sit while reading the Torah, Agrippa stood out of respect for the Torah, and for this he was highly praised by the sages.

The central feature of the synagogue service during the Second Temple period and the Tannaic period was not prayer but the reading of the Torah. Synagogue regulations are not discussed in the Mishnah in Tractate Berachot which deals with prayer and blessings, but in Tractate Megillah which deals with the reading of the Torah. Rabbi Yehudah, when describing the great synagogue in Alexandria which was destroyed during the Jewish uprisings (115–118 C.E.) in the reign of Trajan, does not mention prayer but the reading of the Torah: "And he took [the scroll] to read, and that one [i.e., the *hazzan*] waved a scarf [to signal to the congregants when to say 'Amen' to the blessing pronounced by the reader, since the reader's voice could not reach the whole congregation] and they responded 'Amen'" (Tosefta Sukkah 4:6).

Tosefta Megillah 3:7 relates: "One may not act frivolously in synagogues. One should not enter them to seek shelter from the heat, the cold, or the rain. One does not eat, drink or sleep in them . . . rather one reads, studies and teaches [Torah] in them." Interestingly, this Tannaic ruling which states what is permissible and what is not permissible in a synagogue mentions the reading and study of the Torah but not prayer. There may be a few sources which



*Moses (or Ezra) reading from a Torah scroll, as depicted on a panel of the frescoes that covered the west wall of the mid-third century C.E. synagogue at Dura-Europos. (Reproduced from The Synagogue by Carl H. Kraeling, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956, Plate LXXVII.)*





**A "seat of Moses" carved from basalt found in the ruins of the third-fourth-century C.E. synagogue at Chorazin.**

(Courtesy of the Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums.  
Photo: David Harris)

refer to prayer in the synagogue on the Sabbath and festivals, but this activity was certainly secondary to the main function of the synagogue.

## Reading and Preaching

The story in Luke states that Jesus read first from the Torah and then from the Prophets. This is in keeping with the Mishnah which contains numerous rulings pertaining to the reading of the Torah and Prophets. There is, however, a difference between the two.

The reading from the Torah was instituted much earlier than the reading from the Prophets, and there are traditions that it began as early as the time of Moses and was expanded during the time of Ezra (Jerusalem Talmud Megillah 75<sup>a</sup>; cf. Acts 15:21).

It is impossible to know from the Mishnah, however, whether there was a reading from the Prophets in the synagogue during the Second Temple period as well, or whether the custom began only a short time before the Mishnah was edited around 200 C.E. The evidence in Luke regarding the reading of the Torah followed by a reading from the Prophets is the earliest reference

in all literature to this custom, which continues in synagogues until today.

The next oldest witness to this custom also comes from the New Testament. In Acts 13:15 ff., it is related that Paul and his companions preached in a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch after the reading from the Torah and the Prophets.

The Torah and the Prophets were read while standing, however the *דרשה* (*de-ra-SHAH*, sermon), the teaching of a sage or teacher, was delivered while sitting. This is the situation described in every source dealing

with a sermon or teaching which also mentions the posture of the preacher or teacher. Thus, for example, Babylonian Talmud Megillah 21<sup>a</sup> states that "the teacher should not sit on a couch and teach his student who is sitting on the ground." Although rabbinic law is here concerned with equality between master and disciple, it is taken for granted that the master is teaching while seated. The Talmudic discourse even adds: "... which is not the case when reading the Torah," which is always read while standing.

The fact that one was seated while teaching is alluded to by Jesus in Matthew 23:2, where he states that the scribes and Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat." Sitting in such a seat is mentioned in rabbinic literature where the seat is called *קתדרת משה* (*ka-ted-RA' de-mo-SHEH*, the seat of Moses) (Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 1, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 12). The phrase was used for hundreds of years afterwards, even as late as the twelfth-century Epistle of Rabbi Samuel ben Eli (p. 64). One such ancient chair, from the third-fourth centuries C.E., was found at Chorazin near the Sea of Galilee and is now displayed in the Israel Museum. **JP**



## Transliteration System

Linguists use various transliteration systems to represent the sounds of the Hebrew language. Some are more technical than others, but all of them employ symbols unfamiliar to the non-specialist.

Admitting that no system can perfectly represent the sounds of the Hebrew language using only the letters of the English alphabet, JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE employs a system which hopefully elicits from English readers a pronunciation that comes close to Hebrew. We use special symbols only for three letters whose sounds are not normally made by English speakers — **כ**, **ך**, **ע** — and for one silent letter — **ס**.

The one-symbol-for-one-sound system which scholars strive for is less necessary today than it was only a few years ago when it was time consuming and expensive to set type in more than one language. Today, in an age when typesetting is often done by computer, it is easy to print many languages on a page. Thus, the transliteration can serve mainly as a pronunciation aid for readers who do not know Hebrew.

Hebrew does not have upper and lower case letters, therefore we do not capitalize proper nouns in our system of transliteration. However, we do use capitalization to indicate the syllable which receives primary accent in words of more than one syllable. One-syllable words are treated as unaccented. Syllables of transliterated words are separated by dots, as in *ye·ru·sha·LA·yim* (Jerusalem).

Except for diphthongs, the vowels are represented by one letter each, similar to Spanish vowels. The vowel in "too" is represented by the letter "u," the vowel in "see" is represented by the letter "i," and the vowel in "day" is represented by "e."

In the Glossary boxes we use symbols such as "א," and indicate accented syllables (primary accent only) by "א". These symbols are employed in standard English dictionaries and will be familiar to most readers.

### Transliterations

- ס — ' (silent)
- ב — b (like b in boy)
- ב — v (like v in very)
- ג — g (like g in gold, never like g in gem)
- ד — d (like d in day)
- ה — h (like h in horn; normally silent at end of a word)
- ו — v (like v in very)
- ז — z (like z in zeal)
- ח — h (no English equivalent — voiceless guttural produced by retracting the tongue root into the throat, but in modern Hebrew often is pronounced like ch in the

Scottish *loch* or the German *ach*)

- ט — t (like t in tip)
- י — y (like y in yard; sometimes silent)
- כ — k (like k in kite, never silent like k in knit)
- ך — k (no English equivalent, like ch in the Scottish *loch* or the German *ach*)
- ל — l (like l in let)
- מ — m (like m in met)
- נ — n (like n in net)
- ס — s (like s in sit)
- ע — ' (no English equivalent — voiced guttural produced by constricting the lower throat muscles and retracting the tongue root. It is related to ה like the voiced b is related to the unvoiced p.)
- פ — p (like p in port)
- ף — f (like f in fit)
- צ — ts (like ts in nets)
- ק — k (like k in kite)
- ר — r (a gargling r sound produced by vibrating the uvula against the back of the tongue, like in the French *rire*)
- ש — sh (like sh in shell)
- ש — s (like s in sit)
- ת — t (like t in tip)

**Vowel signs** and dots occur mostly under the letter; sometimes to its left. They are pronounced after the letter that carries the sign. Our transliterations are in accord with modern Hebrew pronunciation and do not distinguish vowel duration.

- א — a (like a in father; rarely like the o in bone)
- א — a (like a in father)
- א — a (like a in father)
- י — i (like i in ski)
- י — i (like i in ski)
- י — e (sometimes like e in net, sometimes like e in hey, and sometimes somewhere in between)
- י — e (like e in net)
- י — e (like e in net)
- ו — o (like o in oh)
- ו — o (like o in oh)
- ו — o (like o in oh)
- ו — u (like u in flu)
- ו — u (like u in flu)
- ו — e (sometimes barely audible like e in happening, at other times as long as e in net. Also can be silent. When silent we transliterate with nothing.)

**The addition** of ך to the vowels א, י and ו creates in each case a diphthong.

- אי — ai (like ai in aisle)
- וי — oi (like oy in boy)
- וי — ui (like uey in gluey)

\*This is the form of the letter when it appears at the end of a word. **JP**



# “Binding and Loosing”



David Bivin is co-author of *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus and the home-study Hebrew course, Fluent Biblical and Modern Hebrew. He has lived in Israel since 1963, and serves as director of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research.*

by David Bivin

*“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:19, KJV)*

**T**he Hebrew words for “bind” and “loose,” **קשר** (*ʿa-SAR*) and **התיר** (*hi-TIR*), each appear with more than one meaning in the Hebrew Bible. “Bind” can mean “tie” as in Judges 15:12, 16:11, “imprison” as in II Kings 17:4, “hitch” (a cart, wagon or chariot) as in Genesis 46:29, or “tether” as in Genesis 49:11; while *hi-TIR* can be the exact opposite of *ʿa-SAR* in each of these senses.

By the time of Jesus, *ʿa-SAR* had acquired the additional meaning “forbid,” and its antonym *hi-TIR* had acquired the meaning “permit.” These are the meanings most often found in rabbinic literature.

The rabbis were called upon constantly by their community to interpret scriptural commands. The Bible forbids working on the Sabbath, for instance, but it does not define what constitutes work. As a result, the rabbis were required to rule on which activities were permitted on the Sabbath. They “bound” or prohibited certain activities, and “loosed” or allowed others.

The Mishnah contains many rabbinic rulings on what is “loosed” and what is “bound,” such as the following:

“During the war of Vespasian they [the rabbis] **bound** the garlands of bridegrooms and the (playing of) bells [at weddings]. During the war of Quietus, they **bound** the

garlands of brides and that no one should teach his son Greek. During the last war [the Bar-Kochba Revolt] they **bound** the bride’s riding about the village in a litter” (Sotah 9:14).

“If a person made a vow to abstain from milk, he is **loosed** to eat whey. Rabbi Yose **binds** it. . . . If a person made a vow to

abstain from meat, he is **loosed** to eat broth [i.e., the water in which the meat was cooked]. . . . Rabbi Yehudah **binds** it. . . . If a person made a vow to abstain from wine, he is **loosed** to eat a cooked dish which has the taste of wine” (Nedarim 6:5–7).

“If a person sold produce in Syria and said, ‘It is from the Land of Israel,’ tithes must be paid on it. If he said, ‘It is already

tithed,’ he may be believed, since the mouth that **bound** is the mouth that **loosed**” (Demai 6:11).

## Authority in the Kingdom

The words in the Greek text of Matthew 16:19 which are translated “bind” and “loose” are forms of the verbs **δεῖν** (*dein*) and **λύειν** (*LU-ein*). In the Septuagint *dein* is the usual Greek translation of the Hebrew **קשר** (*ʿa-SAR*) while *LU-ein* is twice the translation of **התיר** (*hi-TIR*). In normal *koine* Greek, *dein*’s range of meaning is similar to that of the earlier, biblical meaning of *ʿa-SAR* — “tie, bind, imprison,” and *LU-ein*’s to that of *hi-TIR* — “untie, loose, release from prison.” None of these meanings seems to fit the context of Jesus’ words to Peter.

But the Jerusalem School believes that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke may be derived from a Greek translation of a Hebrew text. If so, it is quite possible that

**“Acts 15 ... is a classic example of how the leaders of the new movement exercised their authority to bind and loose.”**



the Greek translator used forms of the Greek verbs *dein* and *LU-ein* to translate *ʾa-SAR* and *hi-TIR*, rather than trying to capture in a free translation the more recently acquired meanings of these Hebrew words. This would explain the odd way *dein* and *LU-ein* are used in this context. The translator's choice of words would agree with the customary practice of using equivalents which had been fixed by generations of predecessors, rather than using dynamic equivalents. In other words, the Greek translator might have translated *ʾa-SAR* and *hi-TIR* by their Septuagintal Greek equivalents even though in this passage they have their new post-biblical sense of forbid and permit.

## Jesus' Movement

Jesus referred to his movement as the "Kingdom of Heaven." It was a new phenomenon in Jewish history. Situations soon would arise which none of the members of this movement had ever faced, and about which the Bible gave no specific instructions. Jesus, their teacher, would no longer be there to make the decisions, to say what was permitted and what forbidden. Others would now take his place.

Peter was given "the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." Keys symbolize authority, as Isaiah 22:20–24 indicates: "In that day I will summon my servant Eliakim. . . . I will entrust him with your authority. . . . I will place on his shoulders the keys to the house of David; what he unlocks no one may lock, and what he locks no one may unlock." Similarly, Jesus authorized Peter to find scriptural solutions for problems the early Church would encounter after Jesus' death. Peter was not to be indecisive, for Jesus had given him the authority to make rulings binding on the rest of his community, and had promised that "Heaven" would endorse his decisions: "Whatever you 'bind' on earth will be 'bound' in Heaven" — the decisions he made would have the authority of Heaven — in other words would be upheld by God, for "Heaven" was a common euphemism for God.

## Classic Example

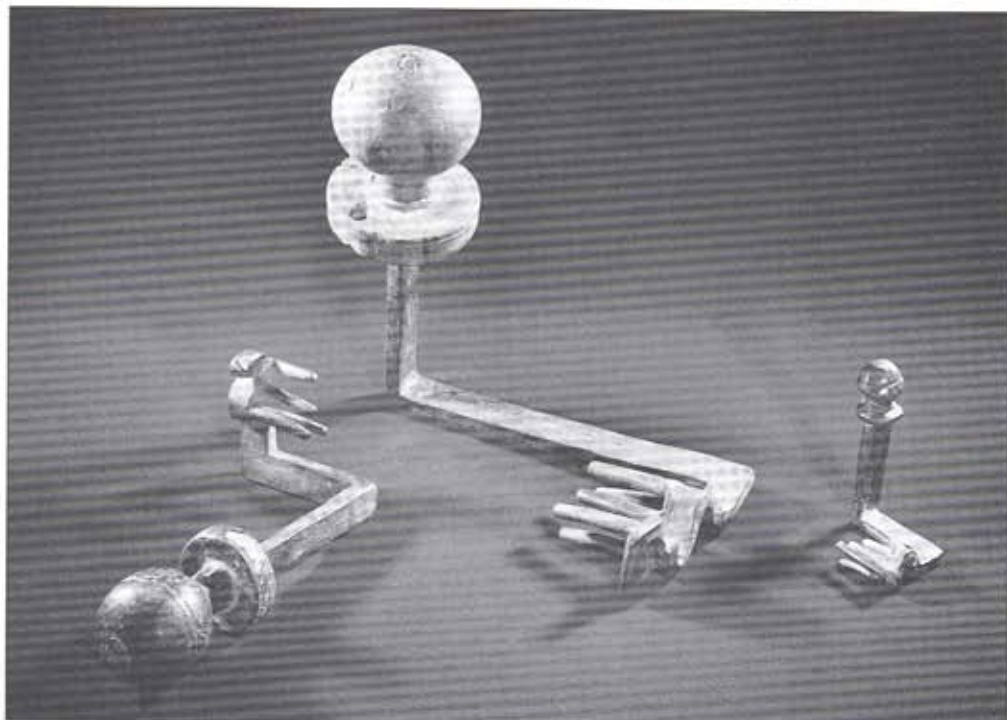
The leaders of the new movement, like the sages of their day, were called upon by their community to interpret Scripture, settle disputes and find answers in times of crisis. Sometimes they were compelled to deal with relatively minor conflicts such as the complaints of the Greek-speaking Jews who felt their widows were not being treated as well as the Hebrew-speaking widows (Acts 6:1–6). At other times these leaders were required to settle disputes of a more serious nature.

Acts 15 describes one controversy concerning whether Gentiles should be admitted into the fellowship without first being circumcised and obliged to keep the Torah of Moses. The decision reached is a classic example of how the leaders of the new community exercised their authority to "bind" and "loose."

The apostles and elders convened in Jerusalem, and after much discussion Peter ruled that the yoke of the commandments was too heavy for Gentiles (Acts 15:10), that they should be "loosed" from the obligation to keep the Torah of Moses. James, Jesus' brother, concurred, but he "bound" as well as "loosed." He ruled that it was necessary for Gentiles who became members of Jesus' movement to distance themselves from idolatry, sexual immorality and murder (Acts 15:20), which in Jewish eyes were the sins most characteristic of pagans. **JP**

*Keys from the time of the Bar-Kochba Revolt (132–135 A.D.), found in a cave near Ein-Gedi in 1961.*

*(Courtesy of the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum. Photo: David Harris)*





# Gennesaret According to Josephus

The cover photo of this issue of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE shows the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee and bordering it the Plain of Gennesar (Gennesaret). In the foreground, by the lakeshore can be seen Tabgha (ancient Heptapegon) and in the distance, the Arbel cliffs which form the southern boundary of this plain. Josephus, a first-century A.D. Jewish historian, obviously was quite moved by this fertile valley, as his description makes clear:

"Skirting the lake of Gennesar [Sea of Galilee], and also bearing that name, lies a region whose natural properties and beauty are very remarkable. There is not a plant which its fertile soil refuses to produce, and its cultivators in fact grow every species; the air is so well-tempered that it suits the most opposite varieties. The walnut, a tree which delights in the most wintry climate, here grows luxuriantly, beside palm-trees, which

thrive on heat, and figs and olives, which require a milder atmosphere. One might say that nature had taken pride in thus assembling, by a *tour de force*, the most discordant species in a single spot, and that, by a happy rivalry, each of the seasons wished to claim this region for her own. For not only has the country this surprising merit of producing such diverse fruits, but it also preserves them: for ten months without intermission it supplies those kings of fruits, the grape and the fig; the rest mature on the trees the whole year round. Besides being favoured by its genial air, the country is watered by a highly fertilizing spring, called by the inhabitants Capharnaum [Capernaum]. . . . This region extends along the border of the lake which bears its name for a length of thirty furlongs [5.6 kilometers] and inland to a depth of twenty [3.8 kilometers]. Such is the nature of this district" (*The Jewish War* 3:516-521, trans. Thackeray). JP

## Glossary

**B.C.E.** – an abbreviation of "Before Common Era," corresponding to B.C. in Christian terminology.

**C.E.** – an abbreviation of "Common Era," corresponding to A.D. in Christian terminology. JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE uses B.C.E. and C.E. in articles by Jewish scholars since many Jews feel unable to use B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (*anno Domini*, in the year of our Lord) without compromising their beliefs.

**Mishnah** – (מִשְׁנָה, *mish-NAH*) the collection of Oral Torah compiled by Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi around 200 A.D.

**Second Temple period** – literally the period from the rebuilding of the Temple about 530 B.C. to its destruction by the Romans in 70 A.D.; however, the term usually refers to the latter part of this period, beginning with the Hasmonean Uprising in 167 B.C. and often extending to the end of the Bar-Kokhba Revolt in 135 A.D.

**tannaic** (tā-nā'ik) – pertaining to the Tannaim (תַּנַּיִם, *ta-na-IM*), sages from Hillel (died c. 10 B.C.) to the sages of the generation after Rabbi Yehudah ha-Nasi, the compiler of the Mishnah, from the last third of the first century B.C. until approximately 230 A.D.

## Readers' Forum

(continued from page 2)

ilarity with the teachings and practices of Jesus and his Jewish contemporaries. A great deal that Jesus said and did has been distorted because the Church has grown unacquainted with its Hebraic roots. Since 1921, when Bultmann published his influential *Die Geschichte der synoptischen Tradition*, the Church and its academic institutions have taken a wrong turn in viewing the Gospel stories primarily as mythology.

However, the scholars of the Jerusalem School have evidence suggesting that Jesus' sayings were recorded soon after his death — and in Hebrew, the language in which they were probably spoken. Consequently the Jerusalem School begins its study with different assumptions than Bultmann, and is able to take a much more optimistic view of our ability to recover accurate information about the Jesus of history.

Of course the School's Jewish scholars do not view Jesus as the Messiah, nor do they necessarily hold the same view of inspiration of the New Testament as our Christian scholars. We hope that our Christian readers understand this, and can still benefit from the vast resources and insights that our Jewish colleagues bring to Gospel research. JP



# Annual Jerusalem School Study Tour

The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research will host an in-depth study tour of Israel this spring, March 30–April 13, 1990. The tour will be coordinated by Dr. E. William Bean, director of the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research in Pasadena, California.

This is the only tour hosted by the Jerusalem School, and the School's scholars will be actively involved throughout. David Bivin, for example, will lead tour participants on a walk along the ancient road to Emmaus. Halvor Ronning, the Jerusalem School's assistant director who will guide the tour, was selected last year by the State of Israel to be their representative to the United States for promoting tourism in the Holy Land.

In addition to the daily lectures by scholars of the Jerusalem School, there will be a reception with the School's members and their families. The highlight of the tour will be a unique Passover meal in Jerusalem, an unforgettable experience that will enrich the participant's under-



*Garden of Gethsemane and the Mount of Olives.*

*(Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office)*

standing of the life of Jesus. The sights and sounds of Jerusalem during this season and the city-wide preparations made for this historic event will carry tour members back in time to the days when Jesus himself earnestly desired to share this great feast with his disciples.

The price of the tour (fifteen days, thirteen nights in Israel) is \$1,919 from New York, or \$2,158 from Los Angeles. To receive more information about the tour and a special publication, "Joyous Passover," write or phone the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research, P.O. Box 5922, Pasadena, CA 91107 (tel. 818-796-8001).

We hope that many of our readers will be able to take part in this unique experience.

## Jerusalem Perspective Seminar

David Bivin, director of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, will be featured in a special three-day study seminar entitled "Fresh Insight into the Words of Jesus." The seminar will take place on January 26–28, 1989, in Pasadena, California, U.S.A., and will be sponsored by the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research.

This will be a unique opportunity to hear the director of the Jerusalem School and publisher of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, and to learn

about the latest discoveries made by scholars in Israel concerning the life and teachings of Jesus.

We invite you to make plans now to attend this seminar. To receive further information, please contact the director of the Centre for the Study of Biblical Research, Dr. E. William Bean, at P.O. Box 5922, Pasadena, CA 91107 (tel. 818-796-8001). Airline connections to Los Angeles are convenient from most parts of North America, and Dr. Bean can help you find suitable accommodations near the Centre.



## The Jerusalem School

**T**he Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (מכון ירושלים לחקר האוונגליונים) (הסינופטיים) 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 that the original life story of Jesus 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 this first 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.

The Jerusalem School was registered in Israel as a nonprofit research institute in 1985.



## International Synoptic Society

**R**eaders of JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE can become members of the International Synoptic Society. Membership dues promote the research of the Jerusalem School.

The goals of the Society are to:

- Publish the research of the Jerusalem School.
- Present technical research in a distilled and popularized form.
- Support new research into the synoptic Gospels.
- Sustain and expand JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, the popular voice of the Jerusalem School.

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

Members of the Society will receive a special membership certificate, and publi-

cations of the Jerusalem School will carry the names of Society members.

Checks should be made payable to "ISS." United States 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.

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. Your membership dues will help expand the horizons of Gospel research, and enable JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE to more fully report on the work of the Jerusalem School.

