

Interestingly, the book of Jonah is read on Yom Kippur. What is the connection between the stubborn unwilling prophet, Jonah, and the Day of Atonement? Jonah, an Israelite, is called to preach God’s word of repentance to Israel’s archenemy, the Assyrian city of Nineveh. “Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown!” he cries. The writer of the book of Jonah depicts the runaway sourpuss prophet as reluctant to call his enemies to repentance and salvation, standing in stark contrast to God’s never failing compassion, forever extended to those who turn away from Him.

The story of Jonah ends with this inconclusive denouement—a pouting prophet being scolded by God for his misplaced compassion. Instead of feeling anguish for the 120,000 lost souls of Nineveh, Jonah is more concerned about the untimely death of his shade-giving vine. Jonah’s presumptuous theology—Nineveh is going to Hell because they are the enemies of my people—supersedes God’s clear directive of sharing His good news of repentance. Just as the people of Nineveh turned from their wicked ways by fasting and putting on sackcloth and ashes during those forty days of repentance, so too, can the vilest and basest of all humans – whether our family, our friends, our enemies and even ourselves – be transformed when given the chance to repent. As we remember this Jewish New Year, let us not shun the opportunity to repent of buried sin, to seek God again with pure hearts, and to restore broken relationships.

The Jewish Holidays Fall 2004

Rosh HaShanah – September 16th - 17th

Yom Kippur – September 25th

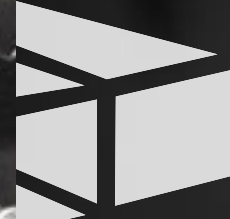
Sukkot – September 30th - October 6th



“And Jonah stalked to his shaded seat and waited for God to come around to his way of thinking. And God is still waiting for a host of Jonahs in their comfortable houses to come around to his way of loving.” –J. Verkuyl

PROFILE: Matt, Sharona and Silas Doll

Matt and Sharona met in Jerusalem seven years ago and have been married for the past six. Sharona grew up in Israel and completed her BA at Dallas Baptist University and an MA in Art Education at Azusa Pacific with an emphasis on International students. Matt studied for his BFA at the Rhode Island School of Design and an MFA in painting at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. He taught for one year at Gordon College before they moved back to Israel in 2002. Sharona has taught English at a local school, a synagogue and as a private instructor. Matt divides his time between teaching, graphic design and studio work. Silas divides his time between three naps a day, regular meals and moderate exercising. After initially battling a case of Whooping Cough he has filled out measurably and is looking forward to crawling, walking and waking up nearly six times every night.



Sept/Oct 2004

אבן פינה
Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation

TenDaysofAwe

Time for Repentance, Reconciliation, and Renewal By GARY ALLEY

This is the time of year when Jews around the world celebrate their new year by commemorating God’s creation of the world 5765 years ago according to tradition. These High Holy Days begin with the festive Rosh HaShanah (“head of the year”) and culminate with the somber Yom Kippur (“day of atonement”). Just as New Year’s spawns resolutions to help change or improve personal habits in the coming year, so too the Jewish New Year is meant –even to a greater degree–to stir deep contemplation and soul-searching. During these “Days of Awe,” we are reminded of our sinfulness and failures – towards God, others, and even ourselves. Insofar as it inspires recognition of our human weakness, the Jewish New Year is primarily a time of repentance, reconciliation, and renewal.

During Elul, the month prior to Rosh HaShanah, the ram’s horn (or shofar) is blown every morning at the synagogue, reminding people that the days of reckoning are approaching. These Ten Days of Awe begin with the celebration of Rosh HaShanah that lasts for two days. Rosh HaShanah, though, is not just a social engagement but also a time of communal introspection, a time for judgment. The Sabbath between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur is Shabbat Shuvah, the “Sabbath of Repentance,” when Hosea 14:2-10, with its opening exhortation “Repent, O Israel!”, is read in the synagogue. This prophet’s cry for repentance prepares the listener’s heart to seek God in the days to come.

On the second day of Rosh HaShanah, the story of Abraham’s binding/sacrifice of Isaac is read (Gen. 22: 1-24). God’s

testing of Abraham’s faith is a visceral reminder of our flesh and blood and its struggle to follow God—what agonizing choices are we willing to make and to what painful lengths will we go? The testing of Abraham awakens us to the sting that necessarily accompanies an unfettered faith: open to humility, longing for repentance, and intent on obedience.

During the seven days following Rosh HaShanah, people seek to change and “clean up” their lives. According to Jewish tradition, during these final days, God is recording His rulings on every person for the coming year whether for favor or ignominy in His Book of Life. By the tenth day, Yom Kippur, time has run out and the books are closed.

On Yom Kippur, people fast from food and water, not even bathing or brushing their teeth for more than 24 hours, thus interpretively enacting the biblical command, “you shall afflict your souls/practice self-denial” (Lev. 16:30-31). On the ancient biblical Day of Atonement, the Israelite High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies just this one time of the year to make a sacrifice for all the sins of the people. Today’s Yom Kippur is understood by Jewish tradition to only atone for the sins between God and man. Sins between a person and his neighbor must be dealt with on a personal basis before Yom Kippur. This especially reminds of us of Jesus’ words,

“If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Matt. 5:23-24

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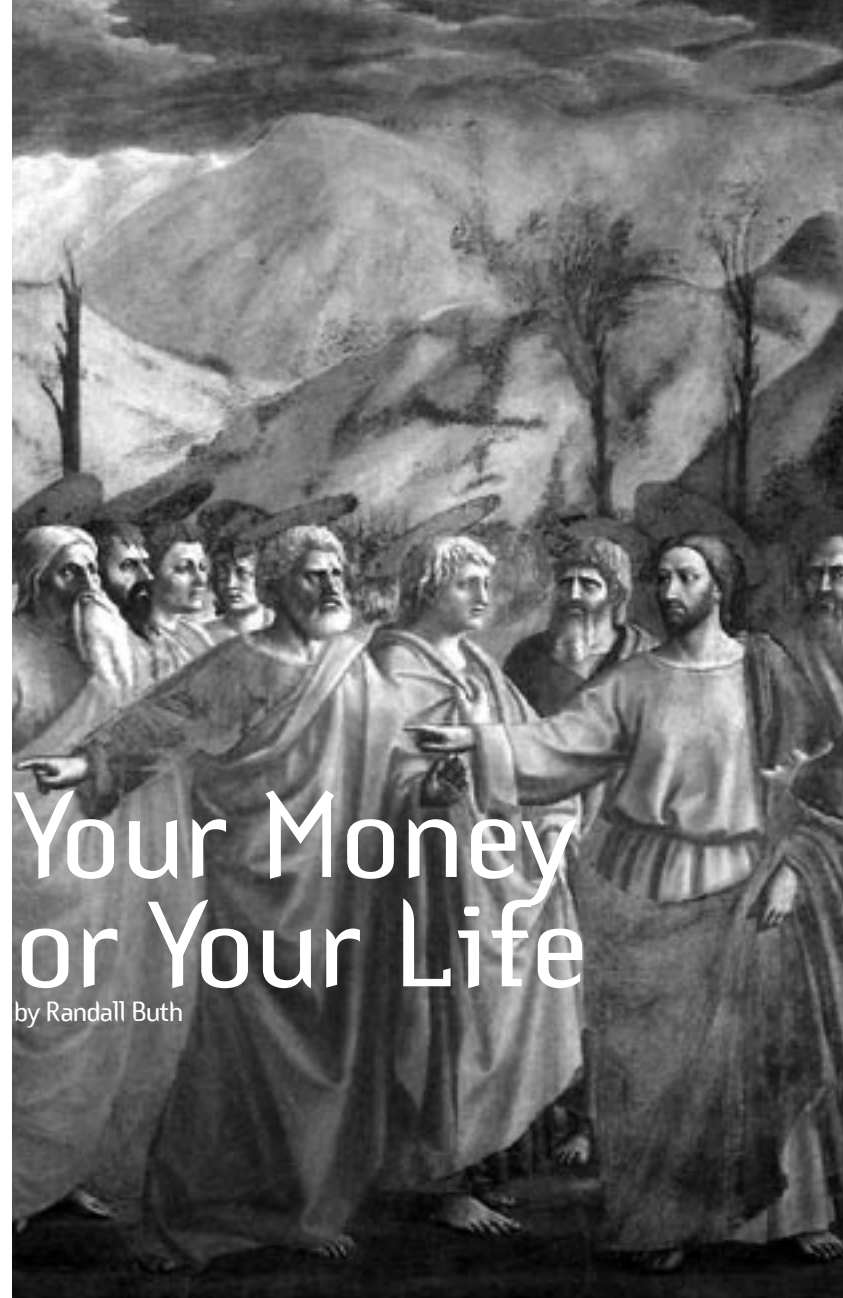
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Sometimes a translation can be dramatically changed when the translator learns more about the culture in which the original events took place. Luke 20:24 is one such instance. During the final week of Jesus' ministry, a crisis developed with the religious authorities. First, Jesus tried to stop the money lenders and the merchants from operating in the Temple. The religious authorities demanded an explanation of his actions, and he responded with a parable about wicked tenants who beat and killed their landlord's son. The authorities knew the parable was spoken against them, and they sent agents to try to catch Jesus in a word against the Roman government so that they could have him arrested and condemned.

Loaded Question

"Should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?" The question was loaded. The pious people saw the Roman government and army as a denial of God's promises to Israel, pagans who defiled the country by their presence. Many longed for the freedom they enjoyed in the days of the Maccabees, and the faithful believers expected God to send his Messiah to liberate them. No self-respecting prophet would tell the pious people that God was happy with Roman rule and that they should be content with the taxes and idolatrous practices of the Roman officials. But if Jesus said anything about a coming day when they would not pay taxes to Rome, the agents of the religious authorities would be able to testify that Jesus advocated the overthrow of Roman rule. Jesus' answer is famous, though its impact on the immediate audience often is underestimated or misunderstood. "Give me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?" "Caesar's." "Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's."



Your Money or Your Life

by Randall Buth

Jesus' Wordplay

I once asked a translator in Africa to explain what his translation of this verse would convey to his people. He responded that the contrast was primarily between money and obligations: pay to Caesar what you owe Caesar and pay to God what you owe him. When pressed further he mentioned tithes and helping the church. This man's answer was true as far as it went, but missed the dynamics of Jesus' wordplay.

The power of Jesus' response comes from a play on the word "image." Human beings are the image of God. Let Caesar have the things he puts his image on, but let every man give his whole life to God. After all, men are created in God's image and they owe him their lives, their time, their money, their property and their families. Such submission is the essence of repentance. Caesar and his ilk might claim a person's specific possessions, but God demands the totality of a person.

The question for the translator is whether the original audience was expected to immediately grasp Jesus' wordplay, and if so, how he can translate this wordplay for modern readers?

Rabbinic Debate

We have evidence that Jesus' contemporaries were already acquainted with religious debate concerning "the image of God." There is a story about Hillel, a famous rabbinic teacher who lived a generation before Jesus:

Once when Hillel concluded his lesson and began walking away his disciples asked him "Master, where are you going?" He answered, "To do a mitzvah [commandment]." They said to him, "And what is the mitzvah you are going to do?" He answered, "To take a bath in the bath house." That's a mitzvah?!" they exclaimed. "Yes," he said. "The images of kings are placed in their theaters and circuses. The one appointed to look after these images scrubs and washes them and they [the kings] pay his wages. Not only that, but he is honored like one of the nobles of the kingdom. Now we who have been created in the image and likeness of God, as it is written, 'For in His image did God make man' [Gen. 9:6], how much more [should we scrub and wash ourselves]." (Leviticus Rabbah 34:3)

This is a well-known story that was preserved within Jewish tradition and was probably heard by all Jewish children growing up in Jesus' day.

It is typical of rabbinic argument, short and to the point: if pagan images are worth washing, how much more are images of God worthy of washing. What is important for the translator and interpreter is not the merit of taking a bath, but the fact that a sage before the time of Jesus could make a comparison between the image of a king and man who, according to Scripture, is the image of God.

My assumption is that Leviticus Rabbah, a rabbinic text dating from about the sixth century A.D., is a historical record of sayings made prior to the time of Jesus. Whether or not this assumption is correct, the text at least indicates that at some point within Jewish culture the image of God could be used understandably in debate.

The fact that Jesus was able to make the same wordplay adds to the probability that it was a known usage in his day. The Gospel story supports the pre-Christian history of the rabbinic story, while the rabbinic story supports the cultural appropriateness of the Gospel story.

Return to God

In Greek, Jesus' answer is literally, "Then give the things of Caesar to Caesar and the things of God to God." The things that belong to Caesar are the things that are stamped with Caesar's image, and the things that belong to God are the things that are stamped with God's image.

But how does one translate for people that do not have the text of Genesis or a tradition of man as God's image? It would not be accurate to say "Give Caesar's idol to Caesar and God's idol to God." The following translation often works: "Give to Caesar what Caesar has made, and what God has made — yourselves — give to God."

Perhaps the most impressive thing about this story is that when Jesus refers to the image metaphor he disarms his opponents and at the same time places a total demand on them. Jesus does not just evade their trap, he calls them back to God.

Good News from the Middle East *Arab and Jewish Children Attending School Together*

From the article: "Israeli bilingual school bridges the gap between 'Shalom' and 'Salaam'" By Daniel Ben-Tal, September 05, 2004
Published in Israel 21c www.Israel21c.org

Rami Abu Wazir gleefully clutched a bright green balloon as he trundled out of class at the end of his first day at the new Bridge Over the Wadi bilingual Hebrew-Arabic school in Kfar Kara.

"It was fun. I've made some new friends - Jewish boys and girls who don't speak my language," exclaimed the 7-year-old second grader from the nearby Israeli Arab village of Kfar Ara, adding that he already knows Hebrew well. "I learned from watching children's television programs, and translated for the other Arab children today. My friends from my old school are jealous," he chuckled, before rushing into his waiting mother's arms. "One day, I'll speak fluent Arabic," vowed Abu Wazir's classmate, Liam Guy-Fox from the Jewish town Karkur. "Today, I learned how to write my name in Arabic. Our teachers asked us each to make a wish for the future - my wish was that I will never have to leave this school," he added.

Bridge Over the Wadi opened on September 1, the first day of the academic year in Israel. For its inaugural year, the school has accepted 106 pupils - half Jewish, half Arab - in four classes from kindergarten to third grade. Each class has a Jewish and an Arab teacher. The 14-strong academic staff also includes specialized music, arts, sports and drama teachers.

The school was established at the initiative of parents from Jewish and Arab towns around Wadi Ara, in central Israel, and is the third bilingual school supported by the Hand In Hand non-profit organization. "It was a long procedure. We

had no experience of establishing a school. First, we had to define what we want," Mohamad Marzouk, from Kfar Kara, father of Said, 4, and May, 3, told ISRAEL21c. "The school will be completely bilingual and bi-national. Its Jewish-Arab character is an overriding consideration. It will promote mutual understanding of each other's culture, and build bridges between Jews and Arabs in Israel. We want to instill our children with democratic values and give them the tools to engage issues of equality. The school will give each nationality space for expression - the children will learn about Jewish and Moslem festivals. Through coexistence, they will become part of each other's reality," said Marzouk.

New classmates Abu Wazir and Guy-Fox first met during a series of informal get-togethers over the summer vacation that helped break the ice. "After they played together, Liam forgot his preconceptions about Arabs. He used to say they are our enemies, because that's the kind of message he heard from his environment," said his mother, Dorit Guy-Fox.

Afnan Younis, from Kfar Ara, who is sending his sons, third-grader Adam and second-grader Ayub, to the school, said he wasn't deterred by the views of some of the people in his village. "We live here together. If each side understands

the other, it will be better for all. My [Arab] neighbors have differing views - some think that my sons should only study with other Arab children. Katzir is a walking distance from our village. Why shouldn't our children learn and play together?" asked Younis.

Kfar Kara local council head Zohair Yahya arranged for the school building - the adjacent high school's former carpentry and electronics workshops - to be converted into classrooms at a cost of some \$200,000. "We are achieving the seemingly impossible in these difficult times. Many parents did not believe that we would succeed in establishing the school, so they dropped out. Now they're sorry. There's enough space to add one more class next year, then it will have to expand, or move," said Yahya, whose youngest son Dored, 4, will enroll next September. "The new Wadi school is the best answer to those who say that Jews and Arabs cannot live together," said Hand In Hand co-director Josie Mendelson.