

Southern Lebanese Christians cont...

Three years later...

Today, approximately 720 families of the former SLA and South Lebanese refugees remain, and they are in a quandary over their future in Israel. Many still have not received permanent residency or citizenship, and most are still trying to navigate the Israeli social services system. In protest, a group of former SLA officers organized themselves to lobby the government for a speedier process of absorption and veteran benefits. Their petitioning tent stood opposite the prime minister's offices for several months, but they were not granted audience with the prime minister, their chief objective.

A number of Israelis have expressed their shame in the matter: "These people guarded us, our families and community for years, and we can't even give them a little respect" Doron Shnafer, speaker for the mayor's office of Kiryat Shmonah.

their contribution towards the security of Israel for nearly two decades. We at JCF hope to play a role in the establishment of this important heritage center.

Our Response:

After fleeing from Lebanon, Jameela Mansoor and her three children (pictured below) were abandoned by her husband making their situation extremely difficult and our need to respond all the more relevant.

JCF has found that vouchers are more reliable and practical when it comes to meeting the most immediate needs. There is minimal food waste and virtually no overhead expense such as warehouses for food storage. In locating needy families and individuals, we coordinate our voucher distribution with local couriers and social workers, making for a very effective and accountable system.

"I am embarrassed to look them in the eyes," said Haim Barbibai, mayor of Kiryat Shmoneh. "It cuts to the heart to see how the government neglects them and forces them to hold out their hands and beg."

As the Passover and Easter holidays approached, Mayor Barbibai personally helped to raise some \$50,000 dollars from Jewish communities in France to help SLA families and others in need, including Israelis, from the surrounding northern regions of Israel.

The Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation currently assists a number of SLA families with rent and utilities assistance, food vouchers and bulk foodstuffs. We also work with the social services agencies when directing assistance to particularly needy families.

Under the direction of Esti Doron, Project Supervisor to the Israeli government social offices that deal with the SLA refugees, a special heritage center is to be established to help preserve and strengthen the SLA society and to educate the surrounding communities about the South Lebanese people and



JCF:

Adrenaline ran high as the war coverage in Iraq was displayed for the world to see. With the conflict coming to an end and new beginnings set in motion, now is the time to channel that adrenaline with the urgency that the message of the resurrection deserves. Each new fragile, delicate beginning needs to be green-housed into fruition and growth. Now is the time to move forward with all the opportunities afforded us, and they are many, in Israel and the region.

There is a new government in Israel, Egypt has released from prison a prominent advocate for human rights and freedom of speech, Saudi Arabia has stated it's women will be given the right to vote and drive cars, and winds of democracy are blowing through Iraq. Freedom has a way of snowballing and paving the way for truth. Let us not disdain new and small beginnings but remain steadfast with the thrust of proclaiming the life-giving message, enabled by the "dunamis" (power) of the Holy Spirit. By word and deed the essence of Jesus' resurrection life will be made known to those with open hearts.

Charles Kopp, Chairman, JCF

Southern Lebanese Christians

Plight after Flight by Yoni Gerrish and Danny Kopp

A brief history of the South Lebanese Army (SLA): From 1975 to 1990 Lebanon was embroiled in its third and bloodiest civil war of that century. Christians and Muslims fought for supremacy in this tiny country on Israel's northern border but further battles ensued along confessional, ideological and political lines splitting the landscape into a crisscross of communities and sects. The Christian-dominated Lebanese army was itself divided and cut off from regions outside its control. Just as other parties received backing from foreign countries, the Christians in the south reached out to Israel for assistance against their common enemies. It seemed to work in Israel's interest to occupy southern Lebanon and aid what was left of the Lebanese Army (now dubbed the "South Lebanese Army") as the various Palestinian and later Shiite Muslim groups launched constant attacks on Israeli towns. Meanwhile the rest of Lebanon had since fallen under Syrian domination and those who had sworn allegiance to Israel were condemned as traitors. For years, civilians and soldiers from both the SLA and the Israeli Army died almost daily and the buffer zone continued to shrink until it finally collapsed on May 24, 2000.

The Israel Defense Forces pullout of South Lebanon May 24, 2000...

Israel's hasty retreat from southern Lebanon occurred in the middle of the night while Lebanese families with connections to the SLA were given but a few hours notice. These majority Christian families were made to decide immediately to either leave their homes, land and all they had worked for or stay and face the fast closing onslaught of Hizbullah, the Shiite Muslim guerillas with whom they had waged a vicious and bitter war. Nearly 1500 South Lebanese families fled for their lives into Israel, without status or international recognition as refugees.

Further complicating the matter, the Israeli ministries of Absorption and Social Services were ill prepared. They provisionally planned to grant citizenship and veteran status only to the SLA officers, and not to an additional 7,500 people. The rest, it was hoped, would filter back into Lebanon, as some did, many of whom faced harsh treatment, long prison sentences or death.

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Good News from the Middle East

(A non-oxymoron)

by Liz Kopp

Studying Hebrew, Arab Christians learn about themselves

Language knows no boundaries and Hebrew is crossing some unusual borders. Rev. Elisabeth Robertson Kennedy, a minister in the Presbyterian Church, is teaching Hebrew to Arab Christians in a seminary in Cairo, Egypt. In these excerpts from her Princeton Alumni Weekly article, she states:

"My students come from Iraq, Syria, Palestine, the Sudan, and Egypt. They are mostly single young men, in their 20's, with college educations. None are wealthy; many grew up in traditional farming villages far from the big cities of the Middle East. They are all Christians.

I am an American clergywoman with the unusual assignment of teaching these young people the Hebrew language, in Arabic. I teach at a seminary in Cairo, which over its 140-year history has produced a majority of the Protestant clergy in the Arabic-speaking Middle East.

My students truly enjoy their Hebrew coursework. The similarities between Arabic and Hebrew are strong, and the students are able to achieve reading fluency much faster than did my students in the U.S., where I was assisting in a Hebrew course at Princeton Theological Seminary. My Cairo students are eager learners. The draw for them: *A clearer sense of what it means to be an Arab Christian.*

How do my students integrate a positive view of their Old Testament scriptures with an Arab perspective on Middle Eastern politics? That is the question that drives their passion for Old Testament study."

Editor's Note: Dr. Randall Buth offers a unique Biblical Hebrew course in Israel this summer for anyone who wants to read their Bible in the original languages. This summer the course will be offered from June 22-August 1, 2003. If you are interested in studying Biblical Hebrew this summer, please check out: www.jerusalemcornerstone.org or www.biblicalulpan.org.



That Small-Fry Herod Antipas, or When A Fox Is Not A Fox

Randall Buth

(Reprinted from the Jerusalem Perspective: www.JerusalemPerspective.com)

This article helps illustrate how a knowledge of the gospels' Semitic background can provide a deeper understanding of Jesus' words and influence the translation process.

Jesus called Herod Antipas a fox (Lk. 13:32), and English speakers and Europeans assume the point is obvious. Foxes are proverbially associated with cleverness and craftiness. Therefore, Jesus must be calling Herod a crafty person. However, it turns out that Jesus was saying something very different to his Hebrew-speaking audience.

The metaphor "fox" has proven deceptive to speakers of European languages. Many New Testament specialists have followed the clear, widely known sense of the Greek word and idiom without first asking an important question: "How was 'fox' used by Hebrew speakers?" The answer reveals a difference in Hebrew and Greek usage, and it should serve as a reminder that one must always interpret metaphors within the proper cultural setting.¹

The context of Jesus' characterization of Herod as a fox is a story that appears in Luke 13:31-33: At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" (New International Version)

Reading the passage in Greek will not help if one is limited to standard Greek reference works. The Greek word for "fox" is *alopex*. The word is as old as the Greek language, and Liddell and Scott state that *alopex* means "fox, *Canis vulpes*" and that it is used proverbially "of sly persons."² The standard Greek dictionary for the New Testament leads to a similar conclusion: Walter Bauer states that "fox" is used figuratively of crafty people.³

In Hebrew "fox" (*shu-AL*) has a wider range of meaning than in Greek or English. First, Hebrew culture shared with the rest of ancient Mediterranean cultures the implication of "fox" as a crafty animal. The Midrash gives an example:

When the other kingdoms are described figuratively in Scripture, they are compared to wild beasts: "Four great beasts, each different from the others, came up out of the sea" [Dan. 7:3], and it is also written, "The first was like a lion" [Dan. 7:4]. But when Scripture speaks of the Egyptians, they are compared to foxes, as it says, "Catch for us the foxes" [Song 2:15]; keep them for the river [i.e., to be thrown into the river, as the Egyptians threw the Israelite babies into the river].

R. Eleazar ben R. Shim'on [end of second century A.D.] said, "The Egyptians were crafty and that is why Scripture compares them to foxes."⁴

There is a similar reference to "fox" in a parable attributed to Rabbi Akiva (early second century A.D.): "A fox was once walking alongside a river and he saw fish swarming from place to place. He said to them, 'What are you fleeing from?'"

"From the nets that humans cast for us," they answered.

The fox said to them, "Wouldn't you like to come up on the dry land? We could live together, you and I, just like our forefathers."

They answered, "You're the one they call the cleverest of animals? You aren't clever. You're a fool. If we are afraid in our own element, how much more out of our element [literally, in our place of death]!"⁵

More important for our understanding of Jesus' words in Luke chapter 13 is a second, very common use of "fox" in Hebrew. Lions and foxes can be contrasted with each other to represent the difference between great men and inferior men. The great men are called "lions," and the lesser men are called "foxes."

The epithet "fox" is sometimes applied to Torah scholars: "There are lions before you, and you ask foxes?"⁶ In other words, "Why do you ask the opinion of foxes, that is, my opinion, when there are distinguished scholars present?"

A certain scholar, thought at first to be brilliant, was by all outward signs inept, and it was remarked about him, "The lion you mentioned turns out to be a [mere] fox."⁷

Sometimes the use of "fox" relates to pedigree: "He is a lion the son of a lion, but you are a lion the son of a fox."⁸ In other words, "He is a distinguished scholar and the son of a distinguished scholar; but, although you are a distinguished scholar, your father is a less-distinguished scholar than his."

The word "fox" can also have moral connotations, as a saying from the Mishnah demonstrates: "Be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes."⁹ This saying could be paraphrased, "It is better to be someone of low rank among those who are morally and spiritually your superiors than someone of high rank among scoundrels."

The phrase, "And infants will rule over them," from the list of curses in Isaiah 3:1-7 to be visited upon Jerusalem and Judah, is interpreted by the Babylonian Talmud as follows: "Infants means foxes, sons of foxes."¹⁰ In this interpretation, "fox" not only assumes the nuance of moral depravity, but also, through the verb "rule," is linked to kingly reign; thus, "foxes, sons of foxes" means "worthless, degenerate rulers who are the descendants of worthless, degenerate rulers."

A rabbinic interpretation of the phrase "Your fury consumes them like straw" (Exod. 15:7) makes the comparison between the Egyptians and foxes using the same proof-text as Song of Songs Rabbah quoted above. Here, however, the focus of the fox metaphor is explicitly on low status.

When any kind of wood burns, there is some substance to it. But when straw burns, there is no substance to it. Since it is said, "And he took six hundred choice chariots," etc. [Exod. 14:7], I might have understood that there was some substance to them [the Egyptians]; but Scripture says, "It consumes them like straw." Just as there is no substance to straw when it burns, so also with the Egyptians. When they burned, it became evident

that there was no substance to them in the face of the calamities that you brought upon them.... There was no kingdom more lowly than Egypt, but it held power a short time for the sake of Israel's glory. When Scripture describes other kingdoms figuratively, it compares them to cedars...but when it describes the Egyptians, it compares them to straw, as it is said, "It consumes them like straw".... Again, when Scripture describes other kingdoms figuratively, it compares them to wild beasts, as it is said, "And four great beasts" [Dan. 7:3], but when it describes the Egyptians, it compares them to foxes, as it is said, "Catch for us the foxes" [Song 2:15].... "It [Egypt] will be the most contemptible of the kingdoms" [Ezek. 29:15].¹¹

Jesus called Herod a fox after some Pharisees reported that Herod wanted to kill Jesus. Jesus' response challenged any such plans: "Tell Herod I've got work to do first." Jesus was not implying that Herod was sly, rather he was commenting on Herod's ineptitude, or inability, to carry out his threat. Jesus questioned the tetrarch's pedigree, moral stature and leadership, and put the tetrarch "in his place." This exactly fits the second rabbinic usage of "fox."

When Jesus labeled Herod a fox, Jesus implied that Herod was not a lion. Herod considered himself a lion, but Jesus pointed out that Herod was the opposite of a lion. Jesus cut Herod down to size, and Jesus' audience may have had an inward smile of appreciation at a telling riposte.

English versions of Luke 13:32 fail on two counts when they use the word "fox." On the one hand, they miss the true dynamics of the rebuke, and on the other hand, they implicitly give a false, positive meaning. What is needed is a colorful English term that can be used across wide audiences. That last requirement is difficult because words of scorn are often excessively vulgar or restricted to rather small subsets of English speakers.

Consider the following list of possibilities for "fox" in its negative sense: weakling, small-fry, usurper, poser, clown, insignificant person, cream puff, nobody, weasel, jackass, tin soldier, peon, hick, pompous pretender, jerk, upstart.

Most of the terms in this list are too colloquial or jocular. "Small-fry," "insignificant person," "peon," and "pompous pretender" may be the best for a wide audience. In context, and referring to a local ruler, "fox" was a humiliating "slap in the face." The English term should convey this intent as nearly as possible.

We need to start translating "fox" with its proper Hebraic cultural meaning. Jesus was direct. Antipas was a *shu-AL* ben *shu-AL* (a fox, the son of a fox), a small-fry.¹²

1. This is true for any language around the world. One should always assume that metaphors carry different connotations until proven otherwise, even in languages with tremendous cultural overlap like English and French: "cow" and "vache" carry completely different implications.

2. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., revised and augmented by Henry Stuart Jones with Roderick McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 75. Under the meaning "sly persons," Liddell and Scott list examples from Solon [6th cent. B.C.] II 5; Pindar [5th cent. B.C.], *Isthmian Odes* 4 [3] 65; Plato [4th cent. B.C.], *Republic* 365c; Eunapius [4th-5th cent. A.D.], *Historicus*, p. 249D; and Diogenianus 2.15, 2.73, 5.15, 7.91.

3. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 41. This lexicon includes many references to Greek works outside the New Testament such as the works of the first-century philosopher Epictetus.

4. Song of Songs Rabbah 2:15, §1.

5. Babylonian Talmud, *Berachot* 61^b.

6. Jerusalem Talmud, *Shevi'it* 39^a, chpt. 9, halachah 5.

7. Babylonian Talmud, *Bava Kamma* 117^a.

8. Jerusalem Talmud, *Shabbat* 12^a, chpt. 10, halachah 5. Compare *Bava Mets'a* 84^a.

9. Mishnah, *Avot* 4:15.

10. Babylonian Talmud, *Hagigah* 14^a.

11. *Mechilta*, *Beshallah* 6; to *Exodus* 15:7 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, p. 137, lines 3-19).

12. Paul Billerbeck has already outlined most of the arguments in this article. See (Hermann Strack and) Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1922-1960), 2:200-201. In English, see T.W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1974 [1949]), p. 276: "The answer of Jesus is defiant... 'fox'... describes an insignificant third-rate person as opposed to a person of real power and greatness. To call Herod 'that fox' is as much as to say he is neither a great man nor a straight man; he has neither majesty nor honor."