

-"Exile" continued.

thought I'd live to see the day – is finally beginning to echo some of that familiarity I once knew in Israel.

We are not sure what God's plans are for us regarding Israel. Maybe one day we'll return for good; perhaps only for visits. But one thing remains certain – against that place are aligned all my fiercest desires, deepest loves and greatest hopes. There does my soul stop at the end of every bend and turn; towards Jerusalem does my heart remain eternally orientated.

A sage once astutely noted, "In Israel, life doesn't go by you - it goes through you." I've often wanted to tweak it: "In Israel, life most certainly CAN go by you. In exile, the contemplation of Israel can enable life to go through you." Being away from Israel has ennobled and endeared the place to me. And through the perpetual deferment but constancy of that love, I've begun to warm to the UK. I've had to learn that the two need not be mutually exclusive for the former to retain its singularity.

We best serve the object of our desire, not necessarily when we frantically strive to substantiate it, but when we choose to live its ever-transcendent and luminous qualities in the here and now, in the ordinary stuff of life, in those things which are otherwise unattractive. Yehuda Amichai, one of Israel's acclaimed poets, once noted while observing a group of tourists in Jerusalem that redemption would come only when the spectators' attention turned from the cherished site towards the subject resting within its precincts – a man who had just bought fruit and vegetables for his family. Through exile and lamentation, longing and reorientation towards Jerusalem, and through a budding reverence for my present lot in life, something of this needed rapprochement between holiness and ordinariness, the lofty and mundane, the desirable and undesirable begins to take place and sow unexpected blessings.

-"Jesus & Two Donkeys" continued.

Matthew as Midrash Meaning Squeezing

Why does Matthew "expand" the Hebrew parallelism into two animals? It is not because Matthew naively followed the Hebrew version of Zech 9:9b without paying close attention to the attendant practicality of riding two donkeys. Rather, Matthew capitalized on the ambiguity in the Hebrew text and used Messianic interpretations (like those based on Zech 9:9, Is 62:11, Ps 118) to provide a picture of the Messiah, ushering in the Kingdom of God, with one donkey free without a rider.

Perhaps Matthew "splits" the Zechariah text, thereby creating two donkeys, for a midrashic purpose: the other donkey is for other disciples and followers to join Jesus in his lowly and redemptive reign. Matthew finds a scriptural and intertextual way of having Jesus say, "Come ride beside me, follow me!" Matthew, like many Jews in the Second Temple period, creatively read the Hebrew Bible for all possible readings. As the humble King leaves the "House of the Poor" riding on a donkey, Matthew's second trailing donkey may well be a message for Jesus' disciples—an invitation to ride along with God's kingdom.

Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you... and I will bless you... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

(Genesis 12:1-3)

Exile, Lamentation and Redemption By Rena Jackson

Two and a half years have passed since I first set up camp in Britain, following my marriage to the love of my life Matt Jackson. Only now do I begin to realise how unprepared I was for the transition from my native country Israel to England. Most would agree it is hard enough having to adjust to a completely new life of matrimony, let alone uprooting to a different country in the same breadth. I, however, left Israel convinced I was tough enough to brave the change. After all, I would not be countenancing English culture for the first time and would not need to learn a new language. How wrong was I to believe that numerous holidays to the UK in former years could offer sufficient insights into everyday British life.

By the same token, Israel is hard for newcomers. A relatively permanent fixture in Israel during the first 26 years of my life, I had seen so many people come and go, and Israel become the nodal point for some of the most powerful of emotions. The language of the Bible, the place where Jesus walked, the City of the Prophets, the locus of one of the most intransigent conflicts of our day – apathy could hardly be a hallmark response. So much holiness and splendid history, often mingled with unforeseen hardships and ordinariness, had broken many a strong one. What I have finally come to understand today, in exile, I did not back then, when cloaked in familiarity.

I would be stunned that so much pivoted on the history and politics of one small country. I was not half as conversant as most outsiders were on the political intricacies, rich historical heritage, or ancient languages of the place. Having been born in Israel, educated in Israeli schools, conscripted to the military, and enrolled at the Hebrew University, I rather considered Israel as just another country to live in. I loved it as one loves familiarity and despised

it, at times, as one despises the hardships driven by familiarity. Passing by Jerusalem's Old City walls on more days than I can begin to recount stirred neither a sense of wonder nor of profound mystery. And while the prized Hebrew language was mine to employ to better ends, English literature was all I wanted to pursue.

Britain eventually broke me though. The erstwhile charm of Shakespeare and Wordsworth, the awe of impeccable English accents borne on the tongues of debonaire and my romance with sky-grazing castles have paled against the hubbub of every day life. Disillusionment has played no small part in my debutante into English society. I'd hoped for integration and had instead become an expat. How much reminiscing about Israel, family, friends and loved ones! How haunted my thoughts with bygone days of plotting under grape vines to woefully discordant Middle East tunes! How many tears shed! How relentless my equation and differentiation of English and Israeli ways! How much undue criticism of my host country! There were days when I thought England would have to give up the ghost, and I, return to the 'land of the living.'

Yet, the breath never fails to visit the valley of dry bones. The process of assimilation has been notably quickening its pace of late. After many months of searching and dithering, Matt and I have finally found a church we are comfortable with, supportive of our talents and to which we've been able to contribute our time and effort. We've had the privilege of helping lead a Christianity Explored course for people interested in learning more about our faith (thumbs up!), and have likewise started a film club, using church equipment and licences to screen and discuss art-house films. I've grown closer to my in-laws, and even begun to form some close friendships with people in my MA course. England – I never



Staff Profile: Sharon and Gary Alley

Sharon Buth Alley was born in Cairo, Egypt and grew up in Sudan and Kenya. She has lived the past eleven years in Jerusalem and has studied Hebrew Bible at the Hebrew University. Gary Alley, raised in Florida, has lived in Jerusalem the past ten years working with the Narkis Street Congregation. He has an M.A. in Religious Studies from the Hebrew University. Gary is the Assistant Director of JCF's Education Department and a staff writer and editor. Sharon and Gary are biblical Hebrew and biblical studies teachers.



 Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation: P.O. Box 54351 Tulsa, OK. 74155 (918)•622•9573

Chairman: Charles M. Kopp, P.O.Box 546, Jerusalem, 91004, Israel. Tel. 972-2-671-4351 chuck@jerusalemcornerstone.org

Israel Director: Jon (Yoni) Gerrish, P.O.Box 546, Jerusalem, 91004, Israel. Tel/Fax 972-2-673-1096 yonib@jerusalemcornerstone.org

U.S. Director: Larry J. Ehrlich, P.O. Box 54351 Tulsa, OK. 74155. Tel. 918-622-9573 larry@jerusalemcornerstone.org

Speaker at Large: Nathan Solomon 3717 Triplet Rd., Lawrenceville, VA. 23868-4303 nathan@jerusalemcornerstone.org

www.jerusalemcornerstone.org

Jesus & Two Donkeys

Straddling, Skiing, or Semitic Meaning-Squeezing? By Brian Kvasnica

Jesus' Triumphal Entry in Matthew 21:1-9 either portrays: (1) Jesus as large enough to require two donkeys, (2) Jesus as an agile cowboy, or (3) the teaching technique of a midrashic Gospel writer. Matthew's version has a donkey (Greek-*onos*) and a colt (Greek-*polos*); Jesus seemingly sits upon them both. Or does he?

Let's recall the story of the Triumphal or Messianic Entry as found in all four Gospels: Mt. 21:1-9; Mk. 11:1-10; Lk. 19:28-40, and Jn. 12:12-19. After leaving Bethany about five days before Passover, Jesus sends a couple of disciples to prepare a donkey (or two—Mt. follows Zech. 9:9b) for his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Around Bethphage, Jesus meets up with the donkey(s) and begins his "Messianic Entry." The crowd spreads garments, waves branches and shouts "Hosanna to the Son of David" (Mt) and "Blessed is the King" (Lk) and "Blessed is the [presently] coming kingdom of our father David" (Mk).

Jesus' Starting Point: The House of the Poor and Afflicted

All four Gospel accounts have Jesus coming from Bethany, possibly meaning "house of the poor" or "house of the afflicted" in Hebrew (*beit ani*). Support for Bethany as a "house of the afflicted" may be found in the early church father Jerome's Latin translation of Eusebius' Holy-Land Gazetteer, in which he refers to (*domus afflictionis*). Further evidence to back such a reading may be found in the Temple Scroll, a unique rewriting of the Pentateuch discovered in cave 11 at Qumran:

You shall also make three places, to the east of the city [of Jerusalem], separate from each other, to which shall come the lepers and those afflicted with discharges...

The connections are inviting: Bethany is approximately three kilometers east of Jerusalem; Bethany is where Jesus healed Simon the leper (Mt 26:6, Mk 14:3) and where Jesus rode on a donkey "lowly" or "humbly" (Hebrew *ani*, Mt 21:5/Zech 9:9). It is noteworthy that we do not find Jesus staying in Jerusalem where the religious authorities reside, but rather in Bethany, "The House of the Poor/Afflicted," an ironic starting point for a messiah's triumphal Entry.

Why a Donkey? Donkeys as Redemptive Players

Donkeys were not always seen as mere "asses." The donkey and the camel were the automobiles of the day. Furthermore, donkeys had been used in redemptive/kingly events in the Hebrew Bible. Jews remembered Solomon's coronation ride upon a donkey in the Kidron Valley where he was anointed at the Gihon spring (1 Kings 1:37-40). The association between Jesus and Solomon, both "sons of David," and its messianic connotation would not have been lost on the crowd at Passover. So, as described by Mt 21:1-9, donkeys were not only practical, they were part of the redemptive and kingly narrative.

Messianic fervor was also heightened, maybe even in a revolutionary or nationalistic manner, through the spreading of garments, the waving of branches and the invocation of Psalm 118:25-26. This Triumphal Entry began at the edge of the city—at Bethpage or "House of the Unripe Fig"—and was pregnant with messianic symbolism: donkeys, Jerusalem, branches, Psalm 118, and Zech 9. This donkey ride would have been the most publicly recognized messianic act of his life; yet it was a journey that began from the "House of the Poor."

But Two Donkeys? Matthew and Biblical Parallelism

Of the four gospels, only Matthew has a colt *and* a donkey for Jesus. The question immediately arises, "Did Jesus straddle the colt and the donkey, or did he use both beasts sitting to the side like a queen [try royalty]? Did he "ski bareback into Jerusalem" like Antonio Banderas in *The Mask of Zoro*? The image is rather evocative! Yet, there's relief for the realistic-minded as we find that in the three other Gospel accounts, only the colt appears. It is possible that Matthew is simply referring to a donkey leading its colt, but his exegetical style strongly conflicts with a "natural" reading. So then, why does Matthew's account connect Jesus with two animals?

Backing up, we observe how Biblical Hebrew often employs paired synonyms to poetically describe the same object. For instance, in Psalm 15:1, "LORD, who may dwell in your *sanctuary*? Who may live on your *holy hill*?" Here the sanctuary and holy hill refer to one place—the Temple. This same type of parallelism can be found in Zech 9:9b, "behold, thy King comes to you: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon a donkey, and upon a colt the foal of a donkey." Whereas Mark and Luke do not cite Zech. 9:9 and John solves the two-donkey dilemma by explicitly combining it into a "donkey's colt" (Jn. 12:15b), Matthew deliberately uses Zechariah 9:9b, making reference to the two animals or garments of the animals three times (21:2b, 5, 7).

On Feb. 12th -13th, Israeli Arab Christian homes, businesses, and cars were burned and destroyed in a Druze pogrom in the Galilee village of Mughar. More than one million dollars' worth of property was damaged and approximately eleven people were injured.

Return to the Dark Ages— Libel and Pogrom in Israel

By Danny Kopp

"Welcome to Falluja!" is spray-painted in bold red Hebrew letters. No, this is not the former insurgent stronghold of Iraq pounded and purged by American Marines some months ago. And no, al-Qaeda has not learned how to publicise their slogans in Hebrew. This is Mughar, a sleepy town in the Galilean hills of Israel that recently experienced violence and destruction reminiscent of Falluja.

Late on a Thursday evening this past February, a crowd of Druze youth gathered in the town centre and began chanting anti-Christian slogans, angered

by a rumour that Christian teenagers had disseminated pornographic pictures of Druze girls on the internet. The rumour would later be proven false – a cruel libel spun by one devious Druze boy who was upset with his Christian classmate– but not soon enough to quell the flames that followed. For after only three days, most of the Christian businesses were burnt down, as were many Christian homes and vehicles, and scores of families had fled fearing for their lives.

Christians constitute only a small minority in Mughar, about one fifth of a population of 18,000, along with a nearly equal amount of Muslim inhabitants. The remaining 60 percent are Druze, a tight-knit community and religious sect - an eleventh-century offshoot of Islam. Throughout history the Druze have been a small and vulnerable group that has shrewdly ensured their survival by swearing allegiance to the ruling power of the day, whoever that might be. So for instance, today, the Druze serve in the Israeli Army in higher proportionate numbers than even the Jews, while their Druze brothers in Lebanon and Syria are loyal to their respective Lebanese and Syrian armies.

On the night of the pogrom in Mughar, the Druze were heavily armed owing to their membership in the Israeli army. Only a miracle prevented any loss of life after reams of automatic weapons, scores of stun-grenades and even a few hand-grenades were lobbed by the Druze mob. I, along with Matthew Doll and Francois Smit, visited the site of carnage on Sunday evening, Feb. 13th. While interviewing some local Christian youth, a stun-grenade was thrown from a speeding car landing just meters away from us as police stood idly by. The Israeli police weren't about to risk their lives to intervene on behalf of two "feuding" minorities.

The Christian youth of Mughar told us that only 15 teenage boys showed up at the partially damaged Catholic Church that Sunday morning, down from their usual attendance of nearly a thousand. I cannot recall, at any given point during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, anyone being afraid to attend synagogue, mosque or church and yet this incident barely made international headlines.

Also untold is the story of five Druze families who have accepted Jesus and become Christians

awhile before the riots. Their homes were burned during the riots and they were forced to flee because of their newfound faith in Christ. A local Messianic Jewish congregation took the five refugee families under their care.

It is not without warrant that so many residents in this country have come to doubt and lose their faith in this cynical and treacherous land. There have been massacres perpetrated by different religious and ethnic groups since the days of the Bible. The questions to be asked are not "why or how did this happen" but "what can the Body of Christ do to help both the victims and the violent?" How can God's kingdom be realized in this very fractured community just down the road from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. I asked one Christian resident of Mughar what he might do to defend himself. His answer drove home the fragility of the situation—"If Jesus, who suffered and for whom we now suffer, doesn't save us, then who will?"

