

How Beautiful Upon the Mountains...Good News!

As we shared in our last issue, we have been praying about changing the name of this magazine from SELAH to something that more fully expresses our work in bringing the Gospel to Jewish people and we felt that 'BESORAH' encapsulates our calling. In this short article, I will try to unpack something of this wonderful Hebrew word!

Firstly, we find 'besorah' and its root initially used to mean 'good news' or 'good tidings'. In Jer 20:15, it is used in the announcement of the birth of a son. In 1 Sam 31:9 and 1 Chron 10:9, it is used to proclaim victory in battle. 'Mevaser' (מבשר) is a form of this word and means harbinger, or 'bringer-of-good-news', as in Isaiah 40:9 and Isaiah 61:1.

'Besorah' comes from the root 'בשר' – flesh! How does that work? Well, initially, upon bringing or receiving good news, a feast of celebration ensued. At the very least, there would be some 'evidence' of the news. In 2 Sam 18:22, Joab discouraged Ahimaaz from bringing news of Absalom's death to David, as he had 'no tidings ready'. In 1 Chron 10:9 (and 1 Sam 31:9), the Philistines took Saul's head and armour, to 'carry tidings' to their idols and their people. So, some evidence was included.

If we look further at this word in context, we can see that the *reputation* of the news-bearer was of significance. In the passage about Absalom's death (2 Sam 18:20), Joab restrained Ahimaaz further from bringing the news, as it wasn't fitting for Ahimaaz, being a priest, to do so ('thou shalt not bear tidings this day'. Lit. 'you are not a man of good news, today').

Also, in 1 Kings 1:42, we read, 'and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good tidings.'

'Mevaser' can literally be interpreted to mean 'to make flesh' or, to make something manifest. Is 60:6 says, 'The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth (יבשרו) the praises of the LORD.'

By now, no doubt you are perhaps thinking of what is written in John 1:14, how that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' Another verse comes to mind: 'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: *God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels,*

preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.' (1 Tim 3:16).

Hebrews 10:5 says, 'Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but *a body hast thou prepared me,*' which is a quote from Psalm 40:6. Psalm 40:6, however, reads as follows: 'Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; *mine ears hast thou opened.*' How do we reconcile these two renderings, if they are supposed to be the same verse? This is, in fact, one of the objections that Jewish people can bring up as an argument against believing in Jesus as Messiah. So how are we to understand this apparent conflict?

First of all, the writer to the Hebrews takes his quote from the Septuagint (a Jewish translation of the Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek). So, it is the Jewish scholars, in their wisdom, who saw fit to translate this verse in this way. It is not a 'Christian corruption'. But what was the thinking behind it? I can only offer the following:

The Hebrew word for 'opened' (literally, 'dug') in Psalm 40:6, is 'karah' (כָּרַח). But it is also used to mean 'to prepare', regarding preparing a feast (2 Kings 6:23)! But how do 'ears' and 'body' reconcile? Not being a scholar, I can only offer some conjecture:

The Greek word in the Septuagint translation - 'soma' - is used for 'body' or 'slave' (see Matt 5:30 & Rev 18:13). There

was provision in the Law for a slave to commit his life to his master by professing his loyalty and having his ear pierced by an awl (Ex 21: 1-6). In Ex 21:3, we read: 'If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself.' The Hebrew literally reads, 'if he came in with his body, he shall go out with his body.' Here we see a direct connection between one's 'ear' and 'body'. Is substituting 'body' for 'ear' legitimate, though? Well, there is such a mechanism in translation known as 'synecdoche'. This is used when a writer wants to use a 'part' to refer to the 'whole' and vice versa (think: '9/11' or 'Lockerbie').

So perhaps the translators of the Septuagint wanted to convey the overall concept of 'obedience'(surrender) as

well as present the truth of the 'mystery of godliness' – that Yeshua was to be the Son of God, come in the flesh in a body prepared for Him! In any case, I bow to the superior knowledge of the Jewish translators of this verse!



In bringing the Good News of Yeshua to Jewish people, we seek to 'shew forth' the Gospel with our very lives, as well as with our words, having 'our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace' (Eph 6:15). As Isaiah says: 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet (i.e. – life, witness) of him-that-bringeth-good-tidings (mevasser), that publisheth peace; that bringeth-good-tidings (mevasser) of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!' (Is 52:7)

God bless you!

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