

# The Folio

Bulletin of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center, a research center of the Claremont School of Theology

Volume 20, Number 1

Spring 2003

## Reading Zephaniah in the Manuscripts

Marvin A. Sweeney  
Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center  
Claremont School of Theology

Zephaniah is the ninth book in the sequence of the Twelve Prophets of the Hebrew Bible. Although the book contains only three chapters, interpreters throughout time have looked to Zephaniah as a very influential prophet. Zephaniah is well represented in the manuscript traditions of all versions of the Hebrew Bible in both Judaism and Christianity. Each tradition understands the prophet differently.



The Masoretic Hebrew manuscript tradition of Zephaniah, represented by the famed eleventh Leningrad (B 19A), represents Zephaniah as a true prophet of liberation. According to Zephaniah 1:1, the prophet lived during the time of King Josiah's (r. 640-609 B.C.E.) program of religious reform and national restoration following the collapse of the Assyrian empire in the late-seventh century B.C.E. Zephaniah's calls for the rejection of foreign gods and his anticipation of the restoration of Jerusalem and Judah after years of Assyrian imperial domination were a major statement of support for Josiah's efforts to achieve Judean independence and to reunite the twelve tribes of Israel. Indeed, the prophet's characterization of the "Day of YHWH" draws upon the language of sacrifice to portray G-d's judgment against those who would continue to worship pagan gods. Such imagery provides the basis for Zephaniah's appeal to the people to "Seek the L-rd, all you humble ones of the land who carry out the L-rd's laws! Seek righteousness! Seek humility!" The prophet's appeal presumes his audience's support in carrying out the king's efforts to rebuild an independent Judah to which all those exiled by the Assyrians

could return. Although Jews of the Middle Ages lived long after the Assyrian period, they would read Zephaniah as a book that called for the end of oppression by the Romans, Muslims, Crusader armies and others, and the eventual restoration of Jewish life in the land of Israel.

The Septuagint Greek manuscript tradition of Zephaniah, represented by the equally famed fourth century C.E. Codex Vaticanus (Gr. 1209), provides a Greek version that reads the text somewhat differently. Most interpreters maintain that Zephaniah was translated into Greek by the Hellenistic Jewish community of Egypt during the third or second centuries B.C.E. to provide Greek-speaking Jews with a text that could be used for liturgical or instructional purposes. With the emergence of Christianity, the Septuagint ultimately became the Old Testament of many ancient Christian communities. In general, the Greek translation attempts to provide its readers with a stylistically improved and aesthetically pleasing text. It tends to eliminate duplications and inconsistencies, such as the problematic statement, "and those who cause the wicked to stumble," in the Masoretic version of Zephaniah 1:3. But whereas the Masoretic text presumes the audience's support for Zephaniah's appeal to support Josiah's program, the Septuagint slightly reworks the text to portray an audience that does not do G-d's will, "Seek the L-rd, work at doing (G-d's) law, and seek righteousness and answer to them!" When read in the context of early Christianity, such statements presume judgment against Israel and prepare the way for an eschatological reading of the book in which the restoration of the dispersed exiles to Israel functions as a symbol for G-d's gathering of all humanity at the end of time.

Zephaniah appears in several different forms among the scrolls from the Judean wilderness. The Murabba'at scroll of the Twelve Prophets is not strictly speaking a Dead Sea scroll since it was discovered some eleven miles south of the site of Qumran in a cave by the Wadi Murabba'at. It dates to the second century C.E., and contains

*continued on page 7*

# The Folio

The Newsletter of  
The Ancient Biblical  
Manuscript Center

## Table of Contents

Reading Zephaniah in the Manuscripts <i>Dr. Marvin A. Sweeney</i>	1
Mount Athos Update: Expedition Ready for Launch to Isolated Region of Mount Athos <i>Michael B. Phelps</i>	3
<i>shedding light</i>	
Honor Roll of Donors	4
Publications/Events	6
Staff News	6
<i>on the</i>	
<i>documentary</i>	
<i>history of</i>	
<i>Judaism and</i>	
<i>Christianity</i>	
Editors	Marvin A. Sweeney Dolly Bush Meg Ferris Brent Smith
Published by ABMC	\$40 (US)
Annual Subscription	1325 North College Avenue Claremont, CA 91711 909.621.6451
For More Information	tradents@abmc.org

# Mount Athos Project Update

## *Expedition Ready for Launch to Isolated Region of Mt. Athos*

Michael B. Phelps

On June 17, the Mount Athos Manuscripts Digital Library will launch its first digital photography expedition to the Grecian peninsula of Mount Athos. The project team—composed of Michael Phelps, Director of Special Projects, Nicholas Zarkantzas, Project Director, and Stephen Psarras, Computer Consultant—will climb the cliffs of Kafsokalivia, an isolated region of Mount Athos, to digitally photograph manuscripts that have rarely been glimpsed by scholars.

Just days before this ground-breaking expedition, scholars from the U.S., Great Britain, Egypt, and Greece will gather in Thessaloniki for a two-day international advisory meeting for the project.



*The cliffs of Kafsokalivia, as seen from Aegean Sea.*

## *Major Grant from the Seaver Institute*

The project's first digital photography expedition to Mount Athos is made possible by a generous \$250,000 grant from the Seaver Institute of Los Angeles that will support equipment purchases and travel in 2003. The Seaver Institute charts a unique course among southern California foundations. It identifies visionary projects and then provides them the initial support necessary to enter new fields of research. The ABMC is proud that the Seaver Institute has enthusiastically endorsed the Mount Athos Manuscripts Digital Library. Indeed, in an unexpected move, the Seaver Institute supplemented the budget we requested so that the project can purchase back-up digital photography equipment. In this way, the project can continue uninterrupted even if a high-end piece of technological equipment fails while the project team is on Mount Athos, far from any major city.

The ABMC will use the Seaver Institute grant to place \$140,000 in high-end digital photography equipment at its new project office on the campus of the Patriarchal Institute, the ABMC's project partner in Thessaloniki. From there—just a four-hour drive from Mount Athos—regular digital photography expeditions can embark to Mount Athos quickly and at a much reduced cost.

The Seaver Institute grant will also cover two digital photography trips this year to Mount Athos (June and October), and support the work of project cataloguers to record the contents of the manuscripts of Kafsokalivia.

## *Kafsokalivia and Its Manuscripts*

Kafsokalivia is not one of the monasteries of Mount Athos, but instead a region of the peninsula that is famous for its history as a favored area of hermit monks. Its unusual name, which can be translated as "burnt huts," derives from the activities of a 14<sup>th</sup> century monk by the name of Maximos. Tradition states that whenever another hermit built a hut within view from his own, Maximos would burn his hut and move further up the hills of the peninsula of

Mount Athos.

Kafsokalivia holds a collection of some 230 manuscripts. The project team, representing ABMC and the Patriarchal Institute in Thessaloniki, will be the first to document these manuscripts, about which little is known. Getting to Kafsokalivia requires landing a small boat at the jetty below, and climbing steep trails for more than a hour to reach this monastic outpost. Without the cooperation of the monks, our work would not be possible. Nicholas Zarkantzas, Project Director, recently visited Kafsokalivia and found the librarian to be enthusiastic for our project and scholarly access to the manuscripts under his charge. The monks of Kafsokalivia and several employees of the monasteries that are renovating buildings there will help haul more than 250 pounds of photographic equipment up the steep trails.

*continued on page 7*

## Honor Roll of Donors — 2002

The ABMC is pleased to recognize the individuals and organizations who generously supported the work of ABMC in the year 2002. Each of you, through your generosity, makes possible the preservation of precious Jewish and Christian manuscripts which are our sole sources for knowledge of the text of the Bible today.

We also thank our donors who gave to the Mount Athos Digital Library and Preservation Project. Your gift makes possible a groundbreaking endeavor.

### Foundation Grants

The Seaver Institute  
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation  
Isabel Foundation

### President's Circle (\$5000+)

Crisler Biblical Institute  
Janice McCoy Miller  
Gene Scott

### Lifetime Scroll Club

Carl E. Hanson\*

### Scroll Club (\$1000+)

Betty Anne Arenz  
Michael & Ruby Butchko  
Layne & Minnie Carson  
Lynne & Ross Kogel  
John S. Park  
Bennie & Lois Phelps  
Joseph & Jean Platt  
Gloria Priest  
James & Dora Sanders  
Stuart & Janis Simon

### Codex Club (\$500+)

Duane & Sue Brothers  
Patricia Bush †  
John & Ruth Cargille  
Stewart & Konnie Dadmun  
Robert Gruwell  
George W. Heydweiller  
John O. Reynolds †

### Folio Club (\$250+)

Wallace & Elizabeth Beitzel  
Irwin Borowsky  
James Borthwick  
Charles & Patricia Bush  
Bill Cisne  
Stephen & Patti Delamarter  
J. David Fitzsimons  
Henry & Vi Jones  
Hal & Gretchen Lainson  
William & Mary Laub  
John Mancini  
Peter & Bethany Plesinger  
James & Marguerite Royse  
Verina Saunders  
Frederick L. Walsh

### Papyrus Club (\$100+)

Richard & Ann Alexander  
Barbara E. Arndt  
Ronald R. Atkins  
Marjorie Atkins Steinhouse  
& David Atkins  
George C. Banta  
William J. Barry  
Julia Baum-Coldwater †  
Albert & Joann Bibb  
Jerry & Eleanor Black  
William & Frances Bray  
Charles & Mary Brewer  
Kilbee & M.L. Brittain  
Joyce Miriam Brooks  
Clay & Nancy Bush  
Darvin & Betty Carpenter  
James H. Charlesworth  
Christ Community Church (RCA)  
David & Dena Cleaver-  
Bartholomew  
John & Faith Conklin  
Harold & Mary Davis  
Theodore W. DeLooze  
Larry Doyle  
Helen Wig Elgin  
Robert & Sarah Elgin  
John & Jean Farnham  
Nathan J. Frank  
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Gebhart  
Mary E. Geyer  
Dennis & Opal Gill  
James & Irene Gillespie  
Pauline F. Gilliland  
Edward & Marilyn Gregor  
Rachael & Paul Guth  
Jack & Marcia Heller  
Adrian Herren  
Mr. Abraham Heschel  
Christine & Ronald Heusser  
Basil & Mary Hicks  
Stanley & Carol Hopper  
Harold & Margaret Hultgren  
Donald & Sara Hutchison  
John Hutchison  
Howard & Jean Jamieson  
Carolyn Jones  
Richard & Doris Jones  
Howard & Janet Kee  
Stanley & Frances Kern  
Norma Kershaw  
Margaret & Martin Kleinman

Ezra & Hanni Koch  
Kay Koenig  
Franklin H. Kohutek  
Robert Kraft †  
George & Carol Landes  
J. Philip & Else Landis  
Mark & Anna Lile  
Larry Dean Loftis  
Francis Marshall  
Frank McClanahan &  
Mary Benson  
Charles & Norma Jean McGhee  
Joann C. McKelvey  
Margaret & George McRory  
Patrick E. McSweeney  
James & Loyce McWee  
Victor Gold & F. Meginness  
George & Eathel Mendenhall  
Professor & Mrs. John Miller  
Michael & Betty Milroy  
Lucetta Mowry  
John Murphy & Meg Ferris  
James & Dorothy Nichols  
James & Catherine O'Connor  
Phillip & Linda Pattillo  
Eugene O. Pearson  
Jean & Thomas Perkins  
Mr. Victor Peterson  
Leo J. Pondelick  
Patricia Watts Prather  
Donald & Patricia Range  
Cornish & Elsie Rogers  
William & Elizabeth Rouse  
Arthur & Ruth Ryan  
Charles & Emily Sampson  
Edwin & Fay Schoenberger  
Esther & Herbert Seaman  
Hershel & Judith Shanks  
Herbert & Renate Sorensen  
Irving & Helen Sparks  
David L. Takle  
Ladd & Cherry Thomas  
Charlotte L. Trego  
David J. Valleskey  
Richard & Nancy Warner  
Jerry & Arlene Waxman  
Richard & Barbara Weis  
Vernon & Verna Weis  
Elmer & June Wheeler  
Caroline & George Whipple  
Harry & Audry Whitehurst  
Alexander & Penelope Wilkie

### Fragment (\$35+)

Gerald L. Alderson  
James G. Anderson  
John L. Anderson  
Anonymous  
Mrs. Philip Attalla  
Lynn & Bruce Attig  
William & Ruth Auld

Robert M. Bader  
 Fred Barrett  
 Paul & Sandy Beauregard  
 Earl & Deloris Bengtson  
 Hendrik & Michele Bossers  
 Galt & Doris Bowen  
 Joong Sung Cha  
 Hillel Cohn  
 Marla & Gary Colledge  
 Frank & Elizabeth Cross  
 Virginia West Davidson  
 Vinton & Marion Dearing  
 Donald & Mary Decker  
 Detroit Baptist Theological  
 Seminary Library  
 Diane Divelbess  
 Walter A. Donaldson  
 Marie R. Drollinger  
 Arthur & Louise Durlleser  
 Paul Ehrenfest  
 Mary Jane & H. Elwood  
 Craig & Ginny Evans  
 Melvin & Eleanor Finkbeiner  
 Edward & H. Grace Fish  
 Ellen J. Fisher  
 James & Elizabeth Fuller  
 Ruth E. Gilbert  
 Dane & Judith Gordon  
 Roger & Rebecca Handyside  
 Robert & Dorothy Harder  
 Leslie Hayes  
 Margeret & Herbert Hellgren  
 David & Marcia Hulan  
 Lawrence & Masako Iboshi  
 Steve & Diane Islander  
 Kevin & Jane James  
 John & Helen Kaufman  
 Alexander & Ann Lauterbach  
 Ronnie & Andrew Lowenstein  
 Darrell D. Lynn  
 LaVerne & Charlotte Lyon  
 Peter & Alice Machinist  
 Marilyn W. McCaman  
 Michael & Tammy McKinney  
 Julius & E. Muriel Moster  
 David J. Paul  
 Carol B. Pitman  
 Harold L. Plon  
 Peter Powers  
 James & Dolores Quinnelly  
 Stanley Rainier  
 John & Martha Reumann  
 Donald & Dorothy Rhoades  
 Stanislav & Jarmila Segert  
 George Butler & Judith Slentz  
 Reuben J. Swanson  
 Esther & Harold Taus  
 John & Mary Townsend  
 Petronella Verwijis  
 Barbara A. Walton  
 Harry & Gay Washburn  
 Macil & Burl Watson  
 Virginia P. Webb

Beth & Paul Wehrle  
 E. David & Anita Weinstein  
 Mary Wieand  
 Sherrill & Rianna Williams  
 Richard & Margaret Woodruff  
 William & Helen Zucconi

#### *Friends*

Claire Austin  
 Robert K. Bennett  
 Gavriel Berghouse & Vicki Stone  
 Catherine E. Brown  
 Donald & Margaret Brown  
 Angela Burdge  
 Richard W. Caster  
 Joe & Audine Coffin  
 Sam & Laverne Cohen  
 Suzanne M. Cook  
 James A. Despot  
 Reginald & Ilse Fuller  
 Winton & Joyce Gibbons  
 W. Fred & Jean Graham  
 Howard & Dorothy Granger  
 Sharon L. Gravois  
 W. D. & Trudy Groth  
 Manning & Lorena Hall  
 Marilee Kilbert  
 Clarence & Elsie Knippa  
 De Maris A. Koenig  
 Donald & Gloria Kraft  
 Robert & Alicia Krattli  
 Mr. & Mrs. Walter Lafferty  
 Henry R. Mann  
 David F. Maurer  
 Herbert J. Murray  
 Dorothy Paul  
 Patricia & Thomas Paulsen  
 Ethel & Ferdell Rounds  
 Edward D. Schoch  
 Dale & Miriam Smith  
 Scott & Sandra Stone  
 Wilbur B. Tate  
 William & Sandra Tims  
 Dawn Truex  
 Joan Williamson  
 Alan & Cheryl Zabel  
 George & Rosemary Zettler

#### *Tribute Gifts In Honor Of*

Dr. Mouzon Biggs, Jr., given by  
 Duane & Sue Brothers  
 Bernice Anderson Bray, given by  
 William & Frances Bray  
 Dr. James A. Durlleser, given by  
 Arthur & Louise Durlleser  
 Franklin & Florence Fowler in  
 honor of their 65 years of  
 marriage  
 Dr. Robert and Mrs. Elaine  
 Frank, in honor of their 50th  
 anniversary, given by  
 Esther & Harold Taus

Mrs. Francis T. Marshall, given  
 by Francis Marshall  
 Carol D. McGhee, given by  
 Charles & Norma Jean  
 McGhee  
 Mount Angel Abbey,  
 St. Benedict, OR, given by  
 Ladd & Cherry Thomas  
 Michael Phelps, given by  
 Bennie & Lois Phelps  
 Pastor Bob Rahn, Methodist  
 Missionary, given by  
 John & Jean Farnham  
 James Sanders, for his impact,  
 given by  
 Donald & Anne Bentley  
 James Sanders, in honor of his  
 50th Anniversary, given by  
 Solomon & Thelma  
 Borodkin  
 James Sanders & Family, given  
 by Layne & Minnie Carson  
 James Sanders, given by  
 James H. Charlesworth  
 James Sanders, given by  
 David H. Nienas  
 Dr. Esther Taus, given by  
 Dorothy Paul

#### *Tribute Gifts In Memory Of*

Philip Atalla, MD, given by  
 Mrs. Philip Attalla  
 Elizabeth Hay Bechtel, given by  
 Vinton & Marion Dearing  
 Bill Gilliland, given by  
 Pauline F. Gilliland  
 Jean S. Gruwell, given by  
 Robert Gruwell  
 Abraham Heschel, given by  
 Sylvia Heschel  
 Stanley Romaine Hopper, given  
 by Stanley & Carol Hopper  
 Dr. William R. Irwin,  
 RSV Translator, given by  
 Dale & Miriam Smith  
 Edna S. Marshall, given by  
 Francis Marshall  
 Rev. Evelyn Mertz, given by  
 Macil & Burl Watson  
 John F. Priest, given by  
 Gloria Priest  
 Dr. Ernest W. Saunders, given  
 by Verina Saunders  
 Randy Sherman, given by  
 Elizabeth Sherman  
 Sophie Walus, given by  
 Robert Walus  
 David Wieand, given by  
 Mary Wieand  
 Mary Kay Winteringham, given  
 by Robert K. Bennett  
 William M. Zucconi, given by  
 Helen Zucconi

## Welcome David Simeone De Troyer

The ABMC is pleased to announce the birth of David Simeone De Troyer on Tuesday, April 17, 2003, to Professor Kristin De Troyer and her husband, Remco Kroon. Mother, father, and baby David are now all at home and doing fine!

## Staff News

We are both proud and sad to announce that Arik Greenberg, Research Associate for Scholarly Services, has recently been appointed as Visiting Professor of New Testament Theology at Loyola Marymount University for the 2003-2004 academic year. Arik will be leaving the ABMC in the Fall to fill this position. He has served the ABMC superbly in many capacities and will be sorely missed.

ABMC welcomes Sarah Fields, a Claremont Graduate University Ph.D. student in English to its staff. Sarah is assisting in grant research and writing for the Mt. Athos Project.

ABMC also welcomes Brent Smith, a Ph.D. student in the History of Christianity program of Claremont Graduate University's School of Religion. He will become the new Research Associate for Scholarly Services.

## AMEX & Discover Credit Cards Now Processed!

ABMC can now accept donations by American Express and Discover credit cards! You can give right now by filling out the tear-off portion of the envelope enclosed in this issue of *The Folio* or by contacting us at (909) 621-6451 or [tradents@abmc.org](mailto:tradents@abmc.org).

If you would like to become a pledge member and have your monthly gift automatically deducted from your credit card (American Express, Discover, MasterCard, or Visa), please indicate this wish on the tear-off portion of the enclosed envelope or call us to make arrangements.

## Publications and Upcoming Events

### James A. Sanders

Due to an arthroscopy on my right knee and a TKR on it still to come, my activities have been very restricted, and I have turned down invitations for months to come. I did, however, lecture at Shepherd University in January and for the Biblical Archaeology Society's travel seminar in February, both in Los Angeles; I also preached locally on two occasions—all because the hosts were gracious enough to drive me to and from the respective venues. Being thus confined, I have been limited to research and writing during this period, which included studies on current Hebrew Bible Editions, Origen, and the First Christian Testament.

My contribution to the Emanuel Tov Festschrift, "The Modern History of the Qumran Psalms Scroll and Canonical Criticism," appeared in *Emanuel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 394-411.



### Marvin A. Sweeney

"Abraham in Jewish Tradition." Panel on Abraham in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. University of Nevada, Las Vegas, NV, March 4, 2003.



The Impact of Messianism on Modern Jewish Thought. "The Messiah in Contemporary Judaism and Christianity" The 11th Annual Jewish Christian Dialogue, Palm Beach Atlantic University, West Palm Beach, FL, March 30, 2003.

"Reading the Prophets after the Shoah/Holocaust." University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, March 31, 2003.

"The Twelve Prophets." Academy for Jewish Religion, Los Angeles, California, April 27-June 8, 2003.

"The Five Books of Moses." Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, California, May 27-June 13, 2003.

### **Mount Athos Update cont.**

#### **International Advisory Meeting in Thessaloniki**

On June 12 and 13, scholars and other experts from the U.S., Great Britain, Greece and Egypt will meet at the Patriarchal Institute in Thessaloniki to discuss the accomplishments of the Mount Athos Manuscripts Digital Library and help chart its next steps.

The meeting will focus on the Electronic Catalogue portion of the project. The ABMC plans to create an extensive library of digital images of the manuscripts of Mount Athos, but this image library will be unusable without a sophisticated catalogue that will help scholars and students identify the specific manuscripts they need for their research. Standard formats have long existed for cataloguing the books and periodicals that one finds in any library. The problem is that no shared standards exist for cataloguing ancient and medieval manuscripts, and several schools of thought have developed. Unfortunately, computer databases are very unforgiving and do not tolerate ambiguity. Shared standards for cataloguing manuscripts must be decided in advance.

The participants in the international advisory meeting will include experts in the electronic cataloging of manuscripts, as well as students and scholars who represent the end-users of the project. This meeting in Thessaloniki will not solve all the problems of creating a catalogue of Mount Athos manuscripts, but it will initiate a broad scholarly dialogue. Our goal is to insure that the digital images of Mount Athos manuscripts will be easily accessible to scholars and students around the world.


The list of participants in this first international advisory meeting includes:

*Consuelo Dutschke*, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts for Columbia University. Dr. Dutschke directs the Digital Scriptorium, a collaborative project of Columbia and the University of California Berkeley to decide standards for electronic catalogues of manuscripts.

*Robert Allison*, Professor of Religion at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Dr. Allison is completing a catalogue of the manuscripts of Philotheou Monastery of Mount Athos.

*Father Justin* of St. Catherine's Monastery of the Sinai. Father Justin is leading the monastery's project to create a digital image library of its own manuscripts.

The Claremont School of Theology will be well represented at the meeting by *Dennis MacDonald*, Professor of New Testament, and *John Dickason*, Director of the Library.

Your financial support is necessary to continue the work of the Mount Athos Manuscripts Digital Library and make the manuscripts of Mount Athos easily accessible to students and scholars for the first time. For more information about the project, please visit the project website at [www.mamdl.org](http://www.mamdl.org). 

#### **Reading Zephaniah cont.**

a Hebrew text of the Twelve Prophets that differs from the later Masoretic text in only a very few places. Because it was buried about the time of the unsuccessful Bar Kochba revolt against Rome, it was likely read as a prophecy of G-d's deliverance of Judea from Roman oppression. The Nahal Hever Greek Minor Prophets scroll provides the oldest known Greek version of the Twelve Prophets. It was discovered in a cave by Nahal Hever, some twenty-two miles south of Qumran, among the possessions of some forty people who died while trapped by the Romans during the Bar Kochba revolt. The scroll was written by two scribes during the late-first century B.C.E. and the early-first century C.E. The translation is very wooden and literal, which suggests that it was made by scribes who spoke Greek as a second or third language. The text does not differ markedly from the Hebrew of the Masoretic version. Many argue that it represents an early revision of the original Septuagint text.

Manuscripts of Targum Jonathan to Zephaniah, such as the fifteenth-sixteenth century British Library Yemenite manuscript of the Latter Prophets (Oriental 2211) present the Aramaic version of the book together with the Hebrew Masoretic texts. Aramaic translations of the Bible were produced in antiquity for the use of Jewish communities who spoke Aramaic as their everyday language. The Targum ("translation") provides a translation that is at times literal and at times paraphrastic or expansive in order to present a reading or interpretation of the text for the community at large. It frequently rereads the text to emphasize the holiness of G-d or to condemn all the wicked of the world. For example, the Targum's version of Zephaniah 1:7 reads, "all the wicked have come to an end before YHWH G-d" in place of the Hebrew, "silence before the L-rd YHWH." Because the Targum appears to have been completed at

*continued on page 8*

### *Reading Zephaniah cont.*

some time between the first and second century C.E. revolts against Rome and the seventh-eighth century rise of Islam, most interpreters believe that Targum Jonathan portrays the downfall of Rome.

The Peshitta version of the Bible, represented by the seventh century Ambrosian Library manuscript (Milan, B 21 Inferiore), presents a Syriac version of the text that functions as sacred scripture in the Syrian Churches. Syriac is an Aramaic dialect that continues in use in some communities despite the widespread use of Arabic. Some interpreters believe that the Syriac text originated in the Jewish Targum tradition, but it eventually developed as a Christian tradition over the course of time. The first references to the Peshitta version appear in the fourth or fifth centuries, although most scholars believe it originated in the first or second century C.E. The Peshitta is clearly dependent upon the Greek Septuagint, but it frequently attempts to read the text far more closely in relation to the pre-

masoretic Hebrew. Nevertheless, it reads Zephaniah as a prophecy of eschatological judgment, much like the Septuagint. Whereas the Hebrew reads in Zephaniah 2:11, "because he (G-d) diminished all the gods of the earth," Peshitta reads, "when he destroyed all the kings of the earth," to emphasize divine judgment against temporal power prior to the revelation of Christ to the world at large.

In sum, the manuscripts of the book of Zephaniah point to a very rich tradition of reading and interpretation. The variety of interpretations employed by its readers and translators demonstrates the importance of this brief book in both Judaism and Christianity.

### *Want to Know More?*

Dr. Sweeney has just completed a major commentary on the book of Zephaniah in the Hermeneia series: *Zephaniah: A Commentary* (edited by Paul Hanson; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003). The volume, which includes full discussion of the textual versions of Zephaniah, is scheduled to appear in June, 2003. (f)



1325 North College Avenue  
Claremont, CA 91711

*Return Service Requested*

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE

**PAID**

CLAREMONT, CA  
PERMIT NO. 176