

The Folio

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Reading Inscriptions

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The recent headlines made by the so-called James Ossuary and more recently the Jehoash Inscription invite us to take a closer look at reading ancient inscriptions.

The James Ossuary (an “ossuary” is a box for secondary burial of bones commonly used by Jews in the late 2nd Temple period) won acclaim because its Aramaic inscription, “James, the son of Joseph, the brother of Jesus,” seemed to date to the mid-1st century CE and therefore would almost surely be the ossuary of Jesus’ brother known in the New Testament.

The Jehoash Inscription seemed to be a 9th century BCE sandstone inscription that mentioned the temple repairs done by the Judean king Jehoash and mentioned in 2 Kings 12:5-16. Unfortunately, both inscriptions were part of a private antiquities collection and—even more sadly—both inscriptions seem to be professional forgeries (as reported recently in Israeli newspapers).

The hype surrounding these inscriptions points to one important aspect of reading ancient inscriptions—namely, the importance of the archaeological context. A complete interpretation of an ancient inscription requires that the interpreter also consider the context in which the inscription is discovered. Unfortunately, both the James Ossuary and the Jehoash Inscription came from a private collection and

supposedly were purchased on the antiquities market. This situation deprives the modern interpreter of an important key to unlocking the meaning of an ancient inscription. In the case of inscriptions such as the James Ossuary and the Jehoash Inscription, an element of doubt about their authenticity lingers as a result of the lack of context.

The importance of an archaeological context—or lack thereof—was certainly also a factor in the long publication delay for the Dead Sea Scrolls. Most of the scroll fragments were discovered by Bedouin, who then sold the fragments in bits and pieces to scholars. As a result, a great deal of energy in the publication of the scrolls has been in reconstructing the various documents that were scattered and mixed into a huge puzzle.

For other inscriptions like the Siloam Tunnel Inscription, which was discovered carved inside the water tunnel built by king Hezekiah, or the Tel Dan Inscription, which was found broken and reused in the gate complex built by the Israelite king either Joash (ca. 798-782) or Jeroboam II (ca. 782-753), the archaeological context aids us in its historical interpretation.

The aim in reading an ancient inscription has to be the integration of archaeological context with careful epigraphic examination of the script and philological

interpretation of the text that arrives at a holistic reading. This can be illustrated with the Tel Dan inscription. From the examination of the paleography (i.e., the shape of the letters), it is clear that the Dan Inscription dates to the mid-to-late 9th century BCE—that is, at the time of the rise of the Aramean kings in Syria and Damascus.



Image of forged inscription
courtesy of the Israel Antiquities
Authority.

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The Folio

The Newsletter of
The Ancient Biblical
Manuscript Center

shedding light

on the

*documentary
history of*

*Judaism and
Christianity*

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Mount Athos Update

Michael Phelps
Director of Special Projects

From combing through thousands of details of medieval Byzantine manuscripts to guiding eight mules over a mountain trail, the Mount Athos Manuscripts Digital Library is achieving outstanding progress.

Advisory Meeting Attracts Scholars from Four Countries to Thessaloniki

An international team of twelve scholars gathered at the Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies in Thessaloniki, Greece, for the first advisory meeting of the Mount Athos Manuscripts Digital Library. The two-day meeting (June 12 and 13) was filled with animated conversation among biblical scholars, historians and database designers. Conversation focused on the Electronic Catalogue database that scholars will use to identify manuscripts they need for their research. What information should we collect for each manuscript? And how should this information be organized best to help scholars understand the contents of the manuscripts and find what they need?

The meeting initiated an international conversation about these questions that continues today via email. The project now enjoys the best collective input from experts in the U.S. and Europe, and therefore the meeting was a resounding success.

The scholars assembled included: Robert Allison, Bates College; Claudia Rapp, UCLA; Father Justin, St. Catherine's Monastery of the Sinai; Dennis MacDonald, Claremont School of Theology; David Cooper, consultant in digital imaging of manuscripts, U.K.; Nicholas Pickwood, book conservator in private practice, U.K.; Efthimios Litsas, Ionian University of Corfu, and President of the Greek Paleographical Society; Katerina Katsarou, the Patriarchal Institute; and John Dickason, Claremont School of Theology.

Project Cataloguing Team Is Making Discoveries

The thousands of Greek manuscripts of Mount Athos have been only partially catalogued. That means that scholars have very limited information about their contents and are still unaware of many treasures found in the manuscripts. The project's four-member cataloguing team in Thessaloniki is now at work to provide scholars the first comprehensive record of the Greek

manuscripts of the Monastery of Panteleimon, one of the Mount Athos monasteries. Led by Efthimios Litsas, President of the Greek Paleographical Society, they have completed descriptions of 600 manuscripts.

The team has discovered previously unrecognized copies of ancient texts appearing in the final pages of manuscripts. They are also identifying the authors and dates of texts in the manuscripts and correcting erroneous information in the previous catalogues. All this new information will be made accessible to scholars via the project's Electronic Catalogue.

Electronic Catalogue Draws "Ohhs" and "Ahhs"

We are preparing to publish a beta version of the Electronic Catalogue on the Web in early 2004. This demonstration version of the Catalogue will include full search capabilities so that researchers can search a sample of the manuscripts now being catalogued by our project team of scholars at the Patriarchal Institute in Thessaloniki. Scholars and students will be invited to explore the Electronic Catalogue, and return their comments to help us prepare for its full publication by the end of the year.

Demonstration of the Electronic Catalogue was the high point of the Advisory Meeting this June, and drew "ohhs" and "ahhs" from the scholars gathered.

Cutting-Edge Digital Camera System

We may only have one opportunity to photograph a manuscript, and we want to create images that tempt the viewer to touch the computer monitor expecting to feel the texture of medieval parchment. In April, the project acquired the most advanced system for digitally photographing manuscripts that is currently available. This unique system will enable us to capture images of the highest quality now technologically possible and provides options for optimizing our workflow in case the rigors of monastic life limit our time in a particular Mount Athos library. It features the new 54H Digital Camera Back by Sinar in Switzerland, which boasts the highest resolution CCD (22.2 million pixels) on the market today.

In order to protect fragile manuscripts during photography, the system features the Preservation Book Cradle by Conservation by Design of the U.K. This cradle holds a book or codex open only 90°, and allows the binding to shift during

continued on page 4

Reading Inscriptions cont.

From the archaeological context, we know that the inscription was destroyed and reused in the rebuilding of the gate complex in the early 8th century. Thus, before we even try to read the inscription, we know something of its situation in relation to the competing powers (Israel and the Arameans) that vied for control in northern Galilee during the 9th and early 8th century BCE.

A complete interpretation of an ancient inscription requires that the interpreter also consider the context in which the inscription is discovered.

As is often the case with ancient inscriptions, the Tel Dan inscription is also broken. Scholars increasingly make use of new technologies in digital imaging to reconstruct as much of the text as possible. This has certainly been critical in the story of the Dead Sea Scrolls; it will be an important part of the documentation of the Mount Athos project, in which the ABMC is currently engaged; and, it was an important part of my reconstruction of the Dan Inscription.

The Dead Sea Scrolls From a New Perspective

ABMC Trustee, Sheila Spiro, and her husband, Dr. Gregory Bearman, will speak about their experiences during the ABMC's Jerusalem Dead Sea Scrolls imaging trips.

"What a Physicist Saw – A Different Look at the Dead Sea Scrolls" is part of the Simmons Family Charitable Foundation 14th Annual Program in Biblical Archaeology. Offered between October 27th and December 15th, the annual lecture series is entitled "Biblical Archaeology and Memory: The Role of Archaeology in Recovering Lost Memories and Creating False Ones About the Biblical Past."

Dr. Bearman and Ms. Spiro's lecture will be on December 1st at 8:00 p.m., at the University of Judaism, Los Angeles, CA. ABMC members are encouraged to attend this unique lecture. For further information please call: 310/440-1246 or visit the University of Jerusalem's website: www.uj.edu (*Look under Continuing Education—Biblical Archeology*).

photography following the natural movement of a book as the pages are turned.

Photography Expedition to Kafsokalivia, Mount Athos

On June 18, we fielded a four-member team to Kafsokalivia, an isolated monastic settlement on the tip of the Mount Athos peninsula. The team included: Nicholas Zarkantzas, Project Director; Stephen Psarras, database designer; and Theodore Giagkou, Professor of History, Aristotle University; and Michael Phelps, ABMC Director of Special Projects. Our task was to install the project's digital photography system and begin photography of the medieval and renaissance manuscripts of Kafsokalivia.

The project team arrived in Kafsokalivia on the afternoon of June 18, the journey aided by a chartered boat and a team of eight mules to carry the equipment up to Kafsokalivia (see photo). Early the next morning, we installed the six-foot frame of the Preservation Book Cradle, along with the digital camera, lighting system and the laptop computers. With no power lines going into Kafsokalivia, we were dependent on solar power and diesel generators. We had brought with us a voltage regulator meeting the standards of other photographic projects working under similar conditions. Tests showed the system functioning and ready.

For our first manuscript, the librarian brought us a large, impressive 15th-century codex containing ancient homilies. We positioned the codex on the Book Cradle, and were moments from photographing its first page. Suddenly, our lighting system went dead. We began manipulating the connections of our power supplies and voltage regulator. All to no avail. We traced the power lines back to their source and found that the inverter for the solar power system had blown. This seems to have sent a power surge through the system that overwhelmed our voltage regulator and damaged our lights. We left Kafsokalivia to consult with electricians in Thessaloniki.

Our first photographic expedition ended prematurely, but the initial frustration this caused quickly washed away. Photographing manuscripts in a remote, exotic location is a great challenge. We anticipate many photographic expeditions, and this initial delay is simply part of the learning curve. Our commitment to making these manuscripts accessible is unchanged, and our progress is generating excitement in both the U.S. and Europe.

Thank You, Dolly! and Welcome, Mariko!

The Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center would like to thank outgoing Office Manager, Ms. Dolly Bush, for her nearly five years of service to the ABMC, and welcome Ms. Mariko Yakiyama, who will serve as the new Office Manager.

Dolly came to work for the ABMC in October, 1998, shortly after beginning her graduate studies in New Testament at Claremont Graduate University. She came to Claremont to study New Testament because of Claremont's reputation for New Testament studies in the context of the humanities and because she had read about the ABMC in the Claremont catalogue. She began work at the ABMC as a Research Assistant, which enabled her to play an important role in making the general public aware of biblical schol-

arship in general and the rich collection of manuscript resources that the ABMC makes available to scholars and the public at large.

Dolly came to Claremont from Beaufort, South Carolina, well equipped with a B.A. in English from Mars Hills College (Mars Hills, NC), high school teaching certification in South Carolina and New Mexico, and a wealth of administrative experience working in her father's medical office. She credits her mother, a registered nurse, for teaching her the organizational skills that have made her such an effective administrative presence.

Upon completion of her M.A. during the coming year, Dolly intends to explore the possibilities of producing a video series on scholarly work in biblical studies or teaching in prisons to enable inmates to make new lives for themselves. She is interested in a career of service to others, and finds in the ABMC just such a strong sense of mission to work on behalf of the public at large.

Her advice to others? "Be strong and courageous!" She has been both as she has organized much of the administrative side of the ABMC. Thank you, Dolly!

Ms. Mariko Yakiyama is currently being trained by Dolly to serve as the new ABMC Office Manager. Mariko comes to us from Shimonoseki, Japan, where she has served as a local pastor and as Dean of the Human Relations Department at Baico Women's Junior College.

Mariko came to Claremont in 2001 to study for her doctoral degree in New Testament at Claremont Graduate University. Upon completion of her degree, she will be the first woman in Japan with a Ph.D. in New Testament studies. She already holds the B.A. in New Testament and the M.A. in Comparative Culture from the

International Christian University, Tokyo, and she holds the Th.M. in New Testament from Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. She is ordained in Yamaguchi, a branch of the United Church of Christ in Japan.

Mariko likewise brings a wealth of experience and expertise to her new position. As an Associate Pastor in Shimonoseki, located

close to Hiroshima, she preached once a month and administered the youth education program, which served both high school and college students. As an instructor in the Human Relations Department of Baico Women's Junior College, she taught courses on Christianity as part of a general education curriculum that emphasized both Japanese and English literature.

Mariko ultimately became Dean of the Human Relations Department, where she supervised the work of seven senior faculty members, a remarkable accomplishment for a woman of her relatively young age.

Mariko came to Claremont to study in part because she had heard about the ABMC from Professor Takeshi Nagata, International Christian University, and in part because of an ICU alum, Professor Yoshihide Suzuki, Niigata University (a 1981 CGU alum in Hebrew Bible). She is especially interested in comparative work in ancient Judaism and Christianity, and plans to work with both Septuagint texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls. She is fascinated with ancient manuscripts, and hopes to bring manuscript studies to Japan.

Mariko, we look forward to working with you! Welcome to the ABMC!



Dolly Bush and Mariko Yakiyama

Publications and Upcoming Events

James A. Sanders



"The Modern History of the Qumran Psalms Scroll and Canonical Criticism," in *Emanuel: Studies in Honor of Emanuel Tov*, ed. by Shalom Paul, et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 393-411.

"Early Memories of Tantur," *Tantur Today* 4/1 (Jerusalem, January 2003) 1-2.

"Intolerance is Idolatry," *Bible Review* 19/3 (June 2003) 6&53-54.

Marvin A. Sweeney

Publications

Zephaniah: A Commentary (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003) on September 11, 2003.

Events

"Abraham in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam." All Saints Episcopal Church, Pasadena, CA, September 7, 2003

"The World of the Bible," Academy for Jewish Religion, Los Angeles, CA, Sundays, September 7-December 21, 2003

"Jewish Mysticism: The Heikhalot Rabbati." Congregation Beth El, San Pedro, CA, September 8, 2003

"The Queen of Sheba and Ethiopian Jews." Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center, Pasadena, CA, October 23, 2003

"Zephaniah in History and the Manuscripts." Lecture for the Church of the Good Shepherd, Arcadia, CA, November 16, 2003

"The Purification of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 8-11." Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting, Atlanta, GA, November 22-25, 2003

Sheila I. Spiro

"What a Physicist Saw – A Different Look at the Dead Sea Scrolls" with Dr. Gregory Bearman, University of Judaism, Los Angeles, CA, December 1, 2003. *See p. 4 for more details.*

Kristin De Troyer

Books

Kristin De Troyer. *Ester (Belichting van het Bijbelboek)*. Hertogenbosch: KBS, 2003 (commentary on Esther in Dutch)

Truth: Interdisciplinary Dialogues in a Pluralist Age (Studies in Philosophical Theology), edited with Christine Helmer. Louvain: Peeters, 2003.

Wholly Woman, Holy Blood. A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), edited with Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, Anne-Marie Korte. Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 2003.

Rewriting the Sacred Text. What the Old Greek Texts Tell Us about the Literary Growth of the Bible. Atlanta, GA: SBL (Forthcoming, October 2003)

Articles

"The Letter of the King and the Letter of Mordecai. An analysis of MT & LXX 8.9-13 and AT 7.33-38," in *Textus* 21 (2002) 175-207.

"Zerubbabel and Ezra: A Revived and Revised Solomon and Josiah? A Survey of Current 1 Esdras Research," in *Currents of Biblical Research* 1.1 (2002) 30-61.

"Fifty Years of Qumran Research: a different approach," in *RSR* 28 (2002/2) 115-122.

"4Q550 in the Context of the Darius Traditions. The Need for Integration of Different Tools," in J. Cook (ed.). *Bible and Computer*. The Stellenbosch AIBI-6 Conference, Proceedings of Association Internationale Bible et Informatique, "From Alpha to Byte". University of Stellenbosch 17-21 July, 2000, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp. 573-581.

"Did Joshua have a crystal ball? The Old Greek and the MT of Joshua 10:15,17 and 23," in Shalom M. Paul, Robert A. Kraft, Lawrence H. Schiffmann and Weston W. Fields (eds.) with the assistance of Eva Ben-David, *Emanuel: Studies in Hebrew Bible, Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Emanuel Tov*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp. 571-589.



“And God Was Created...” On Translating Hebrew into Greek,” in K. Feyaerts (ed.), *The Bible through Metaphor and Translation: A Cognitive Semantic Perspective* (Religions and Discourse, 15), Bern: Peter Lang, 2003, pp. 205-218.

“Psalm 130: Of Course, I Cry Out of the Depths ... Where else would I cry out of? A Reflection on Metaphors and Truth,” in Kristin De Troyer & Christine Helmer (eds.), and the assistance of Katie Goetz, *Truth: Interdisciplinary Dialogues in a Pluralist Age* (Studies in Philosophical Theology), Louvain: Peeters, 2003, pp. 67-83.

“Blood: a Threat to Holiness or Towards Another Holiness?” in Kristin De Troyer, Judith A. Herbert, Judith Ann Johnson, and Anne-Marie Korte (eds.), *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood. A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity* (Studies in Antiquity and Christianity), Harrisburg, PA: TPI, 2003, pp. 45-64.

Lectures

In Cambridge, at the SBL IM, July 2003: “The Hebrew Text of Joshua as a Contemporary Rereading of the Old Greek?”

In Cambridge, at the SBL IM, July 2003: “Following Orders Given by an Old Joshua.”



William M. Schniedewind

"When the Torah Became a Text," UCLA's Center for Jewish Studies, Spring 2003

"Writing in the Priestly and Deuteronomic Theology." Paper presented in Cambridge, England, Summer 2003.

How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel, (Cambridge University Press, February 2004).

A Primer for Ugaritic Language, Literature, and Culture, with Professor Joel Hunt, (forthcoming, Cambridge University Press)

Staff News

Mike Phelps

Earlier this year, Mike Phelps stepped down as Director of the ABMC to focus full attention on the Mount Athos Manuscripts Digital Library project. A major focus of Mike's seven-year tenure as director has been to transform ABMC projects from film and print media to digital technologies. He plans to continue this work as Director of Special Projects for the Mount Athos project.

Brent Smith

We are sad to report that Brent Smith, a Ph.D. student in the History of Christianity program of Claremont Graduate University's School of Religion, is leaving the ABMC. Brent served as Research Associate for Scholarly Services, but his time at ABMC was cut short by an invitation to teach Greek and Latin at Chapman University. We congratulate Brent on this outstanding opportunity.

Dana Newlove

Replacing Brent Smith is Dana Newlove. Dana is a Ph.D. student in the Hebrew Bible program at Claremont Graduate University's School of Religion. She brings several years of experience and a wealth of knowledge in manuscripts and languages to the ABMC.

Jennifer Greenwood

Joining the Mount Athos Project as a Research Assistant, Jennifer is a student in the History Department of Claremont Graduate University. She will be working with Mike Phelps on grant writing, project development, and technology.



The Tel Dan Inscription

Translation of the Tel Dan Inscription by Dr. William M. Schniedewind

editors note: when the punctuation "... " is used it indicates that a portion of the text is missing or obscured. The use of brackets ([]) indicates what missing or obscured text most likely said, and is based on scholarly knowledge of the text, other extant texts, and linguistics.

1. [...]
2. [XXX]-el my father, went up [against him when] he was fighting at A[bel ...]
3. and my father died and went to [his ancestors.] Now the king of Israel entered
4. formerly in my father's land; [and] Hadad made me myself king;
5. and Hadad went in front of me. [...] I departed from the seven[...]
6. of my kingdom; and I slew seve[nty ki]ngs, who harnessed thou[sands of cha]/riots
7. and thousands of horsemen. [And I killed Jo]ram, son of [Ahab,]
8. king of Israel, and [I] killed [Ahazi]yahu, son of [Joram, kin]/g
9. of the House of David; and I set [their towns into ruins ? ... the ci]/ties
10. of their land into de[solation ? ...]
11. ... other and to over[turn all their cities ? ... and I caused Jehu to]
12. [ru]/le over Is[rael ...]
13. siege upon [...]

Drawing of the Tel Dan Inscription by Dr. William M. Schniedewind



Dr. William Schniedewind's drawing of the Tel Dan Inscription illustrates how the three pieces of the tablet relate to one another, and indicates missing text. Courtesy of William Schniedewind, copyright 2003.

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