

## Identifying the Language of Jesus

The most important **belief models** in any culture are created from “**institutional memes**” – *information created by institutions*. “**Belief models**” at the top of the list in any culture are the culture’s “**language**.” Learning a language is meme building process that takes place in the human brain. The biological processes are the same in everyone. The reason some people have the first meaning for shalom and other people have the second meaning is that “**different information from different sources was received and then processed by their brains**.” In order to understand the words of Jesus we must view them through his language.

Now that you are aware of the science-based information above, consider your answers to these questions:

1. *In what language did you read or hear the words of Jesus?*
2. *In what language did Jesus communicate those messages?*

I am sure the answer to the first question by most readers of this email is “**English**.” Simply “*googling*” the “origin of the English language,” we discover that “**the English language did not exist during the time Jesus lived and taught in Galilee and Judea**.”

For the answer to the second question, I will turn to the work of Dr. David Flusser.

*“Our English translations of the New Testament are primarily translations of ancient Greek manuscripts. The Greek modifications of the **Gospels** which have reached us clearly contain changes and alterations from the original versions. In those original versions, the Jewish character was far more clearly reflected than in the later modifications. Even the **Epistles** in the *New Testament*, which reflect the second stage of Christianity represented by the personality of Paul, bring out some important chapters in the history of Israel during those days.*”

Therefore, studying the Jewish background relevant to the beliefs and memes of the Jewish people during the period of the *Second Temple* reveals **stories that teach us about Jewish realities during those days**, even though the resources are meager. *Interestingly, Early Christian writings reflects the world of the Jewish Sages at an earlier stage than its reflection in the Jewish sources*. Some of those stories are found in the Gospels. They have preserved some of the **stories, maxims, sayings, parables, views and opinions** of Jesus himself. They also preserve stories from other streams of Judaism during the period of Jesus’ life and activities.

The spoken languages among the Jews of that period were **Hebrew, Aramaic**, and to an extent **Greek**. Until recently it was believed by numerous scholars that the language spoken by Jesus disciples was Aramaic. It is possible that Jesus did, from time to time, make use of the Aramaic language. **But during that period Hebrew was both the daily language and the language of study.**<sup>1</sup>

## Beliefs About God in the Jewish Culture of Jesus: Part 1

Based on Flusser's work above, this is what we know about the language of Jesus:

- *There are sayings of Jesus which can be rendered both into **Hebrew** and **Aramaic**.*
- *There are some sayings which can only be rendered into **Hebrew**.*
- *There are **no sayings** that can be rendered only into **Aramaic**.*
- *One can thus demonstrate **the Hebrew origins of the Gospels** by **retranslating them into Hebrew**.*

Jesus spoke and taught in the **Hebrew language of first century CE Judea**. However, it is important to understand that we simply can't pick up a Hebrew dictionary and choose one definition for each Hebrew word Jesus spoke. An example of the inadequacy of picking "one word definitions" is seen in translations of the Hebrew word transliterated "**shalom**."

1. "**peace**" (Ben-Yehuda's English-Hebrew. Hebrew-English Dictionary; p. 297)
2. "**wholesomeness, harmony, success, the completeness and richness of living in an integrated social milieu**" (*Hebrew: The Eternal Language* by William Chomsky; p. 4)

In Matthew 5:9 Jesus said:

*Blessed are the **shalom makers**,  
for they shall be called sons of God.*

Words paint pictures in our minds. Do the two definitions for "**shalom**" above paint different pictures in your mind? The second definition reflects the meaning of shalom to Jesus.

*Blessed are the makers of "wholesomeness, harmony, success,  
the completeness and richness of living in an integrated social milieu"  
for they shall be called sons of God.*

In another teaching he said, "**The shalom makers will be the ones that enter eternal life!**" I will continue this discussion in my next email.

Shalom,  
Jim Myers

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<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* By David Flusser © 1987 Adama Books, New York, NY; p. 7, 11.