

SOME NOTES TO THE BEATITUDES (MATTHEW 5:3-12, LUKE 6:20-26)

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In one of my articles¹ I tried to show the Essene background of Jesus' Beatitudes, and at the same time succeeded in finding in the Thanksgiving Scroll (XIII, 14-15) a passage, which not only comes near to the general ideology of the Beatitudes, but also resembles Mt. 5:3-5 in literary patterns. The sectarian author thanks God:

To [have appointed] me in truth a messenger [of the peace] of Thy goodness to pro- claim to the <i>meek</i> the multitude of Thine mercies, and to let them <i>that are of con- trite spirit</i> [hear salvation] from [ever- lasting] source; and <i>to them that mourn</i> everlasting joy.	Matthew 5: 3-5 3. Blessed are the <i>poor in spirit</i> , for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 5. Blessed are the <i>meek</i> , for they shall inherit the earth. 4. Blessed are <i>they that mourn</i> , for they shall be comforted.
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This is the nearest parallel to the Beatitudes in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The passage from the Thanksgiving Scroll is connected, from its side, with other passages in the Scrolls. A passage in the War Scroll (XI, 9-14), speaking about the final victory of the Sect over the enemies of Israel, names the elect of God "paupers," "paupers of thy redemption" and "that who are of contrite spirit." In the prayer at the end of the Manual of Discipline (X, 26-XI, 2), we learn that the task of the teacher in the sect is to show "affectionate love towards the lowly, and to strengthen the hands of

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1. D. Flusser, "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit," *Israel Exploration Journal* Vol. 10, Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 1-13.

those whose [heart] is anxious, [to announce] understanding to the erring in spirit, to teach instruction to the humble, to answer with humility the haughty of spirit, to behave with a broken spirit towards the men of oppression . . ." The importance of this passage for the Beatitudes is far clearer, when we read the text in its Hebrew original. The same fits for three other passages from the Thanksgiving Scroll, namely I, 35-37, II, 8-9 and V, 21-22, which are parts of the same complex, both in content and in the terms applied to the elect ones. Especially important is the third passage: "And they are with the *meek* who are trampled by the feet of. . . with them are the *anxious of righteousness* (nimhare zedek), to bring from the tumult together all the *paupers of grace* (ebyone hesed)". The last two terms are both in the paradoxical content and in the grammatical form the same type of the Hebrew "semichuth" (construct phrase) as the "poor in spirit" (aniye ruah), which as I have shown in my article,² occurs both in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in Mt. 5:3. The two terms "anxious of righteousness" and "paupers of grace" themselves are parallel to the supposed Hebrew original of Mt. 5:6: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Another construct phrase, namely "the pure in heart" in Mt. 5:8 originates in the Psalms (24:4, 73:1).

We shall return to Mt. 5:6. Meanwhile we have seen the broader Essene background of the Beatitudes: the clear literary parallel to Mt. 5:3-5 in the Thanksgiving Scroll (XVIII, 14-15) is a part of a whole ideological complex in the literature and thought of the Dead Sea Sect; the passages quoted from the sectarian literature contain identical and similar designations of those whom God loves and who will be saved, as the Beatitudes: paupers, paupers of thy redemption, those who are of contrite spirit, the lowly, those whose heart is anxious, the erring in spirit, the humble. Some of the designations are taken from the Old Testament or rooted in it, but this is natural and does not change the whole picture.

BEATITUDES AND WOES

In my previous article (p. 12) I suggested that not only the Beatitudes, but also the Woes (Luke 6:24-26) formed – in a large and more elaborate form than preserved by Luke – a part of the original saying of Jesus. I want to bring here additional material.

2. See the Hebrew text of the Manual of Discipline X, 26 – XI,2, quoted above in translation. About the kind of *dativus* in "poor in spirit" and similar construction, see Fr. Blass and A. Debrunner, *Grammatik des neutestamentarischen Griechisch*, ed. 14, Göttingen, 1976, Paragraph 147 (p. 159), especially note 3, and see also M. Dibelius, *Der Hirt des Hermas*, Tübingen, 1923, p. 427. This kind of *dativus* was used in Greek translations of the Hebrew "construct phrase"; see Lohmeyer-Schamauch, *Das Evangelium des Mt.*, Göttingen, 1962, p. 82, note 1. The Greek "poor in spirit" (katharoi kardiai) in Mt. 5:8 is taken from Psalm 24:4; 73:1, where in Greek the same words occur; see also Ps. 34:19 (Greek 33:19). Especially interesting for the "poor in spirit" in Mt. 5:3 is the Greek translation of "thoe ruah" (those who err in spirit) in Isa. 29:24: "hoi toi pneumatii planomenoi." "Those who err in spirit" is also a designation of the member of the sect in the Manual of Discipline XI,1, in the passage, which we have quoted above. Thus, the "erring in spirit" is parallel to the "poor in spirit," which occurs both in the Dead Sea Sect and in the Beatitudes.

The pertinent passage is the second half of chapter 25 of the Testament of Judah (verses 3-5). The whole of the "Testaments of the Patriarchs" was written in Greek; although they contain, in their actual form, Christian interpolations, they are a Jewish book, based upon testaments of the sons of Jacob. Fragments of two of them, that of Levi and of Naphtali, were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. The actual Testaments of the Patriarchs are near to the Sect, but not identical with it. In their spirit they are near to the moral teaching of Jesus and to the Jewish source of the Didache.³ All who read the passage from the Testament of Judah easily recognize that it is Jewish:

"And there shall be one people of the Lord and one tongue. And there shall be there no more spirit of deceit of Belial, for he shall be cast into the fire forever. And they who have died in sorrow, shall arise in joy, and they who were poor⁴ shall be made rich, and they who were in want shall be satisfied. And they who have been weak shall be strong, and they who were put to death for the Lord's sake⁵ shall awake to life. And the harts of Jacob shall run in joyfulness, and the eagles of Israel shall fly in gladness, but the ungodly shall mourn and the sinners shall weep, and all the peoples shall glorify the Lord forever."⁶

Belial, as the name for the devil, is a keyword for the Dead Sea Scrolls and similar literature.⁷ On the other hand, one of the greater differences between the Testaments of the Patriarchs and the Essene sect is reflected also in our passage: the Essenes believed "that the body is corruptible and its constituent matter impermanent, but that the soul is immortal and imperishable" (Josephus, *Jewish War* II, 154),⁸ while the Testaments of the Patriarchs reflect the Pharisaic belief in resurrection.⁹ The author has rewritten in our passage (Test. Jud. 25:3-5) his supposed *Vorlage* in the spirit of his belief in bodily resurrection and has enlarged it in a poetical manner and enriched it by new motifs. But even so, the similarity between our passage and Jesus' Beatitudes and Woes is clear enough: the promises appear in verse 4 and the curses in verse 5, and they are similar, but by no means identical with what we read

3. See D. Flusser, "A New Sensitivity in Judaism and the Christian Message," *Harvard Theological Review*, 61, 1968, pp. 223-226. M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Patriarchs*, Assen, 1953, thought that the book is Christian. Hè speaks about our passage on pp. 32 and 94-6 (about the resurrection).

4. The text (25:4) reads: ". . . They who were poor for the Lord's sake." I venture that the words "for the Lord's sake" is a Christian interpolation, taken from the second part of the verse. This was the regular explanation of the "poor in spirit" in Mt. 5:3 in the ancient Church. See below, note 20.

5. See the precedent note.

6. We have already quoted the passage in our book *Jesus*, Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1968, pp. 74-78.

7. The name occurs once in the New Testament, in a passage (2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1), which is so strongly Essene that a scholar (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Qumran and the Interpolated Paragraph in 2 Cor. 6:14-7, 1," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23, p. 271 sqq.) thinks that the passage is "a Christian reworking of an Essene paragraph, which has been introduced into the Pauline letter.

8. See also Flavius Josephus, *Der jüdische Krieg*, ed. O. Michel and O. Bauernfeind, Darmstadt, 1959, Band I, pp. 438-9. I do not approve of the scepticism of this commentary.

9. See also M. de Jonge, op. cit. above, note 3, pp. 94-96.

in the Gospels. There could be naturally some small possibility that our author was influenced by Jesus' Beatitudes and Woes. However, the whole context and elaboration is Jewish and not Christian. Even if the author knew Jesus' saying, he did not consider it as a specific message, and, therefore, we would be compelled to suppose that the passage was very early, written in Jesus' days or in the very days after his death. Yet it seems to me that such an assumption is very improbable. On the one hand, we have seen that the Beatitudes have their close parallels in Essene writings and, on the other hand, the whole Testaments of the Patriarchs are semi-Essene, and, with the exception of the idea of resurrection, the passage itself reflects faithfully the spirit and the social message of Essenism¹⁰ (which we find also reflected in the Beatitudes and the Woes). Therefore, nothing is easier than to find a pre-Christian predecessor of Jesus' Beatitudes and Woes embedded in a passage of the Testament of Judah.

However, we can bring a further proof for our assumption. The national Jewish spirit of our author is expressed in the beautiful poetical contrast between the promises for the suffering and the curses of the sinners: "And the harts of Jacob shall run in joyfulness, and the eagles of Israel shall fly in gladness." This is based upon Isa. 40:31 ("They who wait for the Lord . . . shall mount up with wings like eagles." Jacob and Israel are mentioned before, verse 27). The whole Greek translation of Isa. 40:29-31 is an important witness for the prehistory of Jesus' Beatitudes and Woes and is also pertinent to the passage of the Testament of Judah: "He gives strength to the hungry¹¹ and sorrow¹² to them that are not suffering.¹³ For the young men shall hunger and youths shall be weary, and the chosen men¹⁴ shall be powerless, but they that wait for God shall renew their strength, they shall put forth new feathers like eagles, they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk and not hunger."

Before the Greek translator was practically the same Hebrew text that we have today,¹⁵ but he reinterpreted it.¹⁶ The first impulse for this reinterpretation was evidently the contrast between Isa. 40:30 and the following verse: "Young men may grow weary and faint, even in their prime they may stumble and fall; but those

10. The hope that instead of mourning there will be joy, which is central both in the Beatitudes and in the Test. Jud. 25:4, is expressed in a beautiful passage in the Thanksgiving Scroll XI, 19-27.

11. Not only in our passage, but in the whole Greek Isaiah, the Hebrew "yaef" is always translated as "to be hungry" (peino). This is a specific equivalent of the Greek translation of Isaiah and does not appear elsewhere. The similar Hebrew "ayef" (in Isa. 5:27; 28:12), is translated by the same verb (as also in Deut. 25:18 : Jud. 8:5,6), and twice it is translated by the Greek "dipso" (to be thirsty), namely in Isa. 29:8; 32:2.

12. The translator was compelled by his understanding (see the following note) to translate the Hebrew "ozmah" (strength) as if it were written "azabah" (pain).

13. "That are not suffering" is a reinterpretation of the Hebrew "ejn onim" (who has no might). The Hebrew "onim" can also have the meaning of suffering.

14. Here was possibly a doublet in the Hebrew text of the translation. In any case, the Hebrew "bahurim" (youths) reappears here also as "behirim" (the chosen men).

15. Possibly with one exception, see the precedent note.

16. The reinterpretation of the Hebrew wording see above, notes 11-14.

who look to the Lord will win new strength.” This contrast was expanded upon the whole passage, which received now a strong overtone of a social protest and became an expression of eschatological hope. God gives strength to the hungry, but to those who do not feel any pain he gives sorrow. The sorrowless youngsters shall hunger and be weary and the members of the elite shall be weak and powerless, but those who look to the Lord will win new strength: they will not be weary and will not hunger. In the new text there is more or less an equilibrium between the promises to the pious and the prophecies of doom against the privileged.

The Greek translation of Isaiah is pre-Christian; a scholar¹⁷ dates it in “the middle of the second century *ante* – more precisely until about 140 *ante*.” This means that Jesus’ Beatitudes and Woes have a long prehistory; their roots are probably older than the Greek translation of Isaiah. It is true that the Greek paraphrase of Isa. 40:29-31 is inspired by the Hebrew text itself, but at the same time the new message of the paraphrase roots was also in the concepts which were already known to the translator before he began his work. And it is by no means sure that the whole midrash on Isa. 40:29-31, which is behind the Greek translation, was invented by the Greek translator. There is no doubt that the author of the Testament of Judah knew this midrash on Isa. 40:29-31, as he hints to this biblical passage, when he says that “the harts of Jacob shall run in joyfulness, and the eagles of Israel shall fly in gladness.” As he has written in Greek, he could be inspired by the Greek paraphrase of Isaiah, but, if behind the Greek passage was an older Hebrew midrash, the author of the Testament of Judah may have depended directly on this Hebrew midrash. But the situation is far more complex, because the text from the Testament of Judah with his promises and curses is also near to the Beatitudes and Woes of Jesus. However, the latter are not only similar to, but also differ from those in the Testament of Judah. And we have already shown that the first three Beatitudes of Jesus have their counterpart in a passage of the Essene Thanksgiving Scroll. Thus, we are not able to solve all the problems of the literary connection between the three texts, the Greek paraphrase of Isa. 40:29-31, Testament of Judah 25:3-5 and the Beatitudes and the Woes of Jesus, but it is clear that there is an ideological and literary affinity between the three texts. All three are similar both in their contents and their social meaning and in their literary form, being a sequel of promises and woes. The last kind of affinity between the three texts is of special interest, because now we are able to conclude that also in Jesus’ words the Woes were included and that Matthew has omitted the second negative part of the saying.

Jesus’ Beatitudes and Woes are Jewish and in their specific content, their concepts and terms and their antithetic literary character, they are a part of a broader complex. As the other two parallels, they express a social protest, rooted in the Jewish Religion and Jewish eschatological hopes. They are also very near to the Essene ideology, both in their tendency and in their literary links. It is possible that Jesus said them in order to show what his message has in common with Essenism.

17. I.L. Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah*, Leiden, 1948, p. 89, 91.

HEBREW CONSTRUCT PHRASES

In the second part of "Alice in Wonderland" we read about the strange linguistic semantics of Humpty Dumpty. "When I use a word" he said, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less." And he said about the words: "They have a temper, some of them – particularly verbs: they are the proudest – adjectives you can do anything with – but not verbs." And finally he confessed: "When I make a word do a lot of work, I always pay it extra."

Qumran covenanters were great masters in Humpty Dumpty's semantics; they knew how "you can make words mean so many different things."¹⁸ And they also knew that the adjectives are prone to collaborate. They were aided in their activity by a help, which was not at the disposal of Alice's English partner; they could use for their purpose the Hebrew construct phrases, because this grammatical construction can include various meanings. Sometimes they used two substantives, but the method proved to be most effective in the designations of the righteous members of the Sect. Then the construct phrase was formed by an adjective and a substantive.

For instance, the designation "poor in spirit" meant mainly the poor who received the Holy Spirit, but it can also be interpreted as "those whose spirit is meek": the covenanters were obliged "to answer with meekness the haughty of spirit" (Manual XI, 1).¹⁹ It can also mean those who feel lack of the spirit and who pray for a gift of it (in Thanksgiving Scroll XVI, 16).²⁰

Especially large possibilities of maneuvering have such sectarian designations, whose second part is the word "righteousness" (zedeq), because this word means both righteousness as a quality and God's electing grace. We want to bring here only one pertinent example. The "anxious of righteousness" appear in the Thanksgiving Scroll (V, 22) parallel to the "paupers of grace": thus, the meaning of the term is similar to the "paupers of thy redemption" in the War Scroll (XI, 9).²¹ "Anxious of righteousness" in the Thanksgiving Scroll means therefore such anxious, or desperates, to whom God's righteousness, His grace was granted. Yet the "anxious of righteousness" could also mean "the righteous ones who are anxious," or those who, so to say, are anxious to receive God's righteousness or who long for it, even in the social meaning.

18. It was Jacob who drew my attention to this passage, in connection with the Dead Sea Scrolls.

19. Hebrew "meek" and "poor" is practically the same word. "Spirit of meekness" occurs both in the Manual of Discipline (III, 3, 8, IV, 3) and in Paul (I Cor. 4:21, Gal. 6:1).

20. But even so "poor in spirit" *cannot* mean "those who know their need of God", as it is written in the New English Bible. Also the explanations "willingly poor" (see Lohmeyer, op. cit. above, note 2, p. 83), current in the ancient Church, is impossible from the point of view of the Hebrew language.

21. See our article, quoted above, *Israel Exploration Journal*, Vol. 10 note 1, p. 6. The other constructions with "righteousness" are "sons of righteousness" (Manual III, 20, 22 and probably IX, 14), and the "elect of righteousness" (Thanksgiving Scroll II, 13). The last term is reflex-

These speculations were necessary, in order to understand Mt. 5:6: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." It is clear that in the original Hebrew text there were one or two construct phrases – as the "poor in spirit" and the "pure in heart"²² – whose second component was the word "righteousness" (zedek). As we have seen, such constructions could have at the same time many meanings, but I think that in this case the Greek translator understood Jesus' intention: he blessed those who hunger and thirst for God's righteousness, his final grace. But I suppose that Jesus also meant that in the future those who are hungry and thirsty, shall reach God's righteousness and grace and they will be satisfied. Both meanings, the religious and the social, are surely included in the supposed Hebrew original. This corresponds to the very nature of the Hebrew "construct phrase" of this kind.

The parallel to this Beatitude in Luke (6:21) is as follows: "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied." This fits the social meaning of the original Beatitude. As in the case of the first Beatitude (Mt. 5:3, Luke 6:20) Luke (or more probably his source) saw the difficulty in a Greek translation of the Hebrew construct phrase: in both cases the social implications of the two terms becomes unclear in a verbal Greek translation. In order to preserve the social meaning, the translator of Luke did not translate verbally and has spoken about the poor and the hungry. In Jesus' Hebrew words both the spiritual and the social aspect were present.

Thus, "those who hunger and thirst for righteousness" in Mt. 5:6 are more original, but the question is, if Matthew has enlarged his text by "those who thirst" which are lacking in Luke 6:21, because in good Hebrew you need two substantives for the two adjectives, and in Matthew we have only one substantive, namely "righteousness." Once, under the influence of the Lucan parallel, I thought that "those who thirst" are an addition of Matthew, but I changed my view after having discovered an important parallel in a Jewish prayer. Now it seems practically sure to me that in the original saying both the hungry and the thirsty were followed by a substantive and that the first of them was omitted in the Greek translation by mistake.

The Hebrew text is the concluding sentence of an ancient Jewish prayer for forgiveness (selihah), which is said according to the European rite on the evening of the Day of Atonement and the days which precede it.²³ The prayer itself consists of a chain of biblical verses which are connected by words of the author. The concluding sentence is as follows:

עמך ונחלתך, רעבי טובך, צמאי חסדך, תאבי ישעך, יכירו וידעו כי ליי אלהינו
הרחמים והסליחות."

ted in the Book of Enoch as "eklektoi dikaioi," occurs in the Aramaic translation of Isa. 12:3 and is a self-designation of the Mandaeans. See D. Flusser, "The Dead Sea Sect and pre-Pauline Christianity," *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, Vol. 4, Jerusalem, 1958, p. 222, note 25.

22. See above, note 2.

23. The text in the Prayerbook for the Day of Atonement, ed. D. Goldschmidt, (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1970, p. 52: *Seder ha-Selihoth* (according to the Lithuanian rite) ed. D. Goldschmidt (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1965, pp. 11-12.

“Thy people and Thy heritage, who hunger for Thy goodness, who thirst for Thy grace and who long for Thy salvation, will recognize and know that to the Lord, our God, belong mercy and forgiveness.”

Our prayer for forgiveness (*selihah*) belongs to the most ancient type of this kind of prayers,²⁴ as it is a sequel of biblical passages, a litany and not a poem. The concluding sentence can be even older than the actual prayer, and the expressions, which it contains are possibly even older. And it is probable that their patterns are traditional, as can be seen from a comparison with Mt. 5:6. The three designations in the rabbinic prayer are formed as a “construct phrase”; all three have an identical content with the designation in Mt. 5:6, and the first two of them²⁵ are parallel to what is said in the Beatitude. Mt. 5:6 speaks about “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” and the rabbinic prayer about “those who hunger for Thy goodness, who thirst for Thy grace.” The similarity is striking, especially when we know that righteousness and grace are, in our context, synonymous words. And, as we have already said, the supposed grammatical form of the designation in Mt. 5:6 is identical with that of the three designations in the Jewish prayer. The only real difference is that while in the Jewish prayer both “those who hunger” and “those who thirst” are followed by a substantive, there is only one common substantive in Mt. 5:6. Inspired by the parallel and forced by the very nature of the Hebrew language, we assume that Jesus’ Hebrew *ipsissima verba* contained also two substantives and that one of them was omitted by the Greek translator by inadvertance.²⁶

Until now we met in the supposed Hebrew original of Jesus’ Beatitudes four Hebrew construct phrases (Mt. 5, verse 3, 6 (twice) and 8). Also the “peacemakers” of verse 9 is a translation of a Hebrew construct phrase. The basically Greek word²⁷ can be a verbal translation from Hebrew, but it seems more probable that the “peacemakers” in the Gospel are a translation of the Hebrew “*rodfe shalom*.”²⁸ Already

24. See Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, Frankfurt/Main, 1931, Reprint Olms, 1962, pp. 221-3 (Paragraph 33, 1-3) and notes on p. 551.

25. The third designation “those who long for Thy salvation” depends evidently from Ps. 119:174; “I long for Thy salvation.” For the words occurring in the first two designations compare possibly with Ps. 107:5-9.

26. We hope that there will not be many readers, who by reason of apologetics will deduce that the Jewish prayer depends on Jesus. Such an assumption is only possible when there is an ignorance of the nature of ancient Judaism and its ideas. On the other hand, the parallel between Mt. 5:6 and the rabbinic prayer is clear, but the ties between the two texts are impossible to define, because the pre-history of the concluding sentence of the prayer is unknown. Is it, for instance, necessary to suppose an Essene, or semi-Essene origin of the three designations in the prayer, because Jesus’ Beatitudes stem from Essenism and because similar designations occur in the sectarian literature? In any case, it seems to me that originally the three (or the first two) designations, contained in the sentence, did not originally describe the whole Jewish nation, but individuals or parts of it. But, even if the rabbinic parallel is only an analogy to Mt. 5:6, originating from the same religious premises and stylistic patterns, the parallel is instructive and elucidates the meaning of Mt. 5:6.

27. See Lohmeyer, *op. cit.* above, note 2, p. 91 and the Lexica.

28. This is also Delitsch’s translation.

Hillel said; according to the Sayings of the Fathers I, 12; “Be of the disciples of Aaron, one that loves peace and pursues peace (see Ps. 34:15) . . .” The probability that this was the Hebrew wording becomes even greater, because as it seems, there was a play on words in Hebrew which connected “those who pursue peace” (*rodfe shalom*) in Mt. 5:9 with “those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” (*nirdefe zedek*) of the following verse (Mt. 5:10).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:10). The promise is here identical with that to the poor in spirit in the first Beatitude (Mt. 5:3). Yet, while the translation “poor in spirit” is a literary equivalent of the Hebrew phrase,²⁹ a literary translation of the Hebrew behind “those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” is here impossible. We suppose that, as in five previous cases in the Beatitudes, also in this sixth case, the Hebrew wording was a construct phrase, whose second part was the Hebrew word for righteousness as in Mt. 5:6 and in some designations in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In any case, the Greek translation does not seem to be very happy. The Greek translator was here influenced by the following Beatitude (Mt. 5:11); in Greek the words “for righteousness’ sake” are the same construction as the words “on my account” in Mt. 5:11 (cf. Luke 6:22). The word “righteousness’ in Mt. 5:10 is commonly explained as referring to those who have been persecuted for their devotion to religion, for their obedience to the commandments of God³⁰ or to the righteous who oppose evil causes.³¹ According to these and similar explanations, the meaning of righteousness here is unique in the Gospels and not identical with the righteousness in Mt. 5:6 and 5:20. The Greek translator probably meant that Jesus spoke about those who are persecuted because they are righteous,³² but we should not forget that he was also influenced in his way of translation by the following verse. As far as I understand Jesus’ message, it seems to me almost impossible that Jesus promised the kingdom of heaven to those who are persecuted because of their righteousness.

Happily enough for this complex situation, it is very probable that in the Hebrew original of Mt. 5:10 there was a construct phrase, as in the previous five cases, namely “*nirdefe zedek*” (the persecuted of righteousness). This supposed phrase, as already said, is similar to the “*rodfe shalom*” (those who pursue peace) of the previous Beatitude of Mt. 5:9. On the other hand, “the persecuted of righteousness” are also a paradoxical reversal of “those who pursue righteousness” of Isa. 51:1 (see also Deut. 16:20, Proverb 15:9; 21:21). Thus, one of the explanations of the phrase in Mt. 5:10 is: Blessed are those who pursue righteousness and are therefore persecuted. But we have also to remember what we said above: construct phrases, especially those whose second component is the word “righteousness”, can have, at the same

29. See above, note 2.

30. See Hugo Grotius.

31. See Calvin.

32. J.A. Bengel, *Gnomon*, Stuttgart, 1891, p. 38, wanted evidently to avoid this interpretation and writes: “propter justitiam; propter me v. sq.”

time, also other meanings.³³ We quoted above the “paupers of thy redemption” from the War Scroll XI, 9 and, from the Thanksgiving Scroll V, 22 the “paupers of grace” and the “anxious of righteousness.” These appellations are characterized by a paradoxical combination of a term depicting the abject present state of God’s beloved, with a second one, which proclaims triumphantly the plenty of God’s grace bestowed on His elect, partially in present, and fully in the future, when those who mourn shall be comforted and the meek shall inherit the earth. If I am not wrong, we have already found two such paradoxical compound designations in the Beatitudes: the “poor in spirit” in Mt. 5:3 and “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” in verse 6. Especially illuminating for the supposed “persecuted of righteousness” in Mt. 5:10 are the “anxious of righteousness” in Thanksgiving Scroll V, 22. Thus, it is plausible to suppose that the Hebrew construct phrase, which was translated into Greek as “those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake” meant in Hebrew not only “those who pursue righteousness and are persecuted” and “the righteous who are persecuted,” but also “those who are persecuted and upon whom God’s righteousness, His grace, is bestowed, who long for God’s righteousness and will fully receive it in the future.” The social element is not lacking also from this Beatitude: the kingdom of heaven belongs to the persecuted. Thus, the third meaning of the phrase is that which Jews evidently wanted to stress, namely the promise of God’s righteousness to those who are persecuted. And the biblical phrase “those who pursue righteousness” was surely present to Jesus,³⁴ and a similar biblical phrase “to pursue peace,”³⁵ as we supposed, is behind the “peacemakers” of the previous Beatitude (Mt. 5:9). Thus, Jesus’ words about the persecuted was also a deep play on words: those who long for God’s righteousness and seek it in their daily life, shall reach it.

I hope that I have shown the importance of the study of Judaism for a better understanding of Jesus’ Beatitudes. They are also today a humane voice, proclaiming a hope for all of us.

APPENDIX

Mt. 5:8 is a typological commentary to Ps. 24:3-4: the pure in heart shall see God, they shall “go up to the mountain of the Lord and stand in the place of his holiness”; to see God is a common biblical phrase for the pilgrimage to the Temple of Jerusalem, — Mt. 5:3 depends, as known, from Ps. 37:11: “The meek shall inherit the earth.” Also the following Beatitude (Mt. 5:6) about “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” who “shall be satisfied,” is evidently influenced by the same Psalm (37:19): “When times are bad, they shall not be distressed, and in days of famine, they shall be satisfied.” We have already spoken about the Hebrew equivalent of the

33. See also above, note 21.

34. The phrase occurs in Rom. 9:30, I Ti. 6:11; II Ti. 2:22.

35. This phrase occurs in the New Testament in Rom. 14:19, Heb. 12:14, I Peter 3:11.

“peacemakers” in Mt. 5:9, but why “they shall be called sons of God?” It is probably useful to adduce the pacifistic saying of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai in *Mehkilta de Rabbi Yishmael* to Ex. 20:22 (ed. Horovitz – Rabin, Jerusalem, 1960, p. 244) in which he speaks in connection with the peacemakers about the bringing of peace between Israel and their father in heaven. The fatherhood of God in connection with the notion of peace is already stressed in Malachi 2:10: “Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us?”