

yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?" (vv. 17,18). That the miracle immediately follows this account is surely intended to show that the disciples were like the man whose sight was restored but who saw "men as trees, walking". When the Lord Jesus mentioned "heaven", all they could see was natural bread; they could not see that he was speaking of doctrine (Mt. 16:12). If our hearts are hard, then spiritual things will seem like a visual barrage of images lacking perspective and meaning.

### Synthesis

Shirley Jennings died in 2003, and in an obituary, also in the *Daily Express*, his wife gave more insight into how he coped with seeing a tree: "He couldn't even recognise a tree. He knew the top and bottom separately: the trunk, the leaves. It took him six months to put a tree together".<sup>6</sup> It is this lack of ability to *put things together* that seems to lie at the heart of the problem. Sacks elaborated on this aspect: "He would pick up details incessantly—an angle, an edge, a colour, a movement—but would not be able to synthesize them, to form a complex perception at a glance. This was one reason the cat, visually, was so puzzling: he would see a paw, the nose, the tail, an ear, but could not see all of them together, see the cat as a whole".<sup>7</sup> The lack of ability to see things as a whole was also reported by Mike May. For example, when people were speaking, the various movements of their heads, lips and

hands would distract him: "I would look at all that going on and lose track of what they were saying".

Seeing things as a whole is an important ability for spiritual sight. Paul declared "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27), but sometimes it is difficult to see the whole picture, to see the counsel of God as a whole. This perhaps explains why some people never come to "the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). People often believe many aspects of the gospel. Occasionally we meet people who seem to agree with all the main teachings of the Bible. But identifying separate teachings is one thing; putting them all together and recognising them as a whole, as "the truth", is another.

### Conclusion

When the man "came seeing" in John 9 he was obviously not psychologically troubled. It would be inconceivable that the Lord Jesus would restore eyesight without providing the brain with the necessary skills to cope. Lest we should not appreciate that healing the blind involves not only the eyes but also the mind, the miracle in Mark 8 is broken down into two stages to illustrate this. We should not despise the cures which medical science can provide. However, the fact is that man has come close to matching only the first stage of the healing of the blind.

6. Sheridan, P. (2003), "Blind man became a visionary", *Daily Express*, 13 Nov., p. 53.

7. *Op cit.*, pp. 116-7.

## Travel in the Bible

### Transporting goods

Tony Benson

**I**N THE PREVIOUS article we considered how people travelled in Bible times.<sup>1</sup> We now look at the transportation of goods. Unless goods were transported by water this invariably involved animals. A general reference to various animals involved in carrying goods is to be found in 1 Chronicles 12:40: "Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil,

and oxen, and sheep abundantly". Horses are missing from this list and were not used as pack animals in those times.

### Asses

Asses are excellent for carrying goods over difficult terrain, such as steep and rugged mountain

1. "Travel in the Bible: ways of travelling", Nov. 2005, p. 440.

paths where wheeled transport cannot go, and were widely used across the whole of the Middle East. Biblical examples include:

- Asses were used by the sons of Jacob to carry sacks of grain from Egypt to Canaan (Gen. 42:26).
- Joseph sent “ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way” (45:23) after he had revealed himself to his brethren.
- The Gibeonites came to Joshua with asses laden with old sacks, old wineskins and other items artfully designed to deceive the Israelites that they had travelled a long way (Josh. 9:4,5).
- Jesse sent an ass laden with food with David as a present for Saul (1 Sam. 16:20).
- Abigail brought asses laden with food for David and his men when she went out to ward off David when he was marching against Nabal (25:18).
- Ziba, the servant of Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth, brought with him two asses carrying provisions for David and his men when they left Jerusalem at the revolt of Absalom (2 Sam. 16:1).
- People from the Judean countryside brought asses laden with agricultural produce, such as sheaves of corn, wine, grapes and figs, to sell on the sabbath, until stopped by Nehemiah (Neh. 13:15).

### Camels

Camels were not widely used in ancient Israel to carry goods as they are not suited to hilly areas and narrow, rough paths due to their wide and somewhat tender hooves. They are, of course, very suited to crossing deserts, due to their ability to travel for a long time without water, and a camel is able to carry about five times as much as an ass. We do read of camels carrying merchandise in several places in the Bible:

- The merchants who took Joseph to be sold into Egypt were carrying spice, balm and myrrh on camels from Gilead (Gen. 37:25).
- The queen of Sheba (believed to be located in modern Yemen) came to Jerusalem with camels carrying spices, gold and precious stones (1 Kgs. 10:2).

- When Hazael was sent by King Ben-hadad of Syria to enquire of Elisha, he brought with him as a present forty camels laden with “every good thing of Damascus” (2 Kgs. 8:9).
- Emissaries were sent from Judah to Egypt with camels bearing treasure in an attempt to get the Egyptians to assist Judah against the Assyrians. As predicted by Isaiah, this was unsuccessful, and it was God Who delivered Judah (Isa. 30:6).

### Carts and wagons

Besides pack animals, carts and wagons were used in ancient time to carry goods. The use of carts and wagons implies the existence of reasonably level roads, as paths would be too narrow and the ordinary terrain too rough. There were two basic types of conveyances for goods in ancient times, two-wheeled carts and four-wheeled wagons. They were normally drawn by oxen, though the lighter carts could be drawn by mules. The Hebrew word *agalah* is translated both ‘cart’ and ‘wagon’, and it is not always possible to know what is being referred to in Scripture passages where it is used. References to the carrying of items in carts or wagons are as follows:

- Joseph provided Jacob and his family with “wagons”, in which Jacob, along with the women and children of his household, travelled down into Egypt. Although we are not told so, presumably their possessions would have been conveyed in them too (Gen. 46:5,6).
- The twelve princes of Israel brought their offerings in six wagons each drawn by two oxen (Num. 7:3).
- The ark was brought from the Philistine city of Ekron on a “new cart” drawn by “two milch kine”, likely to have been a light two-wheeled cart (1 Sam. 6:7).
- David put the ark upon a “new cart” drawn by oxen to bring it up from Kirjath-jearim (also called Baale of Judah) to Jerusalem. The reference to Uzzah putting forth his hand to steady the ark, with fatal consequences, indicates it was a less stable two-wheeled cart rather than a four-wheeled wagon (2 Sam. 6:3,6).
- Amos refers to carts being used to carry sheaves in harvest time (2:13), as they still were in Britain in my boyhood, being drawn by horses.