

historical period which has a beginning with John the Baptist and is a story that concerns the “last days”. The operation of the Spirit in this time period fulfils the terms of the Old Testament prophecies made by the eighth-century B.C. prophets Joel and Isaiah; and therefore from that perspective, however many bestowals of the Spirit on however many individuals, this is all part of

the same phenomenon predicted by Isaiah and Joel for the “last days”.

Andrew Perry
Sunderland

The short article by Brother Perry which follows, “[The spirit of Elijah and Pentecost](#)”, is complementary to Brother Harrison’s approach.

The spirit of Elijah and Pentecost

Andrew Perry

LUKE ANTICIPATES the bestowal of the Spirit at Pentecost with Jesus’ assertion, “And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you” (Lk. 24:49). There is an allusion here to the terms of the Elijah prophecy of Malachi 4:5: “And, behold, I send . . .” (where the Septuagint uses the same Greek), and the close parallel, “Behold, I send forth” of Malachi 3:1 (LXX).

It is not normally proposed that there is an analogy between the bestowal of the Spirit at Pentecost and the “spirit . . . of Elijah” (Lk. 1:17, RSV). Such a proposal has consequences for Luke’s “last days” understanding of Pentecost (Acts 2:17), as it imparts a particularly *Jewish* emphasis to Pentecost, and it requires us to apply a “last days” framework across the entire story of Luke–Acts.

The use of “send” in Luke 24:49 is distinctive on two counts. Firstly, it contrasts with the Gospel of John, which uses a different Greek verb for the sending of the Holy Spirit (14:26; 15:26; 16:7). Secondly, Luke previously used the same Greek verb as in 24:49 in relation to commissions, whether these concern the disciples and apostles (9:2,52; 10:1,3; 19:29,32; 22:8,35), prophets (11:49; 13:34), angels (1:19,26), Jesus (4:18,43; 9:48; 10:16), John the Baptist (7:27), or miscellaneous characters (7:3,20; 14:17,32; 19:14; 20:10,20). The pattern is regular and repeated in Luke and Acts. This choice of verb, therefore, is distinctive because it carries a *personification of commission and delegation* in respect of “the promise of my Father”, that is, the Holy Spirit. This personification would be consistent with a bestowal of the Spirit upon the apostles as a bestowal of the “spirit . . . of Elijah”.

A number of elements in Luke’s narrative present Pentecost as another fulfilment of Malachi’s forerunner prophecy:

1 The ‘Elijah prophet’ comes *before* the Messiah; the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost *before* any

return of Jesus (Acts 1:11; 3:19,20). The principal function of the bestowal of the Spirit is prophecy, as shown by the quotation of Joel; Elijah is the archetypal prophet, as shown by Luke’s story of the Transfiguration. The ‘Elijah prophet’ is a personal “messenger” (“My messenger”) from the one sending; the disciples are likewise personal messengers sent forth to preach, “witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8).

2 The ‘Elijah prophet’ has a function of ‘comforting’ the people (Isa. 40:1). Luke reflects this when he asserts that Simeon is “waiting for the consolation of Israel” (Lk. 2:25). The Gospel of John (subsequent to the death of John the Baptist) describes the coming of the Holy Spirit as the sending of “another Comforter” (Jno. 14:16). Luke reflects this when he ascribes “comfort” to the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31).

3 The ‘Elijah prophet’ is sent before “the great and dreadful day of the LORD” (Mal. 4:5), and the pouring out of the Spirit is before “that great and notable day of the Lord” (Acts 2:20).

4 The “messenger” prepares a “way” (Mal. 3:1, cf. Isa. 40:3), and this is applied to the work of the Baptist (Lk. 3:4). It has long been noted that ‘way’ is a significant term of identity in Acts. Luke is using ‘way’ to identify disciples and their beliefs, and in this manner shows the apostles’ ministry as a continuation of the work of John the Baptist in bringing out a people from the nation (Lk. 1:16,17).

5 The role of the forerunner is to “turn [the children of Israel] to the Lord their God” (v. 16). This was the pre-eminent work of Elijah on Mount Carmel—to turn the people away from Baal to Yahweh (1 Kgs. 18:21; Mt. 17:11,12). The same purpose is prominent in Acts (3:19; 11:21). Peter asserts that, were the people to turn unto God, “times of refreshing” would

6 come from “the presence of the Lord” (3:19). “Elijah” has the function of “turn[ing]” the children to the fathers (Mal. 4:6). This function is applied to John the Baptist in Matthew’s record (17:11-13), and Luke strikes an echo with the ‘fathers and children’ aspect of the forerunner’s ministry with regard to John the Baptist *and* the apostles (Lk. 3:8; Acts 3:25).

We conclude, therefore, that what is happening in Acts is the same as what is happening in

Luke’s Gospel. The ‘Spirit of Elijah’ brings a broad view of the work of a prophet to Luke’s whole story, whether John the Baptist or the apostles. Even though Luke does not attribute miracles to John the Baptist, this does not diminish his participation in this ‘Elijah’ latter-day bestowal of the Spirit. In the case of the apostles, the broader witness of Elijah is reflected in the accounts of their confrontation with the Jewish authorities, and their miracles.

Gleanings from the Land

Tony Benson

Natural dyes

THE DYING of cloth in different colours is a very old practice. Before the development of modern technology, dyes had to be obtained from natural sources, mostly plants; today they are mostly obtained by synthetic means. Dr Zohar Amar of the Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology at Bar-Ilan University in Israel is studying the production of dyes in ancient Israel in a multi-disciplinary approach, combining Biblical and rabbinical texts, archaeology, botany and biology.

The most extensive Bible references to dyed cloth are in relation to the tabernacle, in which blue, purple and scarlet cloth was used extensively. All three dyes were obtained from animal sources, not plants. Blue and purple were obtained from molluscs and scarlet from a parasitic insect living on oak trees. Until recently the species of insect was unknown, but Dr Amar’s research has shown that the scales of one particular species of insect, living on a species of oak called the Kermes oak in Israel, produces a bright orange-red dye. A cheaper way of producing blue dye naturally

is the indigo plant, a plant in the pea family which used to grow wild around the Dead Sea and was cultivated in Israel in the nineteenth century. It has become popular recently in the USA for dyeing jeans and may be reintroduced to Israel.

A plant widely used today in the Middle East for dye is henna, which produces a red-brown colour. It is referred to twice in the Song of Solomon: “My beloved is to me a cluster of henna-flowers [AV, camphire] in the vineyards of En-gedi” (1:14, RV; cf. 4:13). It once grew wild in the Jordan Valley/Dead Sea area, and has recently been reintroduced at En-gedi. Another important plant for producing dye is the saffron crocus, also mentioned in the Song of Solomon (4:14), from which a yellow dye is obtained. As the dye is only produced from the elongated styles of the flowers, it is very expensive. Its former production in Britain is witnessed by the place name Saffron Walden, a small town in Essex. It is now used more to colour and flavour oriental food.

All these and more are being investigated by Dr Amar and his colleague, who are, like many Israelis, keen to find out more about the land occupied by their forefathers.

Source: “Natural colours”, Heidi J. Gleit, *Eretz*, Apr.-May 2006.

The Babel legacy

EVER since God confounded communication between men by introducing different languages, man has had the problem of translating from one language to another. An additional problem occurs when words are transferred from one alphabet to another (transliteration), as from Hebrew characters to the Latin alphabet, used for English and many other European languages.

The Latin alphabet has twenty-six letters, including five vowels; Hebrew has twenty-two letters and no vowels. Hence there is no exact match between the two and no standard conventions for transliterating from Hebrew to English, as can be seen, for example, by comparing the spellings of Hebrew words transliterated into English in Young’s and Strong’s concordances respectively.

The problem is apparent also when the Israelis today transliterate Hebrew names into English. For example, instead of Isaac and Rebekah, as in our Bibles, we have Yitzhak and Rivka.