

Home for Bible Translators and Scholars in Jerusalem, Inc.

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Spring Newsletter—May 2005

Dear Friends and Relatives,

Greetings from Jerusalem and HBT—the Home for Bible Translators!

We have really missed being in contact with you to share news about HBT, about Israel, and ourselves. Furthermore, we dare to hope to keep up this contact every three months, the Lord willing.

Good news from Israel!

With the new Palestinian leadership and Israel's improved defense strategies, such as the security fence, the ability of extremists to terrorize has been drastically reduced. After four years of extremely low tourism (no salaried work for Halvor), the streets of Jerusalem are once again full of tourists and pilgrims. Halvor once again has income as a guide in the Land, work which he dearly loves. We can indeed wholeheartedly **welcome** you to visit the most interesting and most important Land for everyone whose life is based on the biblical message.

Other than diminished tourism, life has otherwise been going on normally for us at HBT. Bible translators have continued to come each year during this entire period. This Spring is the ninth semester that the special program, co-directed by the HBT and the Hebrew University, has been offered since its inception in 1994. We have been kept busy with administering and promoting the Home. (Please see our travel plans below!)

Membership in the *International Forum of Bible Agencies* (IFOBA or the “Forum”)

We are on the map! It is to our delight to inform you that as of April 2005 HBT has been unanimously voted in as an associate member of the Forum, an umbrella organization of the leading Bible translation and Bible distribution agencies in the world! “The aim of the Forum is to effectively coordinate and strategically work toward the collaboration of all its members so that the Word of God may be globally available and used throughout the world.” Mirja was able to attend the Forum's annual international meeting (this year sponsor: “Faith Comes by Hearing” ministry in Santa Fe, New Mexico). Many central translation and distribution issues were discussed, including “principles of Bible translation.” Mirja, of course, emphasized the importance of knowing the original language and Land of the Bible.



Students of the Bible at HBT in 2005

Our Bible translation students this year come from the four corners of the world—from the East (China), from the West (USA), from the North (Udmurtia and Armenia), and from the South (Chad and Nigeria). This is the most varied



group ever. In spite of these varied backgrounds, we have become one family because we have the same love for the Scriptures and we have the same Lord! In the picture, Halvor is in the back with the hat.

In a recent Herald Tribune newspaper there was an article about the spread of Christianity in the world. It states that Europe is no longer the center of the Christian faith. There are many more Christians in Africa, Asia, and South America. In fact, in China alone there may be now more Christians than in all European countries combined. These countries **urgently** need the Word of God in their mother tongue. No one can become a **disciple** without the Word of God. We are thrilled to realize that our students have come from these countries.

Because of these demographic trends we are even more committed to our vision than in the beginning in 1994. We think it is of paramount importance that mother tongue translators study the Bible text in its context—studying the original language of the Bible in the geographical and cultural context of the Land of the Bible. It is gratifying to realize that HBT has already assisted in the training of translators who work in over 40 languages. It is pure grace that this non-profit organization has been able to function over 10 years primarily on the basis of free-will offerings of individuals and a few congregations. The day to day work at the HBT is the practical gift of faithful volunteer workers. We thank the Lord for your part in the ongoing support of The Home.

The Miracle of the Van

One amazing blessing of grace is our new van. Listen to this recent miracle story: A Finnish man approached Mirja during the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and blurted out: “My wife and I would like to contribute a new van of the best possible kind to the HBT. It is not right that my wife and I both drive luxury cars while HBT has only a problematic old van.” This happened on Oct. 4th. Then on Dec. 4th the old van was stolen! The Lord answered before we knew we had a problem! By January 2005 when the new group of students arrived, we had a new 9 seater Toyota van at our service! The picture shows the new van in front HBT with four students and two volunteers. We are simply grateful to the Lord for His provisions!



Prospect of a Permanent Home for HBT

Our housing facility is crucial to HBT successfully serving Bible translators and scholars studying in Jerusalem. With bathrooms in each of four bedrooms and a large kitchen and living area, it is idyllic for our work.

About three years ago we launched a drive to raise purchase funds by relying on many friends who together would make this possible by purchasing a “stone” or “stones” for the home. Many friends have given sacrificially over the years contributing toward one third of the needed funds. Recently, one contributor has given a large sum that provided another third of the funds and allowed us to seriously negotiate a purchase contract in the coming months. We are proceeding in faith even though \$100,000 of the total \$400,000 still needs to be raised to purchase the main facilities and to secure a first option on the adjacent apartment (ideal for housing volunteer staff) when it is on the market.

Any contribution you feel led by the Lord to give toward this project is appreciate and gratefully received.

We are glad to re-establish contact and look forward to continued communications. Hopefully, we will hear from you as well.

James 1:17 *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”*

With deep thankfulness in His service,

Halvor and Mirja Ronning

P.S. Some of you remember that the upper level of our house burned off in 2000. You will be happy to know that just recently, some five years later, it has been rebuilt (and improved) due to the loving work of volunteers from Finland. Also the wrenching court case of the real estate dealer who attempted to oust us from our home came to an end Dec. 31st, 2003, through the amazing and generous act of a friend. He bought out our adversaries while going into debt himself in order to help us! True, we experienced severe difficulties; but God’s grace is greater—“grace upon grace.” Thank you for your prayers!

Halvor’s 2005 USA Travel Plans - Nov. 14th through Dec. 12th

We’d love to see as many of you as possible to tell you our news and listen to yours. We know that we are not working here alone, but are upheld by your prayers and support.

Set Itinerary Dates:

Philadelphia

Halvor’s traveling dates, God willing, extends one month from Nov. 14 to Dec. 12. He plans to attend two conventions—sponsored by the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), where Halvor is giving a paper, as well as the Board meeting of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research (JSSR)—all three being held in Philadelphia. These great opportunities to promote the Jerusalem School and the Home for Bible Translators are partly due to the travel stipend of Brian Becker, the founder and director of the South East Missouri internet server called “semo.net.” Roy and Helen Brown of Accordance Software, the best original language Bible computer program, has been graciously giving us exhibition hall table space for HBT for some years now.

Los Angeles

Additional set dates is in the Los Angeles area Wednesday, Nov. 30th to Monday, Dec 5th. Three members of JSSR (David Bivin, Dwight Pryor, and Halvor Ronning) are to receive honorary Doctor of Theology degrees from the University of Redlands on Friday Dec. 2nd.

Boston

The final weekend, Dec.10-11, is tentatively set for the Boston area.

OPEN DATES for Additional Invitations:

Anyone wishing to hear about the work of the Home for Bible Translators and Scholars in Jerusalem or to promote a tour to Israel or desiring a presentation on any topic related to Israel and the Bible may consider these dates:

1. **Thanksgiving Thursday, Nov.24th to Tuesday, Nov.29th** ...in Philadelphia or any locations on the route to Los Angeles through Chicago.
2. **Monday, Dec. 5th to Monday, Dec. 12th** ...in Los Angeles or any locations on the route to Boston through either Houston or Atlanta.

Contact Information

Our **contact person** is a dear and true friend, Frances Foley of Fulshear (Houston) Texas. She has remained a faithful supporter for years and will send you various promotional materials about The Home (brochures, videos, DVDs and other material) upon request.

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Donations to HBT can be mailed to (please designate “General” or “Home Purchase”):



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