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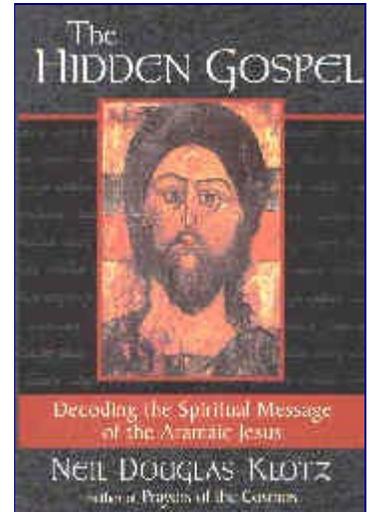


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### **A READER'S JOURNAL:**

**The Hidden Gospel**  
by  
**Neil Douglas-Klotz**  
**Decoding the Spiritual Message**  
**of the Aramaic Jesus**  
Published by Quest Books/IL in 1999

A Book Review by Bobby Matherne ©2002



This is an amazing book written by a Sufi about the Bible. Klotz uses his knowledge of the Aramaic language to tease out deep meanings from otherwise flattened and familiar Bible passages. In the Acknowledgments, page 177, he thanks his spiritual grandfather, Pir Hidayat Inayat Khan, a son of [Hazrat Inayat Khan](#). Klotz is a member of the American Academy of Religion and the Society of Biblical Literature and a leader in the International Federation for the Sufi Message. The author is certainly a *ripe tree* and in this book brings forth *ripe fruit* for the reader's nourishment. I will give examples of the ripe fruit that he brings forth in the following way throughout this review: first I will give a passage from the Bible and below it a re-translation by Klotz using the insights he draws from the Aramaic language. The first example below explains the "ripe" metaphors that I used above.

**[page 1] "Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." (Matthew 7:17)**

**A ripe tree brings forth ripe fruit, an unripe tree bring forth unripe fruit.**

There is a curious presupposition in the contiguity of the two interpretations that seems to say that the usual English translations of the Bible are like a "corrupt tree" bringing forth "evil fruit." That is an amazing way to begin a book about the Bible, and Klotz is certainly courageous with this opening re-interpretation of a Bible verse. From there he proceeds apace with his translation of the Peshitta version of the Bible written in Western Aramaic. While not the Palestinian Aramaic that Jesus would have spoken, it is the closest version to Jesus's native language.

Here's an example of what Klotz does with the most famous prayer in Christianity, the Our Father; first the King James version, then several alternate translation using his technique:

**[page 20] "Our Father which art in heaven"**

**O Thou, the one from whom breath enters being in all radiant forms.**

**O Parent of the universe, from your deep interior comes the next wave of shining life.**

**O fruitful, nurturing Life-giver! Your sound rings everywhere throughout the cosmos.**

Here's Klotz's attitude towards the English translations, in a nutshell, from page 20, "It's not that these English translations are wrong; they are simply limited. They can't hold the spiritual possibilities of the

original Aramaic . . ." In an English-speaking culture that is assured every day that the "map *is* the territory" one can understand how Klotz might be led to believe that it is the English language in which the fault lies, not the readers of the English translations. By any student of General Semantics, steeped in the processes of the "map is *not* the territory," any English translation might be understood in the fullness of any of Klotz's Aramaic translations. The problem is *not* in the language, but in the unconscious meaning-formation of the users of the language. In fact, it is exactly for those who blithely read the Bible in English without any spirit-infused thought and meaning-formation that Klotz's book will be extremely helpful. It is like a crash course in General Semantics using the Bible as the textbook.

**[page 27] "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt 5:8)**

**Ripe are the consistent in heart; they shall see Sacred Unity everywhere.**

**"Have faith in God." (Mark 11:22)**

**Remain within yourselves - live in a place of rooted confidence in Sacred Unity.**

In this next passage, Klotz delivers to the reader several interesting propositions: that our Western concepts of God are only a subset of the Sacred Unity of the East, that our religion uses a different set of rules than the other parts of our lives, and that Jesus, living 2,000 years ago did not live under such separated rules. To untangle the threads of entangled presuppositions is no easy task, so let me state what I read him saying: Our religions are hollow and rule-based and we act as if the people of Jesus's time lived under those same rules. And after saying all this, he tells us Jesus left behind for us a model for living outside rule-based systems of any kind. Read for yourself [I have italicized the key phrases and used Jesus and God in place of his words, Yeshua and Alaha wherever they appear]:

**[page 29] Our usual Western concepts of God and the sacred are only a *partial view* of Sacred Unity in the Middle Eastern sense. It is difficult to overemphasize this point. Most of us have been raised from childhood to think of God as a being *infinitely distant* from humanity or nature, and of the sacred as something separate from the profane. We have been taught that religion operates by *different rules* than politics, science, psychology, art, or culture. Jesus's teaching and reported dealings with his followers show that he did not live from this type of *separation thinking*.**

There is the sting of truth in his words. Those readers whose views of spirituality come from their rule-based religion may spy an aspect of "unripe" fruit in their religion and it would behoove them to read carefully the remainder of this book. Klotz has done a masterful job of prying open the eyes of the spiritually asleep to the deep realities portrayed by the Gospels.

Klotz points to passage from the Gospel of Thomas containing the Hermes Trismegistus dictum, *As Above, So Below*, which expresses an essential truth about the [macrocosm and microcosm](#) for us to digest:

**[page 30] "When you make the two One, and when you make the inner as the outer and the outer as the inner, and the above as the below . . . then you will enter the kingdom." (Saying 22:4,7)**

In Max Freedom Long's books on the Hawaiian language, he finds a "huna code" in which every syllable of the language has a special meaning. When combined into a single word, the multiple meanings of the individual syllables taken separately and in various combinations within the word reveal meanings that illuminate the secret code of healing known as the "huna code." It is a message embedded into the very structure of the language by the ancient Polynesian gods who came to Earth to teach them to talk. The word "kahuna" derives from "ka" as keeper of, and "huna" as name of the healing code. Thus "kahuna" is the keeper of the huna healing code and thus a medicine man or shaman. In the flattened Hawaiian language today, it means "priest." Note the similarity of the word "kahuna" and "Cohen" - the common Jewish name today, which also derives from their word for "rabbi" as I recall. Max Freedom Long

uncovered some evidence that the ancient Polynesian language infused the early Hebrew language in pre-historical times. Note the similarity of structure as Klotz reveals it to us.

**[page 35] In the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah, the spiritual practice of interpretation called *midrash* begins with a study of the Hebrew letters themselves, which symbolize cosmic or universal patterns of energy. In some parts of the tradition, sacred words and letters are considered living beings, like angels. Kabbalistic texts also maintain that every letter, word, phrase, and sentence of the scripture exists simultaneously on several levels of meaning.**

In Steiner's work we discover that Jesus had the "tree of life" within him, which Steiner identified as the *etheric* (or spiritualized) *body* of the first man, Adam, whose very name means "hard" as in our word "adamantine." Consider that the word *archetype* is used to represent a spiritual being and the following passage of Klotz's takes on new meaning using the very technique that he applies so successfully in his book.

**[page 36, 37] One early Jewish mystical practice used before and at the time of Jesus involved remembering and reexperiencing the creation story in one's being. The original archetype of *adam*, the perfection of humanity, became a focus for meditation. One reading of the first chapter of the book of John shows us that, in at least some branches of early Christianity, Jesus was considered the embodiment of the original "word" or perfect human archetype that was present "in the beginning."**

Klotz explains below the circadian usage of the English language in this next passage. The limitation to our individual understanding does not reside in the English language, but in unconscious users of English who mistake the maps they make in English for the territory the maps [English words] represent. This is an easily correctable error through a brief study of the levels of abstraction as taught in General Semantics, but this study is unconscionably left out of most of today's educational system, which seems so devoted to content that the content it teaches misleads more than it leads.

**[page 42] ... when we meditate on the words of a prophet or mystic in the Middle Eastern way, we must consider all possibilities simultaneously. So "Holy Spirit" must also be "Holy Breath." This transcends word play and requires us to shift our consciousness. The separations between spirit and body, between humanity and nature, which we often take for granted in the English language, begin to fall away.**

The next re-interpretation is lengthy, but one can see illustrated clearly the power of Klotz's process. He first points out that "sin" means to "miss the mark," "blaspheme" means to "cut oneself off from the object of [one's] blasphemy," and "forgive" also means to "set free, let go, loosen, leave out, or omit."

**[page 45, 46] "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men." (Matt 12:31)**

**All types of tangled behavior, the missing and falling, the rips and tears -- all the ways you cut yourself off, break your connection, or disrupt the pattern -- can and will be mended. Sooner or later, you will be freed from error, your mistakes embraced with emptiness, your arrhythmic action returned to the original beat. But your state cannot be mended or repaired, when you cut yourself off from the Source of all rhythm -- the inhaling, the exhaling of all air, wind, and atmosphere, seen and unseen -- the Holy Breath.**

And here is an apt re-translation of the famous "meek" beatitude, which is so often misunderstood by the speakers of flattened English:

**[page 49, 50] "Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth."**

**Ripe are those who soften what is rigid, inside and out; they shall be open to receive strength and power -- their natural inheritance -- from nature.**

This next passage resonates beautifully with Hilmar Moore, the person who recommended this book to me. He is a body worker in the new field of orthobionomy which focuses on the types of bodily sensations to which Klotz refers below.

**[page 50] We can again compare these insights to those of various body researchers of this century who have demonstrated conclusively that the idea of the body as a machine is completely inappropriate. The body's movement is not an automatic system of levers and pulleys, but rather a living flow of a whole organism in which awareness plays a very large part. For instance, one can become aware of the sensation of the position in space of joints, muscles, tissues, and organs on a very minute level. These sensations can be sensed and influenced by fine-tuning one's awareness. In this context, the awareness of breathing and the breathing wave can have a very therapeutic effect.**

This next passage reminds me of the story of the "Wizard of Oz" in which the four companions all breathed deeply as they imagined meeting the Great Wizard and as they skipped arm in arm when they went "off to see the Wizard, the wonderful Wizard of Oz." Then came the mis-breathing when they discovered the old man behind the curtain. And full breathing again when he presented each one with a token that recognized their heart's desire. Misbreathing when the balloon takes off without Dorothy, and then full breathing again when she is taught to click her ruby slippers together and say with deep breaths, "There's no place like home."

**[page In one of the earliest Jewish mystical practices, the practitioner tried to reexperience the descent of the spirit and breath into form, and then experience resurrection and ascension in a journey of return to the "throne" of the Holy One.**

In his chapter "Faces of Light" Klotz discusses the nature of day and night as it is used in the Bible, particularly in the Genesis story. Day becomes the building up phase and Night the *pralaya* or destructive phase that allows for re-construction in a better fashion during the next creative phase of Day. [See my essay on "[Art as the Process of Destruction](#)."] In Steiner's description of the [evolution](#) of the solar system, he maps the phases of Saturn, Sun, Moon, and Earth upon the Genesis creation story and shows that each unfolding stage was followed by a re-assimilation or *pralaya* stage.

**[page 76] In fact, Genesis gives both [light and darkness] a place in the unfolding creation as day and night. In Hebrew, the word "day" (iom) gives scope for unfolding, expanding purpose, like a story that proceeds from event to event. "Night" (lailah) allows for assimilation and consolidation, which follow a more mysterious course, like our dream life. We could regard these concepts of day and night as deep insights into the natural world, resulting from close observation of plants and animals on the part of people we normally [RJM: materialistically] call primitive.**

He adds later that "To escape into light is not better than to continually rummage in darkness. Both light and darkness are needed." To this latter sentence, I cannot help but elaborate that he is not talking about some equal amounts of light and dark as some English speakers might naively interpret his words, but a rhythm of light and darkness in one's life.

This next passage requires some elaboration. It reminds me of "Black Elk Speaks" in which John Neihardt writes how Black Elk as a young boy went into a coma-like state for three weeks and when he awoke, he walked around in a daze, avoiding everybody. An old man of the tribe took him aside and told him, "You have had a big dream and unless you share it with the tribe, you will go crazy." Black Elk shared his dream, the tribe helped him enact his dream in real life, and he went on to become a great shaman of the

tribe.

**[page 78] If you receive a vision that illuminates circumstances, you naturally share it. If you keep it to yourself, you either suffocate the flame for want of breath, or you keep it veiled in your inner life. You can only do the latter for so long, however, without denying the reality of the vision. We are also generous with illumination when we allow it to penetrate all parts of our being. Then we embody the light fully and put it into practice.**

In the next passage Klotz gives us a demonstration of a definition of evil that I first came upon in Steiner's works that few people seem to understand at first, namely, "evil is a good out of its time." The light that Lucifer brought to Earth with him was a good that human beings were not quite ready for, and therefore it was an evil deed that he did, a good out of its time. When we consider that "unripeness" is something that is out of its time, and ripe means something good that is ready to eat, we get a deep view into the relevance of Steiner's insight into evil as a good out of its time.

**[page 79,80] "The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness."**

**But when your expression is veiled, the eye cloudy and darting, the action at the wrong time and place, what you embody of light and understanding will be chaotic, swirling, obscure. Your non-understanding then participates in the primal darkness of the cosmos.**

If I have any complaints about Klotz's book, this next passage will show an example of it. In English the word "heart" is used metaphorically to mean the center of one's feeling or being in such expressions as "with my whole heart" and until the advent of materialistic science, the heart was thought to be source of all thought and the container of one's soul. Klotz gives us the Aramaic definition of "heart" and surprise, surprise, it's the same as English. [On page 118 he does a similar thing to our word, "neighbor," which comes from the word "nigh" which means to draw near exactly as he explains the meaning of neighbor in Aramaic.]

**[page 117] The Aramaic word for "heart," *leba* refers not simply to the physical heart, but figuratively to the center of one's feeling or intelligence, the pith or marrow of what we would call our mental-emotional life.**

The next passage is his re-write of Mark 4:11-12 in which Jesus explains why he speaks in parables to the crowds while he often talks more directly to his disciples. To let go of maps and experience the territory directly is figuratively described in the phrase "to release the cords with which you tie your selves to the past." Maps are always items from the past that if we cling to desperately will prevent us acting appropriately in the present. Instead we are apt to bring forth something good, but since it is out of its time, we will produce something that will viewed as an evil or a sin. It was a good in its time, but its time is past.

**[page 124, 126] "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may not hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them." (Mark 4:11-12)**

**These wild parts of you see but aren't yet illuminated, hear but aren't struck by the sound that envelopes the mystery of Unity; not until they (and you) are turned around by parable, not until turning you begin to release the cords with which you tie your selves to the past.**

With so many people infected and infested with what Transactional Analysis calls "Be Perfect" drivers

and injunctions, it is no wonder that the next passage which exhorts us to "be perfect" is so often misunderstood. Watch what happens when Klotz passes his Aramaic magic wand over the short passage:

**[page 129, 130] "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt 5:48)**

**Be fulfilled in all of your selves, know them until they cease to know themselves, grow with them until they outgrow themselves in a reborn "I am." The Knowing, Growing, Parenting of the cosmos completes itself through you.**

Another passage that is often not understood fully, with three re-interpretations by Klotz.

**[page 148, 149] "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." (Matt 5:44)**

**#1, Find the blessing of yielding to those who cover you with their own impressions, detaching you in their minds from who you really are. Use this seclusion to retreat from the surface of your image, the pride and reputation to which these insults stick. Use the force to bend toward your own deepest Self.**

**#2. Restrain a reaction when someone helps filter out the real from the false in you. What you feel as hate is a mirror like the moon, reflecting your own self-loathing. Heal hate with beauty, inside and out. When the dawn breaks, the moon will know its time has passed.**

**#3. Open space for those who try to tie you up. Lay a trap that catches and releases all of their knots and binding complexities. Let your prayer for them be: "O God, use this force that pushes and contracts, that chases and entangles, to guide us all back to harmony and you."**

This is a great passage on which to end. It demonstrates the multi-faceted translations by Klotz that fill the pages of this inspiring book. Each chapter also ends with a meditation and it is only fitting to cap off this review with the final meditation of the book called, "An Inner Shalom":

**[page 169, 170] Return to a quiet place of breathing awareness, feeling the word shalom or shalama riding on the inhalation and exhalation. With this feeling and word, feel the presence of Hokhmah, Holy Wisdom, and greet each aspect of your inner self that you meet. As much as possible, allow each one to participate in feeling the mysterious origins of the universe. Invite each aspect of your self to a table of bread and wine that can fulfill the ultimate desire of each to bring its purpose into being. As you end the meditation, look into the days immediately ahead of you. In what ways can this greeting and invitation enter your interactions with everyone and everything you meet?**

