

THE TANTUR ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE

October Olives

Dan Koski, Tantar Staff



Greetings from Tantar!

In the Holy Land, the October olive harvest season is the most-anticipated time of the year outside of any religious and national holiday. Anyone who has ever journeyed to our part of the world knows very well the importance of the olive tree to both Israeli and Palestinian cultural, national and even religious identity. For Palestinians, the oldest olive trees are known as *Romana zeitun*, or “Roman olive trees,” due to their millennia-long lifespan, and symbolize continuity with the land. For Israelis, the olive tree represents the hope and

aspirations of the founding of the modern state of Israel. For Christian pilgrims, returning home with an olive wood cross or handicraft item is a rite of passage in their spiritual journey. At Tantar, the olives on our olive trees are at present being picked by local residents at the time of this writing; perhaps one day we will get around to bottling our own *zeit* for our guests and participants to bring home with them. For now, we are happy to report that our trees are healthy, and, thanks to God, bearing fruit. May the theological work that we have been entrusted be so as well!

Tantar at a Glance: Three Month Sabbatical Program



As our longest program, the Three Month Sabbatical holds a very special place in the life of Tantar. Beginning at the start of September and lasting until early December, the program is designed to offer both educational enrichment but also allow for ample time for independent pursuits such as regional travel, personal study, and, of course, rest and relaxation.



Our current Sabbatical program participants have just completed the halfway mark of their program. Besides numerous lectures and field trips, including a chance opportunity to visit the Biblical site of Tel Gezer (see above photo), the participants are busy learning from and with one another, as well as creating a circle of fellowship.

Reflections on Ecumenism

Very Rev. Fr. Timothy Lowe, Rector of the Tantur Institute

Ecumenism is not for the faint-hearted, especially on the level of theological and historical dialogue. It is a bit like unrequited love or a woman in the pangs of childbirth but never giving birth. A person can invest a lifetime in theological dialogue, conferences and resulting declarations only to see them float above the everyday life of local parishes and activities. On the other hand, however, local parishes often are quite willing to overlook historical and theological differences for the sake of common interests in the actual work of the gospel in any given locale. As Christians become minorities in any given place, they instinctively bond together for survival and pooling of resources. The Middle East is a current example of this due to being caught between a political/religious dynamic of us versus them. In areas of dominance, Christians can simply stay to themselves in their parochial and self-sufficient environment and go about things oblivious to others. What seems to me to be lacking in both cases is any desire for the deeper healing of the Christian family and the resultant joy of reconciliation. We are neither the prodigal son nor the patient father hoping for a return that sets off a celebration worthy of the kingdom of God. We might even tend towards the self-righteousness of the other brother or the Pharisee who excoriates in supposed prayer that wretched and sinful Publican standing in the back.

It seems to me that if we want to take an ecumenical path, we must start with our own personal repentance. We must be courageous to confess our own sins of indifference and arrogance to the Christian other.

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“We must be courageous to confess our own sins of indifference and arrogance to the Christian other.”

Pope Francis (left) embraces Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. Photo source from www.calledto communion.com

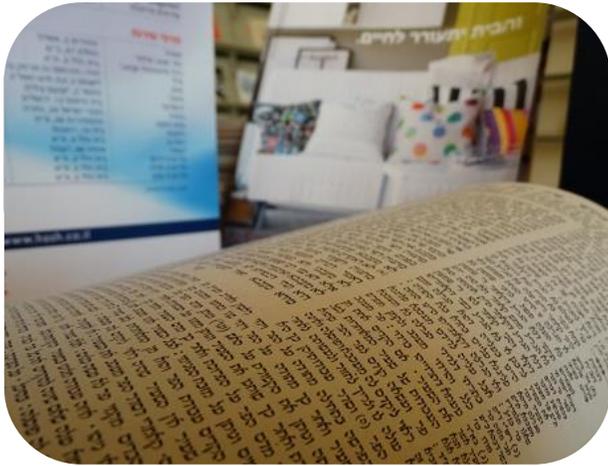
Library Upgrade Underway

The Tantur Library holds a special place in the heart of many program participants, visitors, residents and scholars alike. With over 60,000 books and periodicals, it has been the largest English-language Christian theological library in the Holy Land for most of its 40-year history.

This year, Tantur Librarian Jacqueline Mazoyer has been working with the University of Notre Dame to upgrade our digital infrastructure through the implementation of a new library coding software entitled KOHA, which is currently in use at both the library of the London Undergraduate Program of the University of Notre Dame in London, and at our sibling library at Ecole Biblique near the Old City in Jerusalem. Implementation of this system will mean greater ease of updating our digital database, and open up new possibilities for great use of “the academic gemstone of Tantur.”



Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies program participant Maurice Sikenyi uses our recently-installed library computer. Maurice is an intern at Rabbis for Human Rights, and is residing at Tantur for the length of his program.



Hebrew Ulpan A Student's Perspective

Each summer, the Tantur Institute offers a Four-Week Intensive Hebrew "Ulpan" (an institute or school for the study of Hebrew), designed for scholars, graduate and doctoral Biblical students studying Biblical Hebrew who wish to learn its modern derivative. Clair Mesick, a 2013 participant of this program, offers some insights on her experience in the program.

For four weeks this past summer, five students gathered in a Tantur classroom to learn the basics of Modern Hebrew. Almost all of us were Bible students. Our experience with Hebrew had heretofore been mired in the distant past, caught up in ritual law and biblical poetry and the exacting measurements of temple- and tabernacle-building in the ancient Israelite world. We knew the words for "sacrifice," "cattle," and "the glory of the Lord." Not so much how to say "cellphone" in Hebrew.

What a change to leap more than two millennia into the twenty-first century! Here we heard about the modern Israeli love for sitcoms and encountered different opinions on the apparently perennial debate over the best hummus in Jerusalem. We wrote and gave miniature 'tours' of churches in the Old City and practiced our fledgling Hebrew in the open-air market or while browsing Israeli bookstores. We learned that the verb we'd known for "Moses went up onto the mountain" now meant "emigrate to Israel," and the verb for "Abram went down into Egypt" now meant "get off the bus." Our understanding of the scope of the language - what words could signify, how their meaning had evolved over time - shifted under the very capable hands of our two teachers.

Studying at Tantur meant more than learning a language, however - it also meant getting an inside look into the political, cultural, and religious complications of the area. During the weeks that we studied Hebrew, Tantur was home to an ecumenical group of pastors, scholars, and others who had enrolled in a program to discover Israel - its churches, synagogues, archeology, and political conflict. We tagged along with them to Jericho and the Jordan River, sat in on the occasional lecture or discussion, and shared our reactions over dinner in the evenings. We spoke with Palestinians and witnessed the difficult and (for many) daily experience of crossing the checkpoint between Israel and Palestine. We saw Copts and Armenians and Greek Orthodox and Franciscans uneasily sharing space

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Hebrew Ulpan: A Student's Perspective.

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in the Holy Sepulchre, and we pushed our way through Ramadan crowds in the streets of Jerusalem while muezzins chanted the Muslim call to prayer from loudspeakers over our heads.

The Hebrew language is in some ways as paradoxical as the land itself – the language, thousands of years old yet reborn hardly a century ago under the pen of a Jewish scholar; the land, a strange mix of ancient and modern, of archeological sites side-by-side with billboards, of monks on cellphones and ossuaries crammed in next to gardening tools. We could not claim to comprehend the intricacies of either land or language after a short month, but studying Hebrew at Tantur certainly gave a glimpse into them.

Clair Mesick is a doctoral student at the University of Notre Dame. For more information on the 2014 Four Week Intensive Hebrew course, visit tantur.org.

Reflections on Ecumenism (Continued from Page 2)

We then must be moved to confess our own disregard for what the Lord himself wants for his Church. In the end it is his body, not ours. It is his table to which we are invited, not ours. It is his path to the cross, his death, resurrection and ascension.

We are not the alpha and omega of anything. After we have dealt with our personal issues, we must then be courageous to speak the truth in love to our corporate structures. From time to time, we must have corporate repentance with those of us in leadership leading the way.

We must challenge small-mindedness, historical jealousies, and the endless list of sins of the past rooted in the imperial eras when expanding empires were married to the Christian faith resulting in violence and suffering against the Christian other. People want to remember the wrongs done to themselves and their ancestors. We prefer to be defined by our sufferings rather than the sufferings of Christ. One leads to anger, hatred and suspicion, while the other leads to resurrection and joy.

As a final thought, our hearts need to grow and expand. If Christ can embrace the world, then our hearts can and must expand by the grace of the Holy Spirit to do the same thing. The rest then simply becomes the details.

Rev. Timothy Lowe is rector of Tantur Institute for Theological Studies. He has served as adjunct Professor at Holy Apostles Catholic Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut, where he taught Old Testament and is co-founder and Director of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies.

The Tantur Mosaic



Guest Lecturer Fr. Gregory Collins OSB, Abbot of Dormition Abbey

Jerusalem is no stranger to remarkable figures with extraordinary talents. Fr. Gregory Collins OSB, Abbot of Dormition Abbey since the autumn of 2011, is one such man.

A native of Belfast, Northern Ireland, Fr. Gregory is a renowned lecturer and author on Christian mysticism, Orthodox theology, iconography and many other subjects of note. This October, the Tantur Institute was fortunate enough to have Fr. Collins present a module of three lectures to our Sabbatical program.

The initial feedback from this lecture series has been overwhelmingly positive, with even some of our staff taking time to sit and learn from Fr. Gregory. We thank the good Abbot for his generosity of time and skill, and hope that this is simply the beginning of a mutual journey of Christian learning and fellowship!

A Special Announcement from Trustees of the Garden Tomb Association of Jerusalem

The Trustees of the Garden Tomb Association are looking for a new Director. With a team of around 20 staff and volunteers, the Director is responsible for the management and ministry of the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem. The primary motivation of candidates should be a sense of calling to serve the Lord in this vital ministry of service. The Director meets regularly with political, civil and religious leaders representing widely varied views. The next Director will be respected within their current local Christian community,

bringing strong interpersonal skills which build trust, teamwork, respectful relationships and open inclusive communications. They may will have likely lived in Israel/Palestine or visited regularly. They will be familiar with the complex cultural, political and spiritual issues. For more information, please refer to www.saxbam.com/jobs (reference UANKA) or email [Fiona Galliers-Pratt](mailto:Fiona.Galliers-Pratt). Applications should arrive by 7 November 2013.

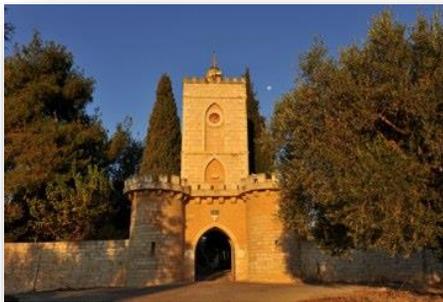


The Garden Tomb, Jerusalem. Photo source from www.gardentomb.org.

Tantur is an institute for ecumenical and theological studies, situated on a beautiful hill in Jerusalem near Bethlehem. It serves as a welcoming place in The Holy Land for visitors who come from all over the world seeking an oasis of learning, community, and hospitality.

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