

Jewish scholar called Jesus 'elder brother'

Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher who lived from 1878 to 1965, viewed Jesus as "an elder brother," according to a speaker in Mobile.

THE SPEAKER was Dr. Haim Gordon of Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel, who has completed a term as visiting professor at the University of South Alabama.

Gordon addressed the Mobile Area Jewish-Christian Dialogue in a meeting at First Baptist Church of Mobile.

Gordon is a co-editor of a newly published book in English titled "Martin Buber: A Centenary Volume."

THE BOOK records the proceedings of a scholarly conference held at Ben Gurion University in 1978 on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Buber, who was born in Vienna, Austria, and lived in Germany and Israel.

Professors, students and many other people from throughout the world attended the conference.

Among those who read papers about Buber at the conference was Dr. Robert L. Perkins of the University of South Alabama.

Gordon said, "People came to the conference to talk to each other, to really have dialogue because Buber was the philosopher of dialogue."

ALTHOUGH THE conference participants included people from many occupations and age groups, most of them were

Christians and Jews, according to Gordon.

The Israeli professor talked about Buber's relationship to Christianity.

Said Gordon, "Buber not only spoke as a Jew but Buber was strong enough in speaking as a Jew to be able to write, 'I see in Jesus an elder brother,' and to argue with the Christians that 'this elder brother of mine has been misinterpreted by you.'"

Buber said to Christians, "Jesus was Jewish just like me, and I know him. I can tell you about him from a perspective that you Christians who only got to know him later will never know."

GORDON SAID Christians argued with Buber, "but for a Jew to be strong enough after years of anti-Semitism, after the Holocaust to get up and say it to the Jewish community and to the Christian community, that is an opening of dialogue."

Dialogue as Buber understood it "is not that everybody is friendly, not that everybody is nice to each other.... The spirit of dialogue is that you don't keep back what you feel about other people. You tell it to them. You have to clear it up."

Gordon said that at the conference at Ben Gurion University arguments among the participants were not by people "who wished to make points with each other, but there was

an attempt to really understand each other better."

ACCORDING TO Gordon, an important contribution of Buber to Jewish-Christian dialogue was a Bible which Buber translated from Hebrew into German. The Jewish Bible is what Christians refer to as their Old Testament.

The speaker said Buber's translation of the Bible is different from many translations including the King James version in that they "are at fault in one basic respect that they're trying to show that the Old Testament is mainly a preview, an avenue into the New Testament, and they're showing the Bible as a preface to the New Testament."

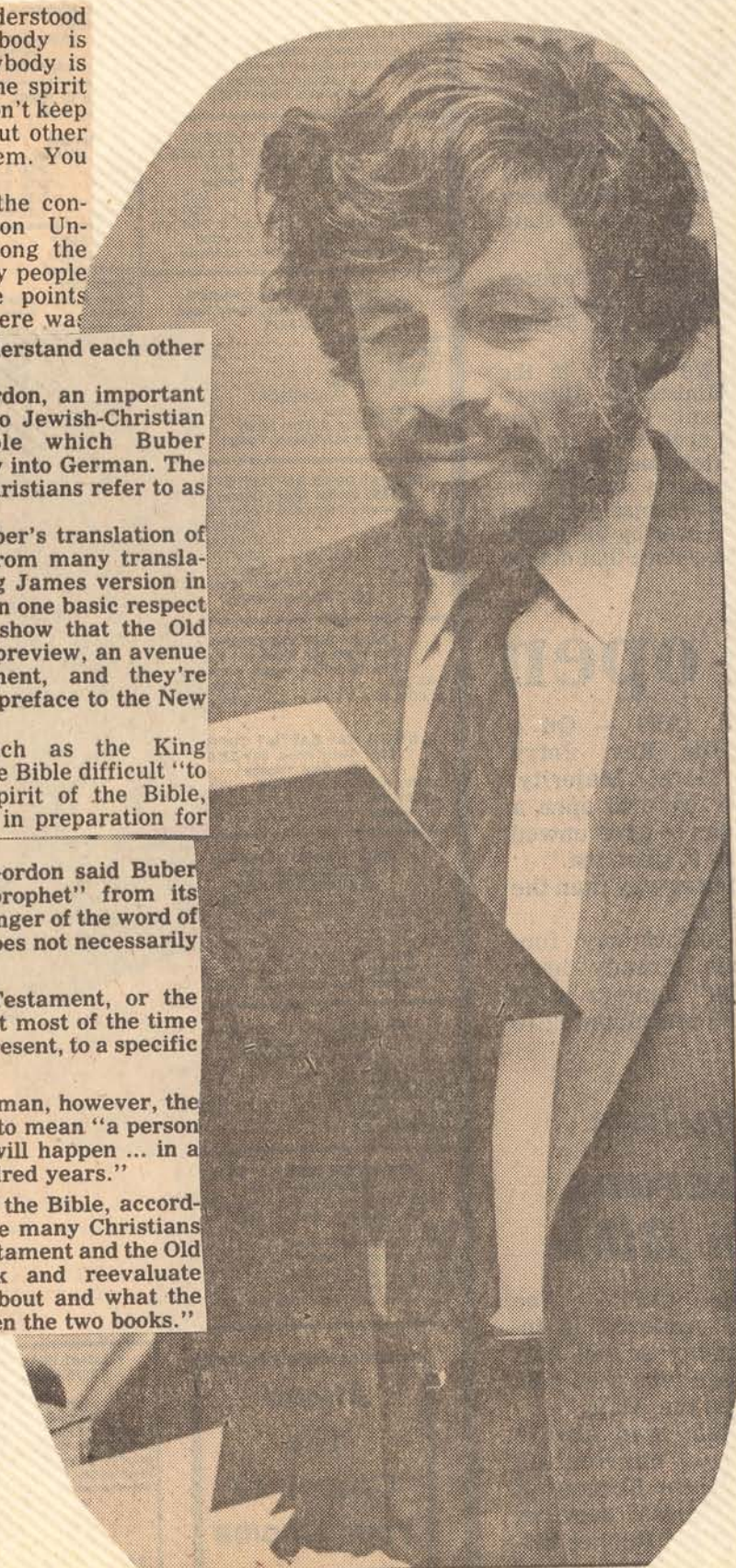
TRANSLATIONS such as the King James make reading the Bible difficult "to get the real Jewish spirit of the Bible, which was written not in preparation for Jesus," Gordon said.

Giving an example, Gordon said Buber translates the word "prophet" from its Hebrew meaning of "bringer of the word of God. The word of God does not necessarily relate to the future.

"You read the Old Testament, or the Bible, and you'll see that most of the time the word relates to the present, to a specific situation."

IN ENGLISH and German, however, the word "prophet" is used to mean "a person who will tell you what will happen ... in a few years, in a few hundred years."

Buber's translation of the Bible, according to Gordon, has made many Christians "go back to the New Testament and the Old Testament and rethink and reevaluate what these books are about and what the relationships are between the two books."



Dr. Haim Gordon