

BES RAUHMA: A BIBLICAL SYMBOL I

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Abstract: Every formation house is to be fashioned after the house built on a hill top. Paul Kalluveettil CMI takes a fresh look at *Bes Rauhma* as a biblical symbol. The founding Fathers of the first indigenous religious congregation chose Mannanam hill to build up the first religious house. Indeed, the sites of the first monasteries were hills. As heights generally evoke heaven, the abode of God, *Bes Rauhma* has a deep spiritual significance. Those who dwell in *the house on the top* were destined to see visions of God concerning cosmos and every created being, such as humans, animals, birds, trees and plants, sun, moon and stars, hills and mountains, streams, rivers and oceans and galaxies. It is here that the fragmented relationships are mended and a new Adam in a new paradise is found. The author goes on to make a comparison between the various biblical mountains and the *Bes Rauhma* and sees the biblical symbolism present in each of them. *Mount Moriah* is described as the place of self-sacrifice and a place of becoming blessed; *Mount Horeb* as a place of encounter and a place of vision and colloquy; *Mount Sinai* as a place of theophany and place of covenant and *Mount Zion* as God's dwelling place where petitions are heard, a place of praise, sacrifices and celebrations and finally, a place of blessing.

Keywords: Mannanam, monastery, hills, *Bes Rauhma*, *Darsanavîdu*, *Tapasubhavanam*, heaven, sages, visionary, creation, Chavara, poem, fragmentation, unity, concord, integrity, sin, animosity, disintegration, love, joy, confraternity, accusation, condemnation, hatred, rebellion, Paradise, *karma*, symbols, Moriah, Horeb, Sinai, Zion, Carmel, Tabor, Golgotha, Olives, Abraham, Salvation History, encounter, Moses, vision, colloquy, Commandments, solitude, silence, penance, prayer, Elijah, God-realization, self-realization, Theophany, Covenant, Egypt, affluence, politics, oppression, exploitation, triumphalistic, religion, desert, service, Baal, Jerusalem, Solomon, tabernacle, sacrifice, contemplation, celebration, vocation, Temple.

1. House of the Top

The Founding Fathers of CMI Congregation chose Mannanam hill to build up the first religious house. Indeed, the sites of the first monasteries were hills. Heights generally evoke heaven, the abode of God. The Founding Fathers also called the *Bes Rauhma Darsanavîdu* (House of Vision) and *Tapasubhavanam* (House of Penance). Both titles have deep spiritual significance. The inmates were destined to see the visions of God concerning cosmos and every created being, such as humans, animals, birds, trees and plants, sun, moon and stars, hills and mountains, streams, rivers and oceans and galaxies. Metaphorically speaking, all of them are the faces of the Creator. In them there irradiates the splendour, magnificence and radiance of God. In the divine destiny the earth was meant to be the mirror of heaven, matter spirit, secular sacred. In the early period of creation there took place the celebration of creation, God the main celebrant, Adam, and Eve the concelebrants, and the whole creation was taking part in this joyful and glorious celebration of praise. Adam (the Hebrew term is grammatically singular in form, but plural in connotation) had the role of the *maestro* of this cosmic orchestra. The eco of this festivity is seen in Ps 29; 19; 136; 148; Dan 3:29-68.

2. *Bes Rauhma as Darsanaveedu*

As already said, the inmates of *Bes Rauhma* were following the *tapas* style of life of the Indian sages. It transformed them into *rishîs* (visionaries) who nurtured and lived the Creator's original designs concerning the whole creation. There reigned in *Bes Rauhma* *êka nâda*, *râga*, *tâla* and *laya* (one voice, tune, rhythm and blend).

3. Means Used to Achieve *Darsan*

Kuriakose Elias Chavara (henceforth KEC) the youngest among the Founding Fathers, and the first Prior of Mannanam Monastery, has thus articulated the means to achieve *darsan*:

Abide in the love of Jesus Christ,
Sit always before His eyes,
Walk close to Him,
Converse continuously with Him. (*Letters VII/6*)

In the poem *Compunction of the Soul* (henceforth CS) he longs for *darsan*
Your sacred limbs, beautiful holy face
Your sparkling eyes, nostrils bright
Ruby lips, conch-shaped teeth

The honeyed sounds flowing from your lips
 I am greedy to behold, to hear I long
 Though steadfast to look, alas unworthy my eyes!
 O furnace of love, you, my treasure of kindness
 I am thirsty and greedy, alas my sin the hindrance! (V: 154-158)

The third canto of CS begins thus:

The Lord of mercy, the Son of God
 His glorious splendour, I long to see (*kānākēnam*)

There are 49 objects for which KEC is athirst. For KEC, the *bhakta yogi* the world was divine milieu. This mystical poet could experience and enjoy the divine splendour in them and had given beautiful articulation to it:

The sky, the move of sun and moon,
 The bright planets and the cluster of stars
 The green grass and flowers of the earth,
 Gazing at the universe entire
 What the reason for their creation!
 Seeing it I could understand your glory,
 If you had set such fortune on earth
 What wonderful blessings stored above! (CS II: 291-298)

4. Fragmentations of Relationships

As Adam tried to grasp the divinity by force, the existing harmony in creation was broken down. In the place of unity, concord and integrity, sin brought forth animosity, and disintegration of relationships between God and man, between humans, between man and animals and between man and earth. Human face was disfigured; it did not radiate the divine splendour. Instead of giving articulation to love, joy and confraternity, the human voice emitted the position of accusation, condemnation, hatred and rebellion.

5. New Adam and New Paradise

Despite Adam's disobedience, the Creator God did not forsake humans. He sent his only begotten Son to earth who took upon himself the sin, and shedding till the last drop of blood, redeemed Adam and the whole cosmos. He created a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21-22), and once more human faces and voices could be transformed into divine face and divine voice.

6. The Karma Yogis of *Bes Rauhma*

The visionaries in the *Bes Rauhma* were engaged in dreaming the divine dreams concerning Adam and the whole creation. Their contemplation led them to action. They zealously set out to transform the disfigured faces and ugly voices into loving faces and celestial voices.

7. Biblical Symbols

This introductory part leads us to the proper theme of the study. *Bes Rauhma* symbolizes Mount Moriah, Mount Horeb, Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, Mount Carmel, the Mountain of the Lord Almighty, God's Mountains, Mount Tabor, Mount Golgotha and Mount of Olives.

7.1. Mount Moriah

Mount Moriah appears a faraway mountain to which Abraham is sent by God for the ultimate test of his faith. (Gen 22:1-18).

7.1.1. Place of Sacrificing the Self

Abraham who was leading a life of security, self-complaisance and comfort of religion, was asked to reject the past, make a radical break with it, become a destitute (*agati*), leap into the dark and cling to God for the day to day existence. The climax of such life style is depicted in Gen 22:1-18. Yahweh asked him: "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering..." Abraham's replied: "*hinneni* (here I am)". Then he went to Mount Moriah, bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on the top of the wood. As he took the knife to slay his son, the Lord forbade him. He was well pleased with the readiness of the patriarch to embrace a life of total *kenosis* (self-emptying). Jesus, the son of Abraham (who was the Father of Salvation History) perfectly realized this call. He became the victim, the sacrifice and the one who performed the sacrifice as well as the salvation itself.

The Founding Fathers of the religious community wholeheartedly hearkened to the special call of God. They left everything and their dear ones, searched for the pearl (Mt 13:44-46) of solitary place, found the *Bes Rauhma*, and zealously devoted themselves to prayer and penance. There they sacrificed themselves as a burnt offering, got rid of everything non-divine and inhuman, and clung to God for survival. KEC thus records: "From that day I have decided to become a total monk and separated myself from the blood relations, and made

incomes and expenses common" (*Chronicles*, pp. 70-71). He enumerates their daily devotional practices: "By the great zeal of Fr Porukkara we recited the Rosary of 153 beads at three intervals, the seven dolours Rosary and prayers to St Joseph and of Holy Scapular. On Sunday noon there was solemn High Mass, sermon, and Rosary. During Lent we recited the long canonical prayers of *Hudra*. That included the vigil songs (*qālā d'sahara*). After *Leliyā* (canonical office for the night) we added other prayers. At the end the inmates sang *santhar 'ālāhā* (the supplication of Simeon after he got the grace to see the Son of God and he take the Child in his arms: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, now dismiss your servant in peace" Lk 2:29). In the morning, after the Holy Mass, all of us prayed the Litany of all Saints - a devotion we cherished, as we wanted to live on earth in the company of the inhabitants of heaven. *Bes Rauhma* was the pre-figuration of heaven (*Chronicles*). On Fridays after 3 pm we conducted the way of cross by erecting 14 crosses and treading through the stones and kneeling at each station. At the saying that Jesus climbed Calvary, we also, together with the people, reached at the top of the hill" (*Chronicles*, pp. 72-73).

7.1.2. Place of Becoming Blessed

The Lord said to Abraham: "I will in blessing bless you, and in multiplying I will multiply your seed (*zēr 'a*) as the stars of heaven and as the sand on the seashore... and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because you have hearkened to my voice," vv.17-18. The Hebrew original uses the ablative absolutes twice, *bārēk abarek'ka*, *harba 'arbe*, in order to give stress to the intensity and thoroughness of action. Abraham was blessed (filled with the divine wellbeing, *kshemam*, *aiswaryam*), and was made a blessing being, like God himself. The reason for this grace was that his ears were attuned to the voice of God.

The Founding Fathers called *Bes Rauhma* a *coventum*, a term that comes from convent (originated from the Latin *convenire* = come together, a community of persons devoted to religious life under a spiritual head. Their continuous sacrificing of self, made them the children of Abraham, a community of the saved and the blessed ones and of the blessing ones. God gave them the grace to enjoy *sālokya* (being in the divine world), *sāmīpya* (closeness to the Divine), *sārūpya* (transformed into the Divine) and *sāyūjya* (united to the Divine). They called themselves *kūdappirappukal* (those who were born together, twins).

7.2. Mount Horeb

Three biblical texts that refer to Mount Horeb come into focus in this analysis: Ex 3:1-2; 34:1-14, 27-35 and 1 Kings 19:9-18.

7.2.1. Place of Encounter: Ex 3:1-2

“Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up” (Ex 3:1-2). Like Moses, the Founding Fathers were alone with the Alone (*solus cum solo*) in a desert-like place. They knew that God would speak only in solitude and silence (Jer 2:1-2). *Bes Rauhma* was like Mount Horeb. This house of the heights was close to heaven, according to the belief of the biblical times.

In his solitary days, Moses was exposed to extreme cold and hot climate. During this period he has clad in rough clothes and had to eat but dried bread. Moses could not enjoy the company of human beings. These factors slowly brought a change in his mentality. The former haughty and imperious prince of Egypt in him was meeting a steady death. The attitude of *agathi* (I am nothing, I have nothing) was slowly emerging in him. Moses has become a diffident fellow who has lost self-confidence. God was preparing him to become His representative, who has to draw out the Hebrew slaves from the sea of slavery, and to make Israel His covenant people, and to lead them to the Holy Land. At Mount Horeb the Lord appeared as a burning bush. Yahweh was undertaking upon himself the sufferings of the Hebrews. Like them he was undergoing the burning experience. But nobody can consume the Almighty. Thereby He was assuring the victims of exploitation that their oppressors will not be able to destroy them.

It was God who inspired the early Fathers to renounce the world and its pleasures. They embraced an ascetic life, in solitude, silence, penance and prayer. This new life style helped them to die to themselves, in order to let Christ live in them (Gal 2:20), who undertook upon himself the sufferings of humanity and became like the burning bush that was not burnt up. For the suffering people the early Fathers had to become the symbols of the burning bush. In order to appropriate this call, they took up the *Bes Rauhma* life style, so that they could be sent to draw the humans from the sea of sin, ignorance, poverty, marginalization, untouchability and eternal death.

7.2.2. Place of Vision and Colloquy: Ex 34:1-14, 27-35

As Israel worshipped the golden calf, the covenant with God was broken down. Yahweh punished them (Ex 32-33). Yet the Lord did not forsake them. He asked Moses to chisel out two stone tablets and come to Mount Horeb in the morning. There Yahweh passed in front of Moses proclaiming His name as the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin (34:6-7). All at once Moses bowed to the ground and worshipped, and pleaded with the Lord to forgive the wickedness and sin of the stiff-necked people, and take them as his inheritance. Then the Lord was willing to re-establish the covenant with Israel, and wrote down on the tablets the Ten Commandments. During the forty days of *upavāsam* (which literally means 'staying close to God') Moses forgot to eat and drink. Living in the company of Yahweh by fixing his eyes on the divine face, and tuning his ears to the voice of Yahweh, made his countenance radiant (34:29).

The life of solitude, silence, penance and prayer at *Bes Rauhma* provided the early Fathers the grace of divine vision; they spent their days in colloquy with God, in praise and worship, in intercession and petition. In the words of KEC, they abided in the love of Jesus Christ, sat always before His eyes, walked close to Him, and conversed continuously with Him (*Letters* VII/6). They followed the Indian *manthra* (maxim)

dhānamūlam Gurormūrti
manthramūlam Gurorvākyaṃ
poojamūlam Gurorpādām
mokshamūlam Gurorkripa

(the root of meditation, the figure of the Master; the root of invocation, the Word of the Master; the root of worship, the feet of the Master; the root of salvation, the grace of Master). At this intense endeavour (*bhagīradhayatnam*) the Lord was pleased with them, graced them with mystical vision, revealed to them his dreams and aspirations concerning the Kerala Church and community. They, like Moses, humbly begged pardon for the lack of total commitment of the people and the clergy to Christ. They praised, thanked, rendered homage to the Lord in the name of humans. Because of their *upavāsam* their faces become radiant with the divine glory. Others recognized this transformation, called them men of God, and held them in great respect.

7.2.3. Place of Vision and Colloquy II: 1 Kings 19:9-18

The life of Prophet Elijah, the Father of the Carmelite Order can be summarized in his own words: "I have been zealously zealous (in Syriac *meten tenēs*) for the Lord, God Almighty" (1 Kings 19:10, 14). The idiom infinitive absolute is used to give articulation to the intensity and vehemence of his passion. Indeed, the Carmelites have taken as their motto these very words of Elijah. In the text, the prophet is said to have travelled for forty days and forty nights, being strengthened by the angelic food, reached Horeb, the Mountain of God, went into a cave, and stayed there in deep contemplation. Then the Lord appeared to him as "sound of sheer silence" and gave instructions concerning his future mission. Elijah obediently followed the command of his Master.

The early Fathers converted *Bes Rauhma* into the cave of Mount Horeb. There they spent their days in deep contemplation, being zealously zealous for the Lord, God Almighty. By the strength of being nourished by the bread from heaven these devotees were continuing their journey of life to the heavenly Horeb, an abode of adoration, praise, thanks and homage. In the cave of heart they heard the divine sound of sheer silence and see Jesus' face on which were imprinted the traces of agony and ecstasy. The inhabitants of *Bes Rauhma* bore the marks of passion and glorification. Their Beloved communicated to them their day to day apostolate, in the execution of which they found their God-realization (*Īswara sākshātkāra*) and self-realization (*āتما sākshātkāra*).

7.3. Mount Sinai

Two biblical texts (Ex 19:1-25 and 24:4-18) mention Mount Sinai as the place of Theophany and Covenant.

7.3.1. Place of Theophany: Ex. 19:1-25

After liberating Israel from the slavery of Egypt, that practiced an economics of affluence, politics of oppression and exploitation, and a static and triumphalistic religion, Yahweh led them to the desert of Sinai. Then He commanded Moses to prepare them to become the people of covenant. After enumerating what He had done in Egypt, and how He carried them on eagles' wings, the Lord exposed the covenant stipulations: "If you listeningly listen (*shamô'a tishmêû*) to my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be to me the cherished

possession (*segullā*) above all people; you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (19:5-6).

As Moses intimated Israel these words, all the people answered together: "All that the Lord had spoken, we will do." Thus they expressed oral consent to become Yahweh's covenant people. Pleased with this positive response the Lord announced that He will descend upon Mount Sinai. Israel is asked to sanctify themselves and wash their clothes. On the third day in the morning, the Almighty manifested Himself on Mount Sinai. There was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone trembled. The Lord descended in fire. The smoke bellowed up from the Mount Sinai like smoke from a furnace.

Yahweh made three covenant promises. Israel will be His cherished possession, with which He will never part. He will make them the kings and priests of the nations with the roles of shepherding over them, and blessing them. Further, Israel was elevated to the status of holy nation (*goy qadosh*), who belongs totally to Him, who spends the life to make other nations holy – they are separated for service.

The Lord manifested Himself in the traditional form of the Canaanite deity Baal, who wanted to engender fear among the people that would prompt them to serve him faithfully. Yahweh adapts himself to the existential situations of humans.

The Founding Fathers of the religious congregation considered *Bes Rauhma* as the new Mount Sinai. KEC gives it a long description in *Colloquies* (pp. 24-25). The titles given to the Lord give articulation to his own personal experience. The mystic thus addresses the Almighty: "Oh boundless Lord, filled with glory and brilliance, who is most supreme and without beginning and end," "Oh the Almighty who is the perfection of every virtue such as goodness, glory, might, brilliance and effulgence." the act of attributing designations after designations to the Lord do not make him content. As Moses, KEC hesitates to approach the presence of the Most Holy God: "How could I, a great sinner, ascend without fear this prayer room? When I look with keen attention at the room I see your greatest hatred for sin and in your eminence justice, and your fierce fire of anger is blazing on the wicked. How is one able to look at the burning fire that manifests the divine might?" Still, entrusting himself to the immeasurable mercy of the *Appan* (Father) the new Moses ascended the chapel.

At *Bes Rauhma* the early Fathers listeningly listened to the divine voice. In the name of the faithful these representatives continuously

repeated: "All that the Lord speaks, we will do." They functioned as covenant mediators, and stayed at *Bes Rauhma*, the new Mount Sinai, seeing Jesus, *Appan* face to face. They were elevated to the status of *segullā*, shepherds and priests, as well as the embodiment of holiness.

7.3.2. Place of Covenant: Ex 24:4-18

On the day of covenant making, Moses got up early in the morning, and built an altar, set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then burnt offerings and fellowship offerings were offered. Moses took half of the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar and on the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you." He and a few chosen people of Israel went up, and saw the God of Israel, and they ate and drank in His presence.

The Founding Fathers of the religious congregation served as the mediators of the new covenant. They, like their *Appan* used to get up early in the morning, make themselves as living altars, where they sacrificed themselves as burnt offering and fellowship offering. They proclaimed to the faithful by word and deed that they were united to Jesus by eating the living bread and by partaking His blood. At the invitation of *Appan*, KEC and the inmates of the *Bes Rauhma* approached Him (*Colloquies*, pp. 26-27), and in his presence or together with Him, enjoyed the meals. The Lord blessed them by making them the earthly symbols of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21-22).

7.4. Mount Zion: 1 Kings 6-8

The temple that Solomon built on Mount Zion according to the instructions of Yahweh, served in the Old Testament as God's dwelling place, place of praise, worship, thanks and the place of divine blessing. 1 Kings 6-8 give details of the building of the temple, furnishing it, bringing the Ark of the Covenant to the temple, and the rituals of dedication of the temple.

7.4.1. God's Dwelling Place

Solomon's prayer of the dedication of the temple (8:22-61) is one of the most beautiful prayers of the Old Testament. Perhaps one can compare it to the prayer of Jesus, the new Solomon in Jn 17. He stood before the altar of the Lord in front of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands towards heaven. The following ideas could be seen in his prayer of dedication:

- Confession of Yahweh's uniqueness and faithfulness to the covenant made to David (vv. 23-24)
- Request to keep the covenant promise of an everlasting dynasty (vv. 25-26)
- Wondering how God, whom the heavens cannot contain, can dwell on earth (v. 27)
- Prayer to take heed to his plea for mercy (v. 28)
- Supplication to open the divine eyes towards the temple night and day, and hear the prayers of Israel turning to the temple, and forgive their sins (v. 29-30)

KEC calls the chapel in *Bes Rauhma* New Mount Zion, the glorious and majestic abode of the beloved *Appan*, *Colloquies* 34, 37: "Behold the *Appan* is seated with outstretched hands to welcome me and embrace me and is inclining his holy face to kiss me with affection." The early Fathers stood before the altar and spread out their hands towards heaven, as Jesus would have done during his earthly days. These covenant mediators, like Christ, confessed the uniqueness and fidelity of Christ to the eternal covenant clauses. They wondered about the mystery of the Lord of heaven and earth abiding in the tabernacle, and pleaded for the divine mercy to forgive the acts of unfaithfulness of the people.

7.4.2. Place of Petitions: 1 Kings 8:31-53

The dominant theme of Solomon's prayer is petition that is spread throughout. The following ones deserve special attention.

- Plea to judge between the guilty and innocent (v. 31-32)
- Petition to forgive when the people repent, and bring them back to the Promised Land (vv. 33-34)
- Appeal to end the draught when people of Israel confess their sin (vv. 35-36)
- Entreaty to stop the plagues, siege of the enemies, disaster and deceases (vv. 37-40)
- Request to hear the prayers of the foreigners, so that all the peoples of the earth may in fear acknowledge the Divine Name (vv. 41-43)
- Solicitation to help the people in times of war (vv. 44-45)
- Prayer to forgive Israel's unfaithfulness, because of which they were taken into captivity, and liberate them (vv. 46-51)
- Plea to listen to supplications of the king and the people, since Yahweh has chosen them as His own inheritance (vv. 52-53)

The inmates of *Bes Rauhma* had a keen sense of the justice of God. KEC shuddered at the thought of the final judgment. In the last petition of CS, he turns to the Lady of Immaculate Conception and asks for her intercession at the moment of death:

O benign mistress, succour me, your servant

At the hour of my death, kindly protect, save me. (CS. II 75-76)

The theme of mercy is the most pre-dominant theme in his works. He seems to have enjoyed a deeper insight into divine mercy whose incarnated form is Jesus, the *Appan*. The Founding Fathers spent most of their time before the divine presence, pleading for forgiveness. They recited the Litany of the Saints in which they begged to save all from draught, plagues, enemies, disaster, decease and war. KEC wanted to bring all the peoples to the fold of the good shepherd. Especially he sought protection from the snares of Satan.

7.4.3. Place of Praise: 1 Kings 8:56-61

Solomon praises Yahweh using the formula, "praise be to the Lord..." who has given rest to Israel and fulfilled his promises (v.56). There follows a set of 'may' clauses in vv. 57-60:

- May Yahweh be with us
- May He never forsake us
- May He turn our hearts to him to obey him
- May my words be near to Yahweh
- May He uphold my cause and that of Israel
- May all the nations know that Yahweh is the only God

Halleluiahs! Praise to Jesus Christ! The lips of the Founding Fathers incessantly poured out these words of praise. They became the living *Halleluiahs*, as the Son of Man, who in his body, that was the living Temple, rendered incessant praise to the Heavenly Father. It was they who taught Kerala Catholics to greet each other with the formula: Praise to Jesus Christ. This practice was integrated into the Keralite spiritual tradition. The early Fathers made the *may* clauses of Solomon's prayer their own and taught others to do the same.

7.4.4. Place of Sacrifices and Celebrations: 1 Kings 8:62-65

At the dedication of the temple, Solomon and the people offered to Yahweh a sacrifice of fellowship offering, namely 20,000 cattle 120,000 sheep and goats. Further, at the courtyard of the temple they offered burnt offerings, grain offerings and fellowship offerings. The whole assembly celebrated before Yahweh 14 days, rejoicing, eating and

drinking. After the festival they went home, "joyful and glad in heart for all the good the Lord had done for David and Israel" (v. 68b).

The inmates of *Bes Rauhma*, although were being engaged in continuous contemplation, prayer and penance, appeared to others as persons irradiating the divine bliss and heavenly joy. They resembled Jesus Christ, who became the sacrifice, victim and one who offered the sacrifice. He was the model of celebration, since his whole being was a hymn of joyful praise. According to them, the more one attains union with God, the more one becomes person of joy. The religious vocation is a call to become a celebrative being. In his works KEC delightfully uses the word brighten, beam (*teļiyuka*). Christians are children of luminosity (*teļivinte makkal*). The inmates of *Bes Rauhma* were continuously offering sacrifices, not animals, but themselves as burnt offering, grain offering and fellowship offering.

7.4.5. Place of Blessing: 1 Kings 8:54-55, 66

To bless means to fill one with the divine wellbeing, namely welfare, *kshēmam* and *kalyānam*. Yahweh alone can bless humans. He has entrusted this task to his representatives, namely to the community heads, namely liturgical (priest), of family (father) and of the kingdom (king). In the text, Solomon assumes the roles of the king, father and priest. "He stood and blessed the whole of Israel in a loud voice" (v. 55). At the end of the festival of the dedication of the Temple, the people is said to have blessed the king (v. 56a). It seems that they, the liturgical assembly, function as priests, in fulfilling the covenant promise of Ex 19:6.

The Founding Fathers of *Bes Rauhma*, represented Jesus. Through word and deed they brought the divine blessings upon the people. KEC in his *Letters* and *Chronicles* frequently has given articulation to the formula of blessing. Some instances:

- "May the Almighty protect you" (*Letters* VV/1)
- "In the Lord blessing (*svasthi*) to you" (*Letters* VI/3, 4)
- "May Jesus Christ bless you" (*Letters* VII/2)
- "Praise (blessings) to the Almighty" (*Letters* V/14)
- "May the Infant Jesus, showing you his beaming smile, bless you by uplifting his tiny arms" (*Letters* V/7)
- "May the praise (blessing) increase always to the Almighty, amen" (*Chronicles*, p. 139)
- "May you become the blessed in the Lord" (*Chronicles*, p. 179)

Jesus, the second Adam and Solomon, father, priest and king of the new creation, by words and actions showered the divine blessings on

humans, especially the marginalized of the society. He was the symbol of new Israel, the people ('*am*, grammatically singular in form but plural in connotation) of the covenant, who was elevated to the status of priests, performed the act of blessing, showering the divine well-being.