

Common Sayings From the Bible Are Being Used Frequently in This Year's Election

Norwegian politicians have been meeting face to face during the election. Is this preparing voters to separate the wheat from the chaff, and do people have faith in the abilities of politicians to move mountains? Many of the words and expressions frequently used by politicians, political commentators, and others, have their origin in the Bible. By using data collected by Infomedia, we have examined the use of these sayings in this year's election.

Wolf in sheep's clothing

It may be tempting to claim that our political opponents are wolves in sheep's clothing. The Green Party's (MDG) Farid Shariati states to Utrop that Jan Bøhler is a wolf in sheep's clothing. The deputy leader of the Norwegian Labor Party (AP), Hadia Tajik, says to Dagbladet that it is the minister of finances, Jan Tore Sanner, who is the wolf in sheep's clothing. At the same time, Hamar Arbeiderblad reports that people are accusing the leader of the Center Party (SP), Trygve Slagsvold Vedum, of being a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The expression "wolf in sheep's clothing" originates in the Sermon on the Mounts from the Bible, where Jesus warns against false prophets that come in sheep's clothing, but are inwardly ravaging wolves.

To strain out gnats and swallow camels

Who has swallowed more camels during this year's election? Dagsavisen's political editor Arne Strand claims that the leader of the Norwegian Labor Party, Jonas Gahr Støre, may have to swallow a camel by including the Green Party in the government. The editor of Oppland Arbeiderblad argues that the potential government collaboration will force everyone to swallow a few camels going forward.

The expression "to swallow camels" is derived from a biblical story where Jesus criticizes the Pharisees for swallowing a camel, meanwhile protecting their drinks from something as miniscule as a gnat or a fly. Today, the saying most commonly refers to the acceptance of something against one's values, in order to achieve a separate goal.

Alpha and omega

Immigration politics are the alpha and omega for the Norwegian Progress Party (FRP). This was stated by a political researcher to Bergens Tidende. The latter points out that the party has always done well in elections where this issue has been high on the agenda. The Norwegian Conservative Party (H) emphasizes the use of private schools as the alpha and omega for some

students. The Norwegian Liberal Party (V) suggests that competent teachers are the alpha and omega for students' sense of mastery in school. The Centre Party claims that the party's alpha and omega is to keep the Minister for Agriculture and Food in post for the new government.

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. The expression comes from the biblical phrase "I am the Alpha and the Omega". Depictions of the two letters are frequently used in many forms of church art. A synonymous phrase more commonly used in the English language is the expression "be-all and end-all" of Shakespearean origin.

Ramaskrik (English: A cry from Ramah)

The Norwegian expression "ramaskrik" is mostly used by the media in the north of Norway in reference to the election. It is claimed that there will be "a cry from Ramah" from central areas of the country when Center Party leader Vedum suggests a lowering of plane ticket prices for the districts, as well as an increase in agriculture support. Vårt Land asserts that, unsurprisingly, there was "a cry from Ramah" when the Progress Party's Youth (FpU) launched a campaign opposing nynorsk (one of the two written standards of the Norwegian language) as an obligatory part of the curriculum in Norwegian schools. The Progression Party itself claims that there are often "cries from Rama" when they present controversial proposals.

"Ramaskrik" is a commonly used Norwegian word, roughly translated to "cry from Ramah", expressing a sense of bitter complaint. According to the Bible, mourning and weeping came from Ramah as the women cried for their children and refused to be comforted.

Fact box:

The three most frequently used expressions from the Bible during the election:

Ansikt til ansikt (Face to face)

Alfa og omega (Alpha and Omega)

Kjenne sin besøkestid (Know the time of your visitation)

Single words:

Ramaskrik (Cries from Ramah)

Syndebukk (Scapegoat)

Almisser (Alms)

This analysis has been conducted by Infomedia, a media monitoring and analysis agency, in cooperation with the Nordic Bible Museum. Executive director at the museum, Rune Arnhoff, believes that many will be surprised to hear that so many of these common expressions have their origin in the Bible. He welcomes all to the museum in the center of Oslo to view, among other things, the large posters showcasing many of the biblical expressions used in the Norwegian language. These are a few elements of the exhibition, which as a whole encompasses the largest collections of Bibles in the Nordic countries.