



CELEBRATE MESSIAH

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*In Partnership with Chosen
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Jesus' Birth

THROUGH JEWISH EYES

CELEBRATING THE SEASON | HANUKKAH AND THE BIBLE | LATKES RECIPE

JESUS' BIRTH THROUGH JEWISH EYES

Dear friend,

Shalom and a Happy Hanukkah to you!

We celebrate two great festivals of deliverance and joy during December. One of the holidays is observed by Christians and the other by Jewish people. There is some crossover today as, once in awhile, I find a Christmas tree capped with a Jewish star or see a Jewish person with a *Hanukkah bush* in their home!

Sometimes this is done to ease the tension of a mixed marriage by bringing the holidays together for the sake of the children. Rarely is there recognition that, at its root, **Christmas is a Jewish holiday**, and Hanukkah finds its **ultimate fulfilment in Yeshua**, the Messiah and Light of the world.

Believe me, it is not easy to persuade the most ardent adherents that the above is true, but when recognised, it brings a greater delight and joy to each of the holidays. Let me explain by reminding us of the story of both holidays, beginning with Christmas.

The Christmas Story Begins in the Book of Genesis

Where does the Christmas story begin? Most people would answer correctly – in the Bible. But, then they would begin the story with the wrong Testament by jumping right in with the birth of the Messiah! The story in fact begins much earlier. The story of Christmas begins in the Old Testament as far back as the book of Genesis. The first promise of a redeemer is found in Genesis 3:15: *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

Moses tell us that God would one day deliver mankind from sin and death, from disobedience, and from all the evil and human hardship that came about as a result of the fall of Adam and Eve. This deliverance would come through the *seed of the woman* who, in the process of destroying the serpent, would bruise his heel – not with a mortal wound but painful nonetheless.

The wounding of this son of Eve points to Yeshua who bore our sin. He was born of a woman, innocent, perfect, and without sin. His death, though painful, may be viewed like the bruising of the heel, painful but not fatal. Yeshua truly died for our sins, but by rising from the dead, He proved that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had accepted His sacrifice for sin. Later on, in Isaiah 53, we read these words, *“All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;*

but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on him.”

We are all sinful and we all need a Saviour. We are unable to save ourselves because we have inherited the disobedient nature of our “parents,” Adam and Eve. All praise be to God who sent His Son to die as the solution for our sins – for both forgiveness and transformation!

This glorious story of redemption begins with the first sin, because God’s grace has been available from the very start to all those who would receive it. The drama of redemption unfolds throughout the Old Testament Scriptures.

In Genesis 12, we discover that God calls an elderly couple, Abraham and Sarah, to be His bridge of grace to a broken and sinful world. Their descendants, the Jewish people, were chosen for the sake of those who were not part of their own community and who ultimately would be used by God to bless the world: *“And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed”* (Genesis 12:1-3).

Eventually these blessings to the world would come through one descendent of Abraham, the Messiah Yeshua, and through Him the world would receive the blessings of redemption.

But, how would the one promised in Genesis 3:15 be recognised? The Scriptures begin filling in His qualifications. The first one is that He would come from one particular tribe of Israel. He would be from the tribe of Judah, the fourth-born son of Jacob. As Moses describes, *“The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from*

between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples” (Genesis 49:10).

Even the rabbis of old recognised that the name Shiloh was a reference to the Messiah and redeemer promised to Israel and the nations. These promises shaped the expectations of the Jewish people so that when the Messiah came He would be recognised by His people.

The qualifications for the Messiah continue as the Bible tells us that He would also be a Son of David. This was promised through the prophecy of Nathan to King David: *“When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever...Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever”* (2 Samuel 7:12-13, 16).

BORN IN BETHLEHEM



David thought he would build a house for God – the Temple – but instead God created a house for the king assuring him that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever.

The Saviour would be a Jewish man, a true prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15) that dies for the sins of both Jews and Gentiles (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22) and rises from the grave as the all-powerful Son of God “...who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 1:4).

Christmas is the drama of redemption fulfilled through the Jewish Messiah, and the story does not begin in the New Testament but is rooted and grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is why I believe Christmas is a Jewish holiday!

Salvation is of the Jews

Yeshua made a profound comment in the Gospel of John when speaking to the well-known Samaritan woman: “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews” (John 4:22).

What did He mean? The answer is simple. Yeshua let the Samaritan woman know that salvation has its origins in God’s promises to the Jewish people, but the blessings that come through the Jewish Messiah would extend to all who want to have a personal relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This salvation has “Jewish origins” but is available to all who believe.

In a similar way, Hanukkah, the Jewish holiday celebrating the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Greeks and their wicked king, Antiochus Epiphanes, also points to this same Savior. Did you know that the observance of Hanukkah is mentioned in the Bible? In John 10, the Apostle writes,

At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. (John 10:22-25)

The Messiah took this occasion to reveal Himself to His people and in so doing He was telling the Jewish hearers that there is a salvation coming that is far greater than the one won by the Maccabees on that first Hanukkah. In fact, the lights lit for this holiday are designed by our tradition to remind us of the miracle that kept aflame the eternal light in the Temple. There was only enough oil to last for a day, but it lasted for eight days. The story may or may not be true, but when a Jewish person sees the glow of the Hanukkah candles, they are reminded of His power to deliver His chosen people from destruction.

As a Jewish follower of Yeshua, when I see the beautifully lit Hanukkah menorah, I am reminded of the One who claimed to be the Light of the world (John 8:12) and through whom we all have redemption from sin and the hope of everlasting life.

I hope you will enjoy this edition which features articles on Messiah Yeshua’s birth. I trust that these stories will encourage your heart. I also pray that you might share some of them with your Jewish friends who look forward to the great deliverance to come but who do not yet know that the Messiah – predicted in the Hebrew Scriptures – has come and His name is Yeshua, the Saviour of the world.

Have a great holiday

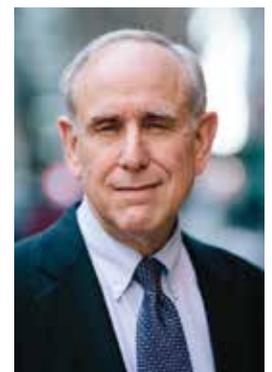
season and remember to pray for Your Mission to the Jewish People as we reach His chosen people in dozens of cities across the Americas, Australia and in 16 other countries around the globe.

Thank you for your faithful prayers and generous support.

Merry Christmas and
Happy Hanukkah,


Mitch

Mitch Glaser is president of
Chosen People Ministries,
partnering with Celebrate Messiah



Christmas and Hanukkah in Haifa, Israel



Messiah's Birth

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BETHLEHEM BIRTH

BY ROBERT WALTER

Nestled in the Judean hills just south of Jerusalem stands Bethlehem, the ancient town whose claims to fame include being the site where David was anointed king and where the Messiah was born. Both Matthew and Luke mention this important location and how it relates to Jesus in their respective birth narratives.

Certain chief priests and scribes answered Herod's paranoid question about where the Messiah would be born. *"They said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"* (Matthew 2:5-6). This appears to be a loose quote of Micah 5:2-4, where the prophet spoke of a unique, future ruler in Israel who would come from Bethlehem but who would also have divine, eternal roots. Micah states that this ruler's *"...goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity."* For Matthew, Jesus' birth in Bethlehem fulfills this prophecy: He was born as a man in Bethlehem but was ultimately God in the flesh.

In Luke 2:1-7, a Roman census called for Joseph to take Mary to register in the *"city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David."* In that city, Mary gave birth to Jesus, wrapped him in cloth, and laid him in a manger. The humility of the scene is striking. The true King of Israel was born not in a palace but in a manger; and not in a free, sovereign Israel but under the compulsion of a Gentile ruler who forced Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem. For Luke, the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem meant the true King had arrived in the humblest fashion.

VIRGIN BIRTH

BY BRIAN CRAWFORD

In this season, we celebrate not only the birth of Yeshua, but also His reason for coming into the world. The Gospel accounts teach that Yeshua was *"conceived...of the Holy Spirit"* in His mother's womb (Matthew 1:20, cf. Luke 1:35). Many skeptics deny that the virgin birth could have happened because of assumptions about the supernatural, but Yeshua's miraculous conception is essential if our faith has any truth at all!

Any Messiah who could redeem us from our sins would have to be sinless himself. But how can a human being, descended from Adam, live without sinning from birth to grave? Likewise, any Messiah had to be born from David's line (2 Samuel 7:16). But if someone is descended from David's line, then surely he is tainted by humanity's sinful nature!

The virgin birth was God's solution to this paradox. Just as God created Adam as a perfect living being out of nothing, so too the Holy Spirit miraculously provided twenty-three perfect chromosomes to fertilize the egg in Mary's womb. It was through this fusion of the miraculous and the natural that the pre-existent Son of God was made incarnate. On the one hand, this broke the chain of sin inherited from Adam (Genesis 3, Romans 5), enabling Yeshua to have a human nature untainted by sin. On the other hand, by having Mary as his physical mother and Joseph as his adoptive father, Yeshua was born from David's line (Matthew 1:6).

Thus, the virgin birth enabled Yeshua to be our sinless, perfect, unblemished lamb for the forgiveness of our sins and guaranteed that Yeshua could fulfill the Messianic prophecies about the Redeemer coming from David's line. Only God could have come up with such a profound and awe-inspiring solution for our sin. For this reason and many others, we come and adore Him, Messiah the Lord.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 1

BY NEAL H. SURASKY

Matthew was the consummate Jewish evangelist. He had come to faith in Jesus and now had a burden to see his Jewish brothers and sisters come to the same saving faith. As a Jewish man, he understood just what it would take to convince his people. It started with proving that this man Jesus, who the Jewish people would know as Yeshua, fulfilled the required prophecies. First and foremost, he had to establish the proper lineage.

Of all of the prophecies regarding the Messiah, there were two that had to precede the rest. First, the Messiah had to be Jewish, a descendant of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob. Second, he had to be a descendant of David in order to sit on his throne as king. Matthew begins his proof with the statement, *“The record of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham”* (Matthew 1:1). It is interesting to note that the only other genealogy of Jesus is found in the Gospel of Luke, who takes His lineage all the way back to God. For the Jewish people, it was a given that God was the ultimate creator. It was more important to show that the Messiah was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and thus Jewish, and that He had the right to sit on the throne of David.

God promised Abraham not once, but twice, that through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3; 18:22). Through Jacob, God promised that the rule of Israel would be forever in the hand of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). And He promised King David, *“...your throne shall be established forever”* (2 Samuel 7:16). At this season for remembering His birth, Matthew teaches us that even Jesus’ lineage is the fulfillment of prophecy, as it was written.

MATTHEW CHAPTER 2

BY MICHAEL HERTS

One of my childhood memories was when a school music teacher took class time to sing Christmas carols (in those days it was permitted). Since Jewish children were not required to participate, we would go over to the corner of the room and talk about life. One of the songs they would sing was “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” which meant nothing to me then because I did not connect the town with Israel and the Jewish people. It was not until years later that I understood the significance of that song.

The Jewish prophet Micah’s ministry took place during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, three kings of Judah, between the years of about 750-686 BC. Micah was

calling the people to repentance. He let them know that, even though judgment was coming, God loved His people and would one day bring a deliverer. In doing so, he named a small town where the Messiah, the Anointed One, would be born.

When Matthew wrote his Gospel, he was bringing incredible news. He quoted prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures to make his point that our long-awaited Messiah had come and His name was Jesus. In quoting Micah 5:2, Matthew wrote, *“And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders of Judah; for out of you shall come forth a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel”* (Matthew 2:6). In verse 2, we are told that a star indicated where this shepherd had been born. This star was the sign that the prophecy of Micah had come to pass. And now I know the real meaning of the song, “O Little Town of Bethlehem.”

HANUKKAH & CHRISTMAS

BY CHARLOTTE MACHADO

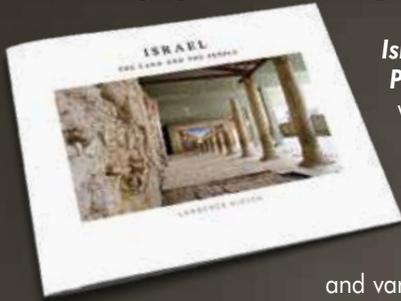
The Feast of Dedication is first mentioned in John 10:22. In fact, this is the only place in Scripture where the holiday of Hanukkah is mentioned. In this passage, Jesus goes to the Temple in Jerusalem to celebrate the festival. The word Hanukkah comes from the Hebrew verb *hanakh*, which means to dedicate.

Hanukkah celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over the Greeks and the rededication of the Temple. Approximately two hundred years later, Jewish people gathered around Jesus in the Temple court and asked him plainly whether or not he was the promised Messiah. At that time, they were waiting in hopeful, anxious anticipation for the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies. They desperately wanted to know if Jesus was the one for whom they were waiting. After some discussion with the onlookers, Jesus acknowledged His deity by saying, *“I and the Father are one”* (John 10:30).

As written in Ezekiel 8-11, the Divine Presence had not been seen in the Temple since the glory of the Lord departed. In Solomon’s Temple, the glory of God was present and hovered over the mercy seat. Ezekiel 8-11 describes the glory of God—which can be interpreted as the Holy Spirit—leaving the Temple because of Israel’s disobedience. With Jesus’ presence in the Temple, the Holy Spirit had indeed returned.

Hebrews 1:3 describes Jesus as the *“radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”* There is tremendous significance that on the Feast of Dedication, or Hanukkah, Jesus announces His deity and returns the Spirit to the Temple. Through Messiah, we, who are now His temple, are made clean and filled with His Holy Spirit. This is the meaning of Hanukkah and it is truly something to be celebrated.

MESSIANIC RESOURCES



Israel: The Land and the People is a wonderful book with some of the best photos of Israel anywhere! Through 70 spectacular photos by Lawrence Hirsch, this coffee table book presents the beauty, history, culture and variety of the land from snow-topped Mt. Hermon to the fortress of Masada, ancient Jerusalem, modern Tel Aviv, Jaffa and much, much more. A must before you visit Israel, a reminder afterward, and a perfect gift for anyone who wants to feel as if they've been there.

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COMMUNITY PASSOVER SEDERS 2019

MELBOURNE
St Kilda Town Hall, Saturday 20 April

SYDNEY
Northridge Vineyard Church, Saturday 20 April

SUNSHINE COAST
Caloundra RSL, Tuesday 16 April

For more information visit www.celebratemessiah.com.au/events
or call our office on +61 3 9563 5544

POTATO LATKES

INGREDIENTS:

- 4 large potatoes – peeled and grated
- 1 large onion – peeled and grated
- 2 large eggs
- ½ cup all-purpose flour / matzah meal
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 cup of vegetable oil



INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Place the grated potato and onion in a strainer and press lightly to remove most of the moisture and let stand 30 minutes.
2. In a bowl, mix the potato mixture and eggs with your hands. Then add the flour, salt, and pepper. Mix thoroughly.
3. Take an ice cream scoop of the potato mixture and place in your hands and then form a round patty (latke). Repeat 8 times and place the patties on a baking sheet.
4. Heat ½ cup of oil in a large frypan over medium heat.
5. Place 4 latkes in the frypan and cook for 3 minutes or until the bottom is a golden brown color. Turn the latkes over and cook another 3 minutes. When the latkes are done, place them on a paper towel to absorb some of the oil. Add the remaining oil into the frypan and cook the other 4 latkes just like above.
6. Serve latkes with a dollop of sour cream and applesauce.

Yield: 8 servings

Tabernacles and the Mountains of Israel Tour 23 October - 5 November 2019

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