



# The Chosen People

DECEMBER 1989 ISSN 0164-5323

## The Virgin BIRTH

Joseph's Journey  
From Skepticism  
To Belief

THE STORY OF HANUKKAH  
A CHILDREN'S CRAFT



# From the President

**"For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given" (Isaiah 9:6). Only thirteen words, but these thirteen words have changed the course of history. They have fulfilled the hope of the ages. Yet Israel and the nations still refuse to accept the true meaning of Christmas.**

God had promised that He would in the fullness of time send forth His Messiah, made of a woman. God kept His Word, and while the nations and Rome were seeking to conquer the world, a Child was born, a Son was given. In Bethlehem, in Judea, in fulfillment of the prophets, Yeshua (Jesus) was born (Mic. 5:2; Lk. 2:1-7).

The world did not herald His birth. Instead, the heavenly hosts spoke His praises. Mary and Joseph, the shepherds in the fields, the aged Simeon — only a few, only a remnant reacted joyfully to His birth. But the leaders of Israel and the nations of the world chose to ignore Him. "He came unto his own and his own received him not" (Jn. 1:11).

The Jewish leaders who lived at the time of the birth and death of Yeshua knew the prophecies concerning the Messiah. They not only expected Him to come, they eagerly looked forward to His coming. Yet, "his own received him not." Why? There is but one answer. Steeped in religious tradition and worship, they failed to listen to the Spirit of God. Sin had blinded their hearts to God's truth.

Likewise, the nations, caught up in their paganism and superstition, also failed to listen to the Spirit of God. Sin had also blinded their hearts to God's truth.

Today, the Jewish people do not recognize the birthday of Yeshua — the One born King of the Jews. But the nations, following their pagan traditions, set aside December 25 to celebrate the birthday of Jesus, though they do not celebrate His birth in spirit and in truth: The majority of people who "keep Christmas" care little for its true meaning. They "worship" a good-natured old man in a red suit and a white beard rather than the new-born babe. To many, Christmas is a time of drunken revelry. Others are simply concerned about whether or not they will get as much as they give.

Christmas is so often celebrated as a pagan holiday because the One who was born in Bethlehem has not been born in the hearts of many who profess His name. Christmas is not for the world. The cross is for the world. It is only when one has been to Calvary that he can gratefully experience the glorious fact of Bethlehem.

And so at this season the world is once more saying, "Merry Christmas." We, too, would like to be merry, but not like the world. We remember that the prodigal son wanted to be "merry" away from his father. The godly can be merry when the prodigal son returns to his father. We rejoice and are merry when we see Jewish and Gentile people accepting Yeshua as the Child who was born and the Son who was given, when they proclaim Him as Lord and Savior.

This Christmas let us as believers share the true meaning of Christmas with our Jewish and Gentile friends. Let us share with them God's greatest gift to this world — our Messiah, our Savior, the Lord Jesus.

In Messiah,

HAROLD A. SEVENER  
PRESIDENT  
CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES

## The Chosen People

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## Praise the Lord!

We're a year closer to His return. Across the country and throughout the world, we felt this year was the best ever. More people came to faith. He gave us more opportunities to minister. In many ways we struggled more and in many ways, saw more of God. So we wanted to share our 1989 joys with you . . . our very special Chosen People family.

SAM AND MIRIAM NADLER  
Executive  
Director, Charlotte, NC



GEORGE COLFLESH

AVNER AND RACHEL BOSKEY,  
Tel Aviv, Israel



GEORGE COLFLESH



HAROLD AND GRACE SEVENER  
(President), Charlotte, NC

### HAROLD AND GRACE SEVENER (President) Charlotte, NC

We praise God for the many Jewish people who've come to believe in Jesus and the fine missionary staff He has given us. Pray that God will continue to meet our financial needs as the Mission grows and our vision extends to reach all Jews everywhere with the Gospel.

### SAM AND MIRIAM NADLER (Executive Director), Charlotte, NC

We praise God to see our ministry extended as we came to Charlotte this year. Please pray for Joshua and Matthew as they continue to adjust to the move and pray for new doors of outreach throughout the world.

### AVNER AND RACHEL BOSKEY, Tel Aviv, Israel

Praise for the growth of the ministry in Israel—for the musical concert and children's programs, for the evangelistic outreach last June where local believers distributed nearly 20,000 tracts. Pray for spiritual fruit, for the nation as a whole. Also pray for a congregation we hope to plant and for our family's walk with the Lord.



**MICHAEL AND  
EVA RYDELNIK,  
Long Island  
Area**

Praise God for over 100 adults at our High Holy Day services and for the 10 decisions for the Lord during those services. Pray for these new believers and pray for the spouses of our new believers who do not yet know Messiah.

**ISRAEL AND JUDY COHEN,  
Brooklyn, NY**

Praise God for many opportunities for meaningful conversations with Jewish people and pray that we can develop new literature for the New York work. Praise God for a new closeness in our marriage; after 24 years we know that this is a special gift from God.

**ROB AND SHARON STYLER,  
New York City, NY**

We've talked to over 1,000 Jewish people about Messiah. . . . our midtown Manhattan Bible study has doubled . . . we've started a new study on Wall Street. Pray for God's wisdom and pray for our family to grow in Messiah.

**LARRY AND FRAN FELDMAN,  
Northern NJ**

Praise the Lord for a great camp this summer . . . people coming to faith . . . intensified discipleship program. Please pray for the 1990 children's camp, for response to the outreach in Livingston, NJ, and for spiritual growth of Beth Messiah Congregation.

**STEWART AND SHOSHANNA  
WEINISCH, Fairfield, CT**

Praise God, at our Jewish Holy Day services 16 unsaved Jewish people attended, many family members of our congregation and one Jewish girl received the Lord. Pray for the many others unsaved who heard the Gospel, for a facility for Joy of Israel, and for wisdom.

**GARY AND MARYLOU  
DERECHINSKY, Greater Boston  
Area**

We're praising God for Marylou's wonderful health and for our beautiful son, Joel, who is a great blessing to us. Pray for growth for Beth El Shaddai Congregation, and that God would empower and equip us for the challenges we face.



**ISRAEL AND JUDY COHEN,  
Brooklyn, NY**



**ROB AND SHARON STYLER,  
New York City, NY**



**LARRY AND FRAN FELDMAN,  
Northern NJ**



**STEWART AND SHOSHANNA WEINISCH,  
Fairfield, CT**



**GARY AND MARYLOU DEMURO**,  
Greater Boston Area



**STEVE AND LISA CAGAN**,  
Greater Boston Area



**TOM AND SHARON HUCKEL** (National  
Ministries), Cheltenham, PA



**MITCH AND JACKIE TRIESTMAN**,  
Greater Philadelphia Area



**LARRY AND GAIL JAFFREY**,  
Reston, VA  
Praise the  
Lord — it's 20  
years with Chosen  
People  
Ministries and  
we rejoice in  
this milestone  
in our ministry.  
Pray for us to  
continue faith-  
fully. Also pray  
for our work in  
starting a con-  
gregation in  
the D.C. area.

**STEVE AND LISA CAGAN**,  
Greater Boston Area  
Praise God for opportunities on  
Boston U, MIT, Brown U, Salem  
State and Brandeis U. Pray that  
many come to faith and pray for  
our health, as Steve has struggled  
with chronic bronchitis and Lisa is  
having difficulties with her voice.  
**TOM AND SHARON HUCKEL**  
(National Ministries), Cheltenham, PA  
Pray for wider opportunities to  
minister and more Christian  
friends who will share our burden.  
Pray for those working with us to  
be refreshed and pray for more  
missionaries.

**MITCH AND JACKIE  
TRIESTMAN**, Greater  
Philadelphia Area  
Praise the Lord, 35 people came to  
faith in Philadelphia ... God has  
blessed the work and brought  
faithful prayer supporters along.  
Pray for the many who heard but  
haven't responded yet.

**SCOTT AND  
MARJORIE BROWN**,  
Washington, DC  
Praise with us that we've been  
stretched in areas that were pre-  
viously uncharted: One of the  
most profound was that God is  
most certainly our Provider. Pray  
that we are doing what God is  
blessing in 1990, especially our  
fledgling congregation, Son of  
David.

**JIM BATES**, Miami Area  
Praise and pray for the many new  
Spanish-speaking Jews in Florida  
and pray for Spanish-speaking co-  
workers. Pray that God continues  
to bless me with good health and  
that He would give me His wis-  
dom in reaching Florida's 700,000  
Jewish people.

ALL PHOTOS BY STEVE BURNS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED

GEORGE COLLEBISH

**MICHAEL AND SANDY CAMPO,**  
Greater Chicago Area  
Praise God for new Bible studies  
and pray that the Lord causes this  
work to flourish for His glory.  
Praise also for an open door at  
Ohio State University. Please pray  
that we as a family allow the Lord  
to reach His potential through us.  
**BARRY AND VI BERGER**  
(National Ministries), Glenwood,  
IL

We were truly blessed at a new  
Bible study in Wichita with 25 peo-  
ple, 11 of them Jewish. Pray for  
that fellowship and for our minist-  
ry in churches (in 1990 we will be  
in Texas quite a bit). Pray for fi-  
nances and health, that we will do  
as much as we can, while we can.  
**ELIEZER AND SARAH URBACH,**  
Denver, CO

The year 1989 has been rich in  
blessings. Nearly a dozen people  
have been baptized, and we have  
had personal visits with over 600  
people. Pray the Lord to endow us  
with good health and strength.  
With time growing short, we can  
prepare young Jewish believers for  
the missionary field.

**HOWARD AND JANET SILVER-**  
**MAN,** Canoga Park, CA

Praise the Lord for a year of new  
births: Our second child, a daugh-  
ter Heather; and new spiritual chil-  
dren, including a Persian girl.

Praise and pray for our combined  
outreach and fellowship with an  
Arab evangelical fellowship.  
**IRV AND CORDELIA RIFKIN,**  
San Diego, CA

Praise the Lord for two doctors  
who were baptized, the culmina-  
tion of prayer and patience. Praise  
the Lord for help from a new vol-  
unteer, and pray for the many un-  
saved attending our fellowship  
meetings.



**SCOTT AND MARJORIE BROWN,**  
Washington, DC

GEORGE COLFLESH



**JIM BATES,**  
Miami Area



**MICHAEL AND SANDY CAMPO,**  
Greater Chicago Area

GEORGE COLFLESH



**BARRY AND VI BERGER** (National  
Ministries), Glenwood, IL

**ROY AND  
JO ANNE  
SCHWARCZ,**  
Greater Chicago  
Area

Pray for our  
newest congrega-  
tion, Light of  
Israel, for the  
people to grow  
spiritually.  
And praise  
God for the  
excellent re-  
sponse so far:  
many unsaved  
Jewish people  
have already  
come, and  
many children  
were reached  
through  
children's pro-  
grams during  
the Holy Days.





**CHRISTOPHER AND MARSHA MELISKO,**  
*Canoga Park, CA*

**SID AND JOAN STERN,**  
*South Bay, CA*

Pray for salvation of A.L., an orthodox anti-missionary, pray for the many health needs of people we are ministering to. Praise for our newest granddaughters . . . for strong attendance at our Bible studies . . . and for good health this year.

**CHRISTOPHER AND MARSHA MELISKO,** *Canoga Park, CA*

Praise for the renewed awareness of His Lordship in our lives and pray for the ministry He's given us to counsel with many Jewish and Gentile couples.

**ALBERT AND GRETA DAVIS,**  
*Toronto, Canada*

Praise our God for growing ministry among Russian Jews and response from Russians hearing our program in Israel and USSR. Please pray for the establishment of a Russian Jewish Messianic Congregation in Toronto.

**BEN AND SUSAN VOLMAN,**  
*Toronto, Canada*

Praise the Lord for a time of renewal in Olive Tree Congregation and for new disciples growing in the faith. Pray for the new believers and pray especially for Jewish believers whose families are putting pressure on them.

**DAN AND  
MADELINE  
GOLDBERG,**  
*Canoga Park, CA*

Pray for a missionary couple and their support in Orange County, pray for volunteers to help with office work. We're praising Him for a wonderful Senior retreat, and beautiful opportunities to minister throughout



**ELIEZER AND SARAH URBACH,**  
*Denver, CO*



**HOWARD AND JANET SILVERMAN,**  
*Canoga Park, CA*

GEORGE DOLFLESH



**IRV AND CORDELIA RIFKIN,**  
*San Diego, CA*



**SID AND JOAN STERN,**  
*South Bay, CA*

GEORGE DOLFLESH

**WINNIE MARRINER,**  
Montreal, Canada

Pray for my brother Joe, who is dying of cancer . . . praise God with me that he is newly saved. Pray for the many people who have made commitments to the Lord.

**BEN AND BONNIE ALPERT**  
(National Ministries), Montgomery, AL  
Praise the Lord for new believers, for new prayer partners and for the joy of our son Nathan's Bar Mitzvah this year. Please pray that our families will soon come to faith, and that we will continue to have spiritual and physical strength.

**FRANK AND ROSEANNE POTTER,**  
Charlotte, NC

Pray the Lord will open opportunities to share our work in churches and that many would be edified. Praise to the Lord for the opportunities to share with Jewish people and for His presence during Hurricane Hugo this year.

**ROBERTO AND AZUCENA PASSO,**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina  
Pray for our family and the administrative staff, and pray for the financial and spiritual needs of all involved in the South American work. Please pray that many Jews would come to faith, and pray for a larger building to meet the needs of our growing ministry.



**BEN AND SUSAN VOLMAN,**  
Toronto, Canada



**WINNIE MARRINER,**  
Montreal, Canada

**GALEN AND CAROL BANASHAK,**  
Western Springs, IL  
The seven of us have shared and grown this year. Pray for our family and for the work in Canada, where many people, including two Holocaust survivors, have been saved.



**ALBERT AND GRETA DAVIS,**  
Toronto, Canada



**BEN AND BONNIE ALPERT** (National Ministries), Montgomery, AL



**ROBERTO AND AZUCENA PASSO,**  
Buenos Aires, Argentina





# The Virgin Birth: Joseph's Journey From Skepticism To Belief

By MICHAEL RYDELNIK CHOSEN PEOPLE MINISTRIES, PLAINVIEW, LONG ISLAND

**T**he virgin birth is one of the essential features of the Christmas story. For the Jewish people it has always been a stumbling block. Most Christians automatically accept the supernatural elements of our Messiah's birth. But like any miracle it tests the limits of our finite understanding.

How do we make peace with this overwhelming event? Thankfully, we have the example of one who had good cause to be skeptical, one whose personal reputation was at stake — Joseph.

Is it mere coincidence that the account of Joseph's journey from skepticism to belief has been preserved in Matthew 1:18-25? Or is God showing

us something about leaning not on our own understanding but trusting Him?

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**How do we make peace with this overwhelming event? Thankfully, we have the example of one who had good cause to be skeptical.**

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## Betrothal vs. Engagement

The problems Joseph faced varied. First, Miriam's pregnancy occurred when she was betrothed to Joseph. Betrothal was not like a modern en-

gagement; it was considered marriage. Termination required a bill of divorce, not just cancellation of the wedding hall. One of the purposes of betrothal was to test the purity of the bride. Imagine, if you will, how any of us would respond in a similar situation: A supposedly virgin wife is made pregnant by the Holy Spirit! Just think of the reaction in our churches!

A second problem (described in Mt. 1:19) was Joseph's righteousness. As a truly righteous person, he did not desire to marry a girl who was impure and unfaithful. As a moral person, he did not want to join himself to someone who did not share his standards.

To somewhat complicate matters, Joseph had a tender heart. He did not

want to disgrace Miriam publicly. It wasn't only her shame of being an unwed mother. According to Jewish law (the *Mishnah*), an adulteress was to be brought to the Eastern Gate. There, a priest would tear her garments, remove all her jewelry, and clothe her in black or ugly garments tied by a rope. The purpose was "to disgrace her." Furthermore, "everyone who wishes to behold her comes to behold . . . and all women are permitted to behold her, as it is said, "And that all women may be taught not to do after your lewdness"" (Sotah 1:6).

**A Private Divorce**

Joseph did not wish to humiliate Miriam, but he did intend to seek a private divorce. Miriam would not be brought before the Beth Din (rabbinical court). Only her father and two witnesses would be notified. Before Joseph could act, however, the Lord sent an angel in a dream.

Matthew records four proofs to Miriam's virginity. The first is the mes-

sage to Joseph. The timing of this is as important as the message itself. According to Jewish law, once the divorce action is taken, it is unretractable and remarriage was impossible. God's message came in the nick of time, and it came in a supernatural way, just as had the

**Joseph did not wish to humiliate Miriam, but he did intend to seek a private divorce. Only her father and two witnesses would be notified.**

pregnancy itself. That the message came in a dream was, in the religious order of that day, a good omen that was to be obeyed.

**Divine Naming**

The second proof was the naming of Messiah (Mt. 1:21). The angel told Jo-

seph that the child's name was Yeshua (meaning "salvation"). This was significant to all who knew rabbinic teaching. There were six people whose names were given before birth: Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Solomon, Josiah, and the name of Messiah. Since all the others had already been born, perhaps Joseph recognized that this was the promised Messiah. At the very least, he understood that this was no ordinary child. This divine naming did much to convince Joseph that the pregnancy was indeed miraculous and was pleasing to God.

The third proof of the supernatural birth does not come from the mouth of the angel, but from the pen of Matthew. He cites Isaiah 7:14 to confirm the angel's message with Scripture.

Finally, we must take a look at Joseph's actions. He took Miriam as his wife. As a sign of respect, he did not have relations with her until the birth of the child. He called the name of the child Yeshua. All these acts demonstrate that Joseph sincerely be-

**MR. BARRY BERGER**

**DR. BEN ALPERT**

**TOM HUCKEL**

**Meet Your Chosen People Ministries' National Ministries Representatives**

*The National Ministries Representative acquaints the Church with the Jewish roots of Christianity and the history and world of the Jewish people. Each of these men is an avid student of God's Word and teaches in the following areas: The Jewish Perspective of the Scriptures, Israel in Prophecy, and God's Plan of Redemption Through the Feasts of Israel. All who hear their "Word from the Lord" will be challenged! For more information on a program or presentation to fit your needs, please call or write Michelle Barnett, National Church Ministries, Chosen People Ministries, 1300 Cross Beam Dr., Charlotte, NC 28217-2800, (704) 357-9000.*

lieved in Miriam's purity and the supernatural nature of her pregnancy.

### Half-hearted Charge

If Joseph, the man with the most at stake, could be convinced, we must take his testimony seriously. Some people might pawn it off by saying that Joseph was duped, that he was naive or fooled because he did not understand "nature." This half-hearted charge was well dealt with by C. S. Lewis in *God in the Dock*:

But there is one thing often said about our ancestors which we must *not* say. We must not say, "They believed in miracles because they did not know the Laws of Nature." This is nonsense. When Joseph discovered that his bride was pregnant, he was "minded to put her away." He knew enough biology for that. Otherwise, of course, he would not have regarded pregnancy as a proof of infidelity. When he accepted the . . . explanation, he regarded it as a miracle precisely because he knew enough of the Laws of Nature to know this was a suspension of them.

In many ways, Joseph is the forgotten man at Christmas. Yet his was one of the first testimonies we have that Jesus, Yeshua, was the Messiah. His response is a witness to those who reject the virgin birth.

What better time than at Christmas to emulate this righteous man and bow down to the sovereign God who performed this miracle and sent Messiah.



"Why did Matthew include this account of Messiah's birth? Whenever I examine a passage of Scripture I try to understand what was on

the writer's mind as he wrote it", explains Mike Rydelnik. "I believe that Matthew included this passage to counter accusations by some of Yeshua's contemporaries that He was a *mamser* (illegitimate). In John 8:41 this is exactly what His accusers had in mind."

## HANUKKAH SERVICES

**PLAINVIEW, LI., NY** Olive Tree Congregation, Michael Rydelnik (516) 939-2277. Friday, December 8, 8:00 pm.

**EAST HANOVER, NJ** Beth Messiah Congregation, Larry Feldman (201) 635-2954. Friday, December 22, 8:00 pm.

**FAIRFIELD/NEW HAVEN, CT** Joy of Israel Congregation, Stewart Weinisch (203) 732-8296. Friday, December 22, 8:00 pm.

**HARTFORD, CT** Joy of Israel Congregation, Stewart Weinisch (203) 732-8296. Wednesday, December 7, 8:00 pm.

**SHARON, MA** Beth El Shaddai, Gary Derechinsky (617) 784-3204. Friday, December 22, 7:30 pm. Sunday, December 24, 11:00 am.

**PHILADELPHIA, PA** Chosen People Ministries, Mitch Triestman (215) 943-9189. Saturday, December 23, 7:30 pm.

**ROCKVILLE, MD** Son of David Fellowship, Scott Brown (301) 989-2532. Friday, December 22, 8:00 pm.

**BOCA RATON, FL** Chosen People Fellowship, Jim Bates (407) 395-7417. Friday, December 8, 7:30 pm.

**CHICAGO, IL** Light of Israel Fellowship, Roy Schwarcz (312) 338-5959. Friday, December 15, 7:30 pm.

**AKRON, OH** Beth Sar Shalom, Wayne Kaipainen (216) 836-0540. Tuesday, December 12, 7:30 pm.

**COLUMBUS, OH** Beth Sar Shalom, Wilma Koch (614) 885-8546. Monday, December 11, 7:30 pm.

**WOODLAND HILLS, CA** Shepherd of Israel Congregation, Howard Silverman (818) 884-8245. Friday, December 22, 7:30 pm.

**LONG BEACH, CA** Beth Sar Shalom, Sid Stern (213) 635-8531. Monday, December 18, 6:30 pm.

**REDONDO BEACH, CA** Beth Sar Shalom, Sid Stern (213) 635-8531. Thursday, December 21, 6:30 pm.

**MONTREAL, CANADA** Chosen People Fellowship, Winnie Marriner (514) 483-4079. Friday, December 8, 8:00 pm.

**TORONTO, CANADA** Olive Tree Congregation, Ben Volman (416) 665-4695. Saturday, December 23, 10:15 am.



# THE STORY OF HANUKKAH

PREPARED BY MARSHA MELISKO

## HANUKKAH STORY

To be read by the teacher of his or her class. The story's emphasis is the miracle of God's providing light.

### APPLICATION

With the rededication of the Temple, the people could continue to go and worship God. The Jewish people looked to the day that the promised Messiah would come.

Messiah did come; His name is Jesus, or Yeshua. In John 10:14, we read how Jesus described Himself as the Good Shepherd. Many did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, but some of the Jewish people did believe in Jesus. Jesus describes Himself as the "Light of the world" (Jn. 8:12). (Refer to the shammus-servant candle on the Hanukkah menorah.)

The same is true for us today. At this time of year we celebrate the birth of Jesus the Messiah, but not everyone has personally believed in Him as their Savior. Without knowing Jesus, people live in spiritual darkness. Some Jewish people don't believe in Jesus as their Messiah. We can share how Jesus is the Light of the world to our Jewish friends by

1. Understanding that Jesus was Jewish and our Scriptures are Jewish.
2. Sharing how Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies about how Messiah would be born, live, and die.
3. Praying for Jewish people to receive Messiah, especially those in your school or neighborhood.
4. Living as believers, we are "lights" in the world. Live as lights in the way you talk, act, and think.

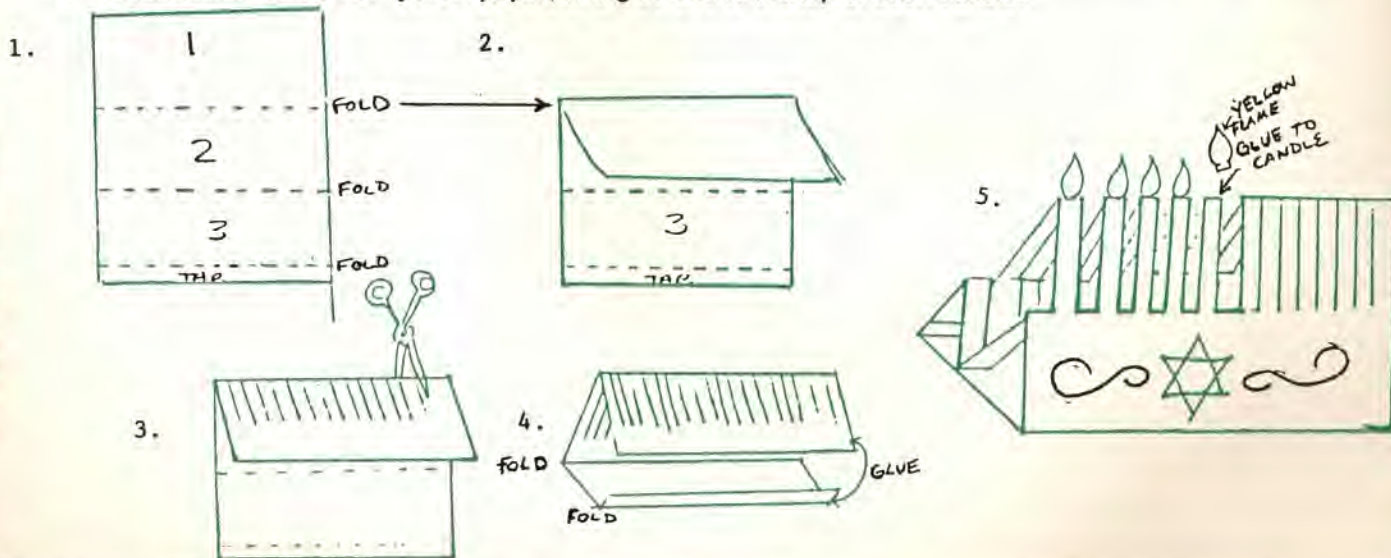
## MAKE A MENORAH

### MATERIALS NEEDED

Stiff paper, tag, or lightweight cardboard (9" X 12"), scissors, yellow construction paper, glue, ruler and pencil.

### CONSTRUCTION

1. Use the ruler to divide the paper into three equal sections.
2. Then mark off a very narrow strip of the third section. This is your tab for gluing the piece together.
3. Fold the first (top) section down evenly over the second or middle section, and press firmly on the fold.
4. Make 18 evenly spaced, parallel cuts halfway into the two folded sections as pictured to make the candles.
5. Fold and glue the tab in place as shown to make the menorah stand.
6. Invert every other "candle" by folding it down into the base as shown. You will have nine candles standing.
7. Cut out nine flames from yellow paper, and glue one to the top of each candle.



# The Prophet Daniel

By HAROLD A. SEVENER

*In previous months: God speaks to Nebuchadnezzar three times: once in a dream about the great image and again when Daniel was in the fiery furnace. For the third and final time God speaks to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream predicting that his mind will be changed from human to animal.*

**M**edical science tells us that there is a disease called lycanthropy. It is a psychosis where one actually believes he has become a wolf. Perhaps it was this or a similar type of disease that God used to judge Nebuchadnezzar. Interestingly, the annals of the Babylonian kings also record the disappearance of Nebuchadnezzar. There even seems to be some reference to the madness that befell King Nebuchadnezzar.

During this seven-year period no other Babylonian king arose to take over the empire from Nebuchadnezzar. When the seven years had been completed, Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes toward heaven, his sanity restored. "Then I praised the Most High. I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: "What have you done?" (Dan. 4:34-35).

I believe that through this third encounter with the God of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar finally became a believer. He states, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of Heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble" (Dan. 4:37).

I wonder how many of us could say the same thing: "God, everything You do is right and all of Your ways are just"? It's easy to say this when everything is going our way, but when the path of life becomes rocky, when we are in the pit of despair, when there's not enough money, when illness strikes, or when death sends its cold chill through our families, can we say of God, "Everything You do is right and all of Your ways are just"?

## Surrender and Contentment

When we are able to come to that point of surrender, we are able to be content. We are able to live at peace with ourselves and with one another. The vision and experience of Nebuchadnezzar are truly unique in Scripture. Remember that he was the head of the Gentile nations that God was

using to bring judgment and chastisement upon Israel. The period of judgment was to last for 70 years.

We know also from history that the extent of the Babylonian captivity has continued to the very present hour in which we live. While a few Jewish people returned from Babylon at the end of the 70-year period of captivity, because of sin and disobedience God continued to disperse and scatter Israel among the nations of the world.

The other empires that God told Daniel about also came upon the scene of history. These empires continued to bring judgment and chastisement upon Israel until ultimately God will bring judgment upon the Gentile nations for a period of seven years, which we call the Tribulation.

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**I believe that through this third encounter with the God of Israel, Nebuchadnezzar finally became a believer. He states, "Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of Heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just." (Dan. 4:37).**

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When the Tribulation Period is complete, after the seven years, God will then judge the nations and establish His Kingdom here upon the earth.

What God allowed Nebuchadnezzar to go through seemingly typifies and symbolizes what will actually happen during the times of the Gentiles.

First, we see the pride of these nations as they feel, in their sovereignty, in their power, in their places of privilege, that they have the right to do exactly as they please, with total disregard for God and for His Word, as well as for the people of Israel (Rom. 9-11).

## The Tribulation

Second, God's Word tells us that during this period called the Tribulation God will pour out His wrath upon the Gentile nations. Interestingly, like Nebuchadnezzar and like Israel, He will not completely destroy the nations. As the stump in Nebuchadnezzar's dream remained in the ground, reminding him that his king-

dom would be restored, so some of the Gentile nations will survive and will go into the millennial kingdom of our Lord.

Even as God has preserved a remnant in Israel unto whom the King will return, so also it appears that God has reserved unto Himself a remnant from the Gentile nations who likewise will profess faith in Him. In that Kingdom Age, Jew and Gentile alike will worship the Lord, the God of Heaven.

When Nebuchadnezzar died he was succeeded by his son, Evil-Merodach (2 Ki. 25:27; Jer. 52:31). This was during the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, king of Judah. Evil-Merodach reigned for only two years and was murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, who seized the throne. Violence begets violence. Terror begets terror. The light of God which had begun to shine in the life of King Nebuchadnezzar was gradually being dimmed by the evil deeds of these reigning kings.

Neriglissar was succeeded by his son, Labashi-Marduk, who reigned for less than a year when he was violently put to death by a group of conspirators led by a native Babylonian named Nabonidus. Nabonidus then established a coregency with his son, Belshazzar, whom we meet in Daniel, chapter 5. Nabonidus tried

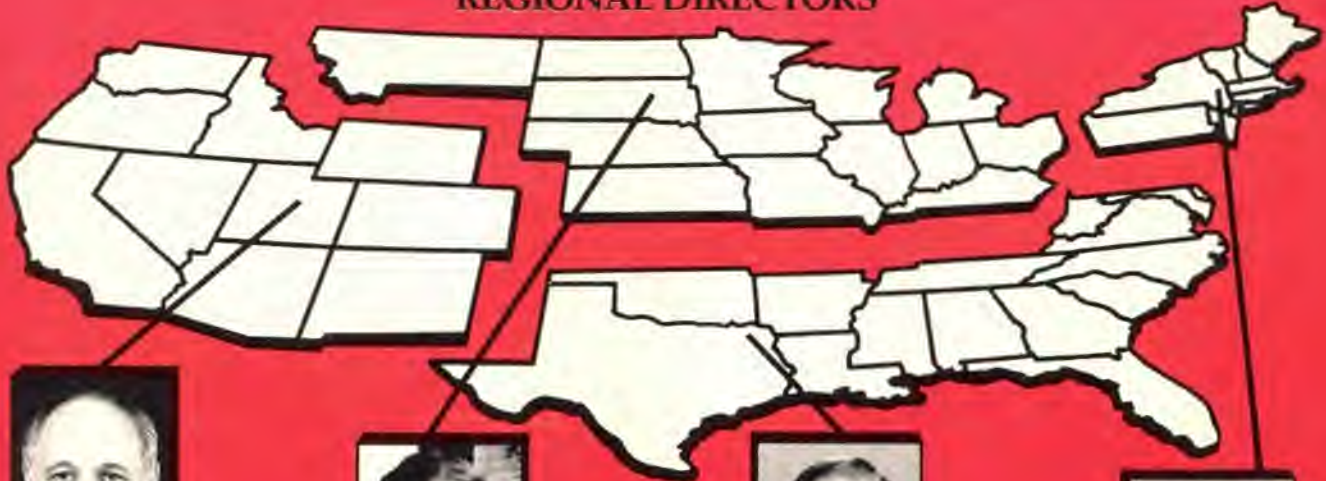
unsuccessfully to change the gods that the Babylonians worshiped to the moon god.

Thus the light that had been established in Nebuchadnezzar's court through the prophet Daniel and then through the king himself, who had experienced faith in God, gradually weakened and waned and was flickering out with the reign of Nabonidus and Belshazzar. These kings failed to heed God's Word. They failed to listen, not only to the words of Daniel, but to the words of King Nebuchadnezzar.

### Leaders Held Accountable

Nations, like individuals, are responsible for the amount of light they have received in relationship to God's revealed Truth. We as citizens of a country have a responsibility to see that our national leaders reflect what we believe about God and His Word. God cannot be real in the lives of our political leaders if God is not real in our own individual lives. Leaders, for the most part, reflect the feelings and attitudes of the people. Because of this, leaders are held even more accountable. It is the responsibility of leaders to instill in the people moral and spiritual attitudes that reflect the revelation of God in society.

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# A Believer's First Christmas

by Bette Sobel Vidrine

**M**ost Americans can't remember their first Christmas. I can. I was twenty-six years old when I first celebrated the event.

Yes, I knew about Christmas before I reached the age of twenty-six. I had sung the carols, seen the Nativity plays, read the Gospel accounts. But I was born and raised Jewish and never celebrated Christmas in my heart or in my home until the year I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior.

My family always allowed me to join the festivities with non-Jewish friends at their homes and churches, and we invited them to participate with us in the Jewish holidays. As a child, I had helped friends decorate their Christmas trees; I had shared in their Christmas feasts, I had attended midnight mass with some, Sunday school Nativity plays with others. It was all purely social for me with no spiritual dimension.

I was familiar with the Christmas story — I thought I knew it. I enjoyed the attendant pageantry, music, food, gift exchanging, and good feelings. In fact, I looked forward to Christmas every year.

But so far as I was concerned, the Christmas story — the story of the birth of Christ — was just a story, a fairy tale. No substance. Lots of fun, but nothing more. Kind of like Cinderella — a neat story, but don't base your life on it. I wasn't even sure there had been a historical Jesus.

"I know very well how foolish it sounds to those who are lost, when they hear that Jesus died to save them" (1 Corinthians 1:18a, TLB). Paul's words were certainly true of me. Apply a fairy tale to my life? That would be true foolishness.

Because I participated in the outward celebration of Christmas, people thought I knew what it was all about. Because I was an honor student in school, they couldn't imagine my being in ignorance on a subject they thought was common knowledge. But I was. Few who have been raised in a Christian home fully realize the extent of ignorance of basic Christianity of those who are not believers.

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## For the first twenty-six years of Bette's life, Christmas was only a fairy tale.

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I thank God for Ken, the man who saw through my facade and realized the emptiness in my life. He explained salvation to me. It was the first time I had heard the message. I confessed my sins to God, repented, and accepted Christ. I was born again and baptized. "But we who are saved recognize this message as the very power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18b, TLB).

When I came to believe in Christ's reality, the Christian holidays suddenly took on meaning. I began to celebrate them.

Radical changes occurred in many areas of my life after the Spirit of God came in. One such area was my understanding of Christmas. Listening to the story of Jesus' birth, it seemed as though I had never heard it before. It was beautiful. I wondered how I could have missed what was occurring around me all those years.

I realized that during my entire life I had been exposed to a Christian cul-

ture. Yet no one had explained the new birth to me. I had been to many different denominational churches. I had friends who were true Christians as well as friends who were cultural Christians. They all "respected my religion" and didn't try to explain salvation to me. "Respecting my religion" was their excuse when I later asked them why they had never told me about Christ's atoning sacrifice for sin.

The Christmas carols spoke to me that year as they never had. They were not just myths and fables set to pretty music. They contained eternal truth and significant history.

"Round yon virgin mother and child. . . ." Yes! It's all true!

"It is the night of the dear Savior's birth." Yes, and now He is *my* Savior!

I had always enjoyed crafts and homemade gifts, so I decided to make my own Christmas cards to celebrate my new birth as well as His. I designed a card telling everyone I had been born again and was rejoicing in the Resurrection. I printed it on blue paper, a good color for Hanukkah. Kind friends chuckled when they received my cards and many months later told me resurrection themes were for Easter.

As I happily made gifts and decorations and put up my first *very own* Christmas tree, I rejoiced at the meaning Christmas now held for me. Jesus had been born in my life that year, and I felt that the whole creation was celebrating His birth. ☺

*Betty Vidrine is a lab technician, a writer and a harpist. She lives with her husband in Lafayette, LA.*

*Reprinted courtesy Light and Life Magazine*

## Another Unsolved Mystery

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the circumstances which led to the demise of the king. But, the articles of the king's own testament stipulated that these guilty beneficiaries were to be absolved of all crimes, including his own murder.

It was as if the king foreknew the manner of his own death and provided not only, in His will, forgiveness but also enrichment for those responsible for his death.

This story remains an unsolved mystery.

Of course, those of us who know Messiah, are continually amazed over His great and mysterious love! And, when you stop to think that His will was made known; shouldn't yours? Perhaps you are not a king of a vast domain, but you have a loved one or a special ministry that is worthy of your love. Wouldn't you like to express yourself by remembering them

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