

Baby's First Christmas

A Christmas story

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“Get out of the way, get out of the way, Centurion Marcus Valerius will pass here!” The two Roman soldiers stood at the edge of the crowd, uniformed and armed, reflecting all the might and authority of the Empire. Behind them, the centurion sat upon his warhorse, patiently waiting for the crowd to disperse. And like the surf retreating from the shore, the crowds opened, and the soldiers and their commander slowly made their way through.



“Felix, Primus, move them back, I’ve got to get to the Governor’s palace by midday.”

The Romans made their way through the streets, passing throngs of Jewish bystanders, some sitting, some standing by the side of the way, many engaged in commerce at the edges of the crowd. It was more crowded than usual in Jerusalem that day, due to the upcoming Jewish festival of Passover. People from all over the region were arriving to celebrate this special time of commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt many years before.

On the other side of the crowd, Yehudah and Shimon, two shepherds from out of town, stood conversing. Having recently delivered their flock to the Temple authorities for use in the Passover rituals, the men needed to find a place to stay until the conclusion of the festival. And with so many people in the city, that would be a challenging task.

“Those guys have all the power now”, Shimon remarked, “But someday, Israel will be free again”.

“We can only hope”, Yehudah replied. And in that moment, he remembered back many years ago, when he was a lad, working with his father and the other men to bring the sheep in from the cold. And they all saw it, those lights in the sky, and seemingly other-worldly voices directing them to a small house on the outskirts of the village of Bethlehem.



His father told him that what they saw and heard were messengers from God himself. Yehudah remembered a chorus of voices stating, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to all men'.

How could peace come with these
Romans occupying their land?

As he dug deeper into his memory, he remembered arriving at that place where a mother lay in the straw surrounded by some family's domestic animals. The father sat near, keeping a small fire going for warmth. There was no room for them elsewhere, he was told.

This little family had come to pay their taxes and now, a baby, it seemed to Yehudah, just born, was brought into the world on the very night that he and the others heard those angelic voices. The father greeted them. "This is Miriam, and our son Yeshua..."

There was something strange and awesome about that cold night, and Yehudah was moved to give the mother a small lamb that he had carved out of olive wood, made while he was on the night watch in the fields. “I know he is too young now for this”, he told Miriam, “but when your baby grows up a bit, he can play with this!”



“Yehudah! You are lost in your thoughts again”, Shimon told him. And Yehudah came back to the present moment, still holding his memories close. Shimon continued, “You hear the people, they are calling Hosanna, calling for our king, our deliverer”.



At that moment, the crowd opened again and a man riding a donkey came slowly up the street. The people surrounding him were cheering and calling, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the way of the Lord’.

What a commotion, and what an odd scene, a humble man on a donkey as king? It couldn’t be.

The two shepherds waded into the crowd to get a closer look as people were throwing cloaks and branches down on the road. Yehudah stood next to an older woman, she called out, “God be with you my son”.

Her voice sounded oddly familiar and he looked at her face, and although this woman was much older than the young girl with the baby he saw on that curious night some thirty years ago, she looked like Miriam and so he asked, “Miriam?”

She turned to look at him. “Yes”, she told him, “do I know you?”

Her eyes revealed the truth, this was the young mother from that place near Bethlehem. His heart leaped and he responded to her. “Many years ago, when your son was born amidst the animals, I was there, I was a boy. I gave you my wooden lamb for Yeshua”.

She smiled and cried out, “It’s you, really!” and then she reached into the folds of her robe and pulled out the lamb.

“You see, he kept it all these years, he learned to craft wood himself and gave the lamb back to me when he left our village to begin his teaching and speaking across the north.”



“And now he is here, there.” She pointed to the man on the donkey.

Yehudah was stunned. This man, riding into Jerusalem was the baby in that stable. This man they were calling king.

And at the beginning, he had given the baby his prized possession and now, here they were close once more.

Miriam told him. “You see, he really is a king, but not as we imagined. He has helped many in his life with love, with words of truth, and with healing. He has come to point us all back to finding God in our hearts and living a life focused on the wellbeing of us all.”

“The baby you shared your lamb with is even called by some, the lamb of God and we may soon know the deeper meaning of this name.”





"The baby you shared your lamb with
is even called by some, the lamb of God"

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