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the Shepherds & the Angel

the Birth Series

the Birth - Revisited

by haRold Smith

a citizen of the Commonwealth (Ephesians 2:19)

*"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. And all went to be registered, each to his own town. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in **THE MANGER** because there was no place for them in the inn.*

"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of YHVH appeared to them, and the glory of YHVH shone around them, and they were filled with fear. And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy

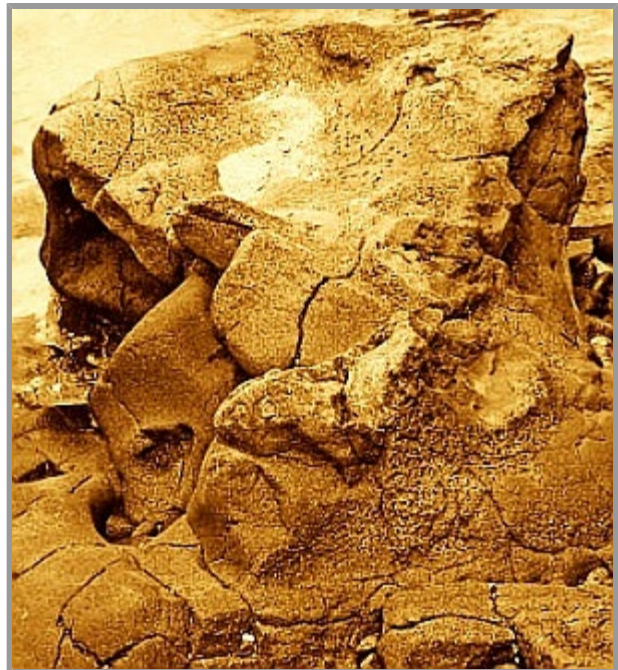
*that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, who is Yeshua haMashiach. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in **THE MANGER**' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising YHVH and saying, 'Glory to YHVH in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased!' When the angels went away from them, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which YHVH has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, lying in **THE MANGER**. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child. And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising YHVH for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them." Luke 2:1-20*

Luke's original audience would have immediately picked up on the religious significance of the Bethlehem shepherds watching their flocks by night. Aware of the instructional words of the *Tanakh* (OT) about Hebrew Temple worship, they would have known that when you said Bethlehem, you said "sacrificial lambs". The hills around Bethlehem were home to the hundreds of lambs used in ritual worship in the Temple. As a boy from Bethlehem, King David would likely have tended sheep destined for the daily offerings or used in the sacrifices on the high holidays in these very hills. Every day, according to the Torah, two lambs were required for a daily sacrifice in the Temple. A year in the **Hebrew calendar** (**click on highlighted words to view content**) can be 353, 354, 355, 383, 384, or 385 days long. Regular common years have 12 months with a total of 354 days. Leap years have 13 months and are 384 days long. Months with uneven numbers usually have 30 days, while months with even numbers have 29 days. In addition to these regular (*kesidrah*) year lengths, both common and leap years can be a day shorter (*cheserah* or deficient year with 353/383 days) or a day longer (*shlemah* or complete year with 355/385 days). This means that anywhere from 706 to 770 sacrificial lambs were needed each year plus the hundreds more lambs needed for the feast of *Pesach* (Passover) as well as for the other religious rituals. Everyone in Israel recognized Bethlehem as being synonymous with sacrificial lambs. Micah, the Hebrew prophet who foretold of *haMashiach's* (the Messiah's) birth in Bethlehem, also prophesied, "And you, O Tower of the Flock (in Hebrew, *Migdal Eder*), the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto you shall it come, even the first dominion; **the kingdom** shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem" (**Micah 4:8**). Although obscure and often overlooked, Micah disclosed that the Messiah, who embodied the hope of **the Kingdom of Israel**, "was to be revealed from *Migdal Eder* - 'the Tower of the Flock'." Close by where the shepherds were camped that night, in the northern part

of Bethlehem on the road to Jerusalem (less than an hour's journey by foot), was the tower known as Migdal Eder, the "watch-tower of the flock." This was the station where shepherds brought their flocks destined for sacrifices in the Temple. For animals found as far from Jerusalem to the north of Bethlehem and within that circuit on every side, the males were offered as burnt-offerings, the females as peace-offerings (*Mishnah, Shekalim 7:4*).

On the night in which Yeshua was born, the angelic message came to those priests of the Temple whose duties had been designated, often from their youth, to "keeping watch over their flock." These were not just any flock and herd. The shepherds who kept them were men who were specifically trained for this royal task. They were educated in what an animal that was to be sacrificed had to be and it was their job to make sure that none of the animals were hurt, damaged or blemished. During lambing season the sheep were brought to the tower from the fields, as the lower level functioned as the birthing room for sacrificial lambs. Being themselves under special rabbinical care, these priests would strictly maintain a ceremonially clean birthing place. Once birthed, the priestly shepherds would routinely place two lambs in the depression of a limestone rock known as "the manger" and "wrap the newborn lambs in swaddling clothes," preventing them from thrashing about and harming themselves "until they had calmed down" so they could be inspected for the quality of being "without spot or blemish". There had to be two lambs so that if the first was found in the inspection by the priest to have some sort of blemish, there would be another lamb available to prevent any delay in the sacrificial ritual (compare to *Matthew 27:17, 21*). In fact, the *Mishnah* (the first major written collection of the Hebrew oral traditions) from where this information is found goes on to expressly forbid the "keeping of flocks throughout the land of Israel, except in the wilderness and the only flocks otherwise kept, would be those for the Temple-services" (Alfred Edersheim, *the Life and Times of the Messiah*, *Book II, chapter VI*, and the *Bava Kamma 80a*). On the night of His birth, an angel appeared to the shepherds who were out in the fields, "keeping watch over their flock by night" and instructed them: "you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in *the manger*" (Luke 2, above). The shepherds immediately responded, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which YHVH has made known to us" (v. 15). Since there were no directions provided in the instruction from the angel, the question that has to be asked is - **where would they have known to go?**

In verses 7,12, and 16 the KJV has translated from the Greek Text the English words "in a manger". However, when one looks at this particular text through an actual *Greek Interlinear, v.7*, there is a missing Greek word. From the Interlinear the Greek word *TH* (Strong's G3588) is not translated as it should be - an "a" has been inserted instead of "the" (probably in an attempt to smooth out the text). Now, let's take a look at this interesting missing Greek word. According to the *Thayer Greek Dictionary*, this Greek word is defined as "the definite article" - "*the*" in its masculine, feminine or neuter gender, the demonstrative pronoun. There was no need for the angels to give these shepherds directions to the birth place because they already knew. These were the men who raised the lambs that were to be sacrificed in the Temple. When the angelic announcement came, they knew exactly where to go, as Luke 2 indicates, for the sign of *the manger* could only mean the manger at the base of the Tower of the Flock. You cannot explain the meaning or direction of the sign they were given or their response unless you have the right manger, the right shepherds and the proper Hebraic perspective. Hearing that Yeshua was born in Bethlehem would have automatically triggered an image of the Lamb of YHVH who takes away *the sin of the world* - the choices of men which result in *separation* from the Presence of the Holy One of Israel beginning with Adam in *Genesis 3*. With that in mind, it's easy for us to imagine one of Luke's listeners saying, "Of course the Lamb of YHVH would originate in Bethlehem - all the lambs for sacrifice came from there." It would be natural for them to see this imagery.

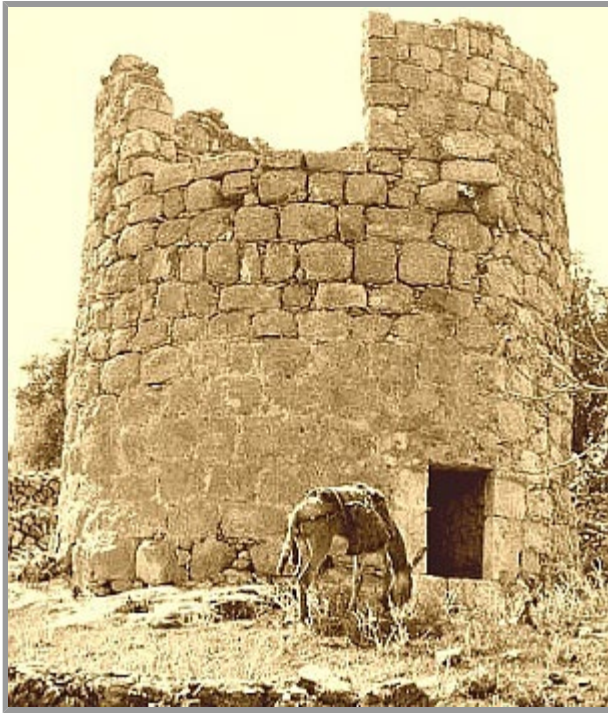


...ancient manger typical of that found within Migdal Eder

The twice-daily offering of a male lamb as commanded in the Torah was known as the *tamiyd* meaning *continual* (found in verse 3 of *Numbers 28:1-8*). It was offered up as the first and last offering of each day and, scripturally, is *the only sacrifice that strictly called for a male lamb without spot or blemish that could not be replaced*. The requirements of the sacrifice at *Pesach* (Passover) could actually be a goat or a bullock as well as a lamb (*Leviticus 22:19-21*). The Hebrew word *tamiym* (translated for lambs "without spot or blemish") means *complete, whole, entire, sound* and is the same word translated as the English "perfect" describing Noah in *Genesis 6:9* and by YHVH to Abraham in *Genesis 17:1*. The *tamiyd* was sacrificed the third hour every morning, the same time as

when Yeshua was hoisted up onto the stake ([Mark 15:25](#), Mishnah: Tamid 3:7; *ibid*, Edersheim, The Temple, [chapter 7, Night in the Temple](#)) and the ninth hour every afternoon when Yeshua was offered up as that sacrificial lamb ([Mark 15:34-37](#), Antiquities of the Jews 14.4.3 & 14:65; Philo Special Laws I, XXXV-169; *ibid*, Edersheim), once and for all, continually every day of the year for the people to be able to stand in the Presence of YHVH ([Exodus 29:38-42](#)). Additionally, by approaching this subject from the Hebrew perspective we shall see that while swaddling "cloths" were used in the handling of newborn babies, swaddling "bands" (as referenced in [Job 38:9](#)) were used for subduing animals prior to sacrifice. These "swaddling bands" were strips of gauze-like cloth used to restrain a lamb being prepared for inspection before sacrifice to prevent thrashing that they not "blemish" themselves. A sacrifice had to be "bound" (Hebrew [aqad](#)) in order to be valid. "Binding" an animal for sacrifice is the Hebrew [akeida](#) (*ibid*, *Hebrew Glossary and Terminology*); specifically mentioned in Abraham's "binding" of Yitzchak (Isaac) for sacrifice to the Almighty in [Genesis 22:9](#) (this particular sacrifice was, of course, never consummated). The tense used in the original Greek of [Luke 2:12](#) shows He will be found "having been swaddled" without any indication of what that "swaddling" consisted of. So, it is not a stretch to see the newborn Yeshua in *the sign* of "**the manger**" of the birthing room of Migdal Eder "having been swaddled" in the bands used on the *tamgid* lambs brought there for inspection before sacrifice.

Tradition would have us believe that Joseph and Mary became "stuck" in an animal stable as a means of last resort to give birth to the Son of YaHoVeH. However, and this is important - **there is no evidence found anywhere in scripture to support that assertion**. The Greek word used in Luke 2:7 for "inn" is [kataluma](#), which is the same Greek word translated as "guestchamber" in [Mark 14:14](#) and [Luke 22:11](#). This scripture speaks of "no room in the *kataluma*" - not "inn". *Kataluma* would have been a guest room in the family home that Mary and Joseph stayed in as they were both direct descendants of King David. Boaz was the great-grandfather of King David through whose [lineage came Joseph](#), wedded to Mary who was of [the lineage of Nathan](#), who gave birth to Yeshua known as *haMashiach* (Hebrew for the Messiah - [1Chronicles 2:12-15](#), [Matthew 1:5-6](#)). So, why are the two lineages presented? Because, since YHVH cursed one of Joseph's ancestors, through that line alone - Yeshua would never have been able to sit upon the throne of David. Jechonias, called Coniah in [Jeremiah 22:24-30](#) was so evil that YHVH cursed him and his descendants, saying, "*Write this man down as childless... for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David and ruling anymore in Judah*" (verse 30). Jeconiah, as his name is spelled in the *Tanakh* (OT), did have children ([1Chronicles 3:17-18](#)), but was childless insofar as none of his descendants ruled as king over Israel. Jechonias is listed in the lineage of Joseph in [Matthew 1:11-12](#). So how, then, could Yeshua be considered a descendant of David and qualify to sit on the throne? Enter the genealogy in Luke 3, which is Mary's who was of [the lineage of Nathan](#), According to Hebrew usage, Mary's ancestry is given in her husband's name. The original Greek merely says Joseph was "of Heli" or Eli ([Luke 3:23](#)). In fact, since Joseph's father is said to be Jacob in [Matthew 1:16](#), Heli is most probably Mary's father. Joseph, then, is his son-in-law. According to Israel's Torah, all inheritances had to pass through the male line; however, when a daughter is the only heir, she can inherit her father's possessions and rights if she marries within her own tribe ([Numbers 27:1-8](#), [Numbers 36:6-8](#)). There is no record that Mary had any brothers to inherit her father's possessions and rights. Thus, Joseph became Heli's heir by marriage to Mary, inheriting the rights bequeathed to her. Boaz owned a home with a threshing floor in Bethlehem which, by right of inheritance, was handed down to succeeding generations within the lineage of David ([Ruth 2:4](#), [Ruth 3:1-2](#)). Herod may have been King in Israel, but the Caesar (emperor) was Augustus who ordered a census of the entire Roman world meaning everyone had to return to their place of origin. Joseph was a descendant of the house and lineage of David and so returned from Nazareth in Galilee, to ***the family home in Bethlehem*** in Judea (Bethlehem was the town of David). The pregnant Mary, who was betrothed to her husband Joseph, went with him (see [Hebrew Betrothal Customs](#) and [the Virgin Birth](#)).



**...a watchtower, Shepherd's Fields,
Bethlehem (circa. 1934)**

According to the Torah, when a woman had an issue of blood for any reason, she was ritually unclean for that time and for seven days thereafter. She remained ceremonially unclean until she was purified by entering a [mikvah](#) (water immersion) in the witnessing presence of a rabbi. While she was ritually unclean, she had to live separately from the rest of the family so as not to defile the people in the household and by her presence rendering them ceremonially unclean. Therefore, during those times, the woman would leave and stay in a nearby area where she would not defile the home. ([Leviticus 15:19-23](#)). During childbirth and with the issue of blood loss, the same rule applied to women giving birth ([Leviticus 12:2-4](#)). If she were to give birth in the common living area, she would defile the family and make it necessary for them to be ceremonially purified by both a ritual immersion and a sacrifice; therefore, women would leave the home and give birth elsewhere. After the cessation of blood and the required time of waiting for purification, the woman and child would perform the necessary rituals of purification to be ceremonially clean and return to the household with the rest of the family. Before the rabbis co-opted it to the confines of the Temple, circumcision was performed as a natural course of birth by the parents ([Genesis 17:23](#)). Thus, with this understanding, there being "*no place for them in the kataluma*" would be regarded as completely appropriate. But this is no indication

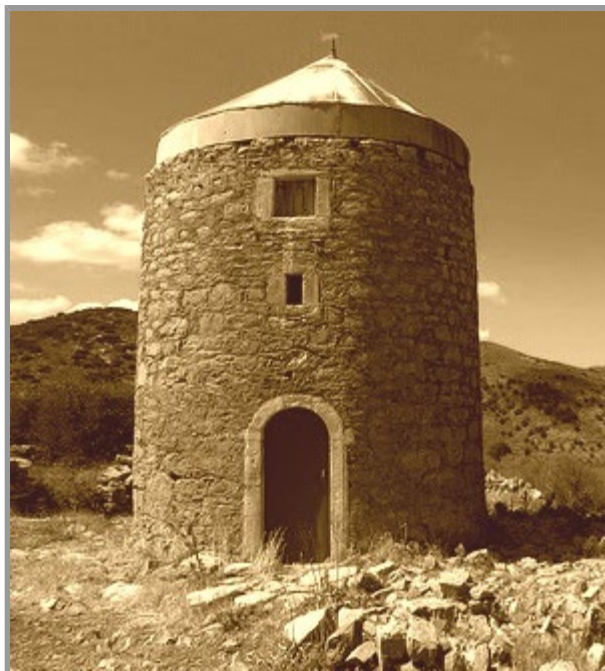
that she would be summarily ostracized to reside in a stable of animals by her family who cared for her well-being. Christian tradition (not the scriptures) tells us that Yeshua's birth place was in a cave over which the Basilica of the Nativity was built in Bethlehem according to Origen of Alexandria (185-254 CE). Origen wrote that it was generally accepted that Yeshua was born in a cave at Bethlehem which could be visited in his day (*Origen of Alexandria, "Contra Celsum", book I, chapter LI*). Based on this information, the Roman Emperor Constantine, built a Basilica over this cave in the 4th Century at the request of his mother Helena. It was destroyed and the present basilica was built by Emperor Justinian in 530 CE. However, just above the shepherd's field northeast of modern Bethlehem, lie the ruins of ancient Bethlehem Ephratah ([Micah 5:2](#)). Both [Genesis 35:19](#) and [48:7](#) state that Rachel was buried at "*Ephrath, which is Bethlehem*." Ephrath or Ephrathah was the ancient name for the area that was also called Bethlehem. The oldest tradition based upon Gen 35 and 48 places ancient Bethlehem Ephratah northeast of the current day city and about 4 miles south of the Old City of Jerusalem. This puts Migdal Eder very close to the modern day marker of *Kever Rakhel* - the tomb of Rachel. It is quite reasonable that Joseph and Mary would have come to their family's ancestral home with hope that the Messiah would be born in the place where David was born. Regardless of what archeologists have uncovered concerning the Tower of the Flock, however, it will never become public knowledge because of the highly lucrative nature of the Roman Catholic Church's ownership of the tourist attraction known as the "Church of the Nativity" in Bethlehem. But, it does not take a leap of imagination to envision how Joseph and Mary, coming from a family whose local roots containing the seed of royalty going back centuries, could have found her being given some preferential privacy for her birthing to take place in the ceremonially clean birthing room of the Temple of YHVH - Migdal Eder. It would be so like the Father to arrange it this way.

Surprise! This event did not happen in the winter of December 25th

My experience has shown it to be safer to view the world from the Truth found in scripture rather than to bend the Truth of scripture to the vantage point of the world's speculations. Not everything is as it seems. For instance, that sheep only give birth in the spring is true for most sheep in the world. However, the Awassi, a fat-tailed sheep, is a local breed found only in southeastern Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Cyprus and [Israel](#). It has [been found](#) that when rams are introduced to the ewe Awassi flock while the lambs were weaning from spring birth, the sheep give birth in autumn - indicating that they had become pregnant while the lambs were still weaning. So, given the fertility of the Awassi sheep, the number of lambs required for Temple sacrifices and the skill of the Temple Priests in managing sheep found locally; it is entirely plausible for the Messiah to have been born in the autumn as the scriptural account indicates: Yeshua was born earlier in the year, in the fall, during the festival of Sukkoth, "the Feast of Tabernacles." Yeshua was 33 1/2 years old at the time of his death. His ministry begins at age 30 ([Luke 3:23](#)). shortly after his baptism by John the Immerser approximately six months *prior* to the first Passover of His ministry ([John 2:13](#), [John 1:33-34](#), [John 2:23](#)). The second Passover is recorded in [John 5:1](#). If the "feast" mentioned here is not the Passover Feast, then it would be one of the other two major feasts, either the Feast of

Weeks (seven weeks after the second Passover) or the Feast of Tabernacles (six months after the second Passover) - but, still occurring within the same year. The third Passover, at the feeding of the 5,000, is mentioned in [John 6:4](#) with the fourth and final Passover, coming when he is crucified, mentioned in [John 11:55](#). Using this chronological information, it appears that Yeshua's ministry lasted around 3 1/2 years. He was crucified at the Hebrew feast of *Pesach* (Passover) which occurs in the spring ([John 19:13-15](#)). So, dialing back six months to the beginning of his public ministry at age 30 would place it into early fall (September or October as there are six months between Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles) which would also be when Yeshua was born 30 years earlier - not in December. *Sukkoth* (the feast of Tabernacles) is also marked in late September to early October (depending on the lunar cycle). [John 1:14](#) tells us that the Word became flesh and "dwelt" among us. The Hebrew word for "dwell" used in [Exodus 29:45](#) is *shakan* and means "tabernacle". By inserting the proper wording, the scripture now reads, "*The Word became flesh and Tabernacled among us*". It would be so like the Father to arrange it this way.

It is noteworthy to observe that in this time of wide spread celebration of the birth of the Son of Truth - nothing about marking this event is celebrated IN Truth. In fact, this event, coming to be known as Christmas, has become the complete antithesis of Truth. Regardless of where your belief reference lies regarding Yeshua, there were some simple instructions given to Gentile believers coming into the faith of this One True God of Israel in [Acts 15:20](#). We are told, in no uncertain terms, to not partake of anything sacrificed to idols - period. And, yet, my email box has been stuffed from people who say they believe in Truth that are full of references and well wishes to this modern idol of mammon, trees and other gods ([Exodus 20:3](#), [Jeremiah 10:1-5](#)). For centuries, this has been the tradition of "Christian-think" - we are free by "God's grace" to do whatever we want. If we embrace something that is clearly against His standards but not quite reprehensible enough to us, we can "pray" over it, use the "right" lingo and "presto", it becomes transformed into something this universal god of Christianity "winks at" for us to partake of. What we give obeisance to, what we give ourselves to, is what we serve and what we serve is what we worship ([Deuteronomy 11:16](#), [Luke 4:8](#)). Pagan rituals of any sort (Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, Halloween, etc) are an indication of worship. Most believers and scholars agree that Christmas is not based in Yeshua's birth. Regardless of from where it has its roots, if we know the Truth then why would we want to compromise what we know as Truth to settle for something less than Truth regardless of how attractive it may seem? And then, by the extension of our actions, teach our children to believe a lie? The world does not acknowledge YHVH and Yeshua during Christmas when they fall at the feet of and worship the idol mammon. When believers in Yeshua attempt to paint a false face on this blatant idol worship to try and make it more palatable for them so they can participate in it and not feel ostracized, they are not worshipping the One True God of Israel. You cannot serve two masters.



...an analytical recreation of how the tower of the flock might have looked

*"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit **AND** in Truth: for the Father seeks such to worship him." John 4:23*

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???Questions???

Please feel free to email me at harold@hethathasanear.com. While not claiming to have all the answers, it would be an honor to partake with you of what Spirit is uncovering.

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