

***The Birth*** — by haRold Smith, a citizen of the Commonwealth (Ephesians 2:12)



*"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 a 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 a 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 the Lord has made known to us.' And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, lying in a 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)*

**NOTE:** This trek was about 93 miles, which takes approx. 35 hours – probably almost a week of walking – with a pregnant woman who was almost at term.



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 Tanakh (Old Testament) and the Jewish Temple worship of the day, they would have known that when you said Bethlehem, you said "sacrificial lambs". The hills around Bethlehem were home to the thousands 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, meaning that 730 were needed each year plus the tens of thousands more lambs needed for Pesach (Passover) as well as for the other religious rituals. Everyone in Israel recognized Bethlehem as being synonymous with sacrificial lambs.

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](#) (*click on highlighted words to see scripture*)). It was offered up as the first offering and the 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 used as "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; Edersheim, The Temple, chapter 7, p. 108) 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), once and for all, continually every day of the year as the atonement for the ignorance of what it means to be separated from the Presence of YHVH ([Exodus 29:38-42](#)); and becoming the motivation behind Yeshua's words, "**Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do**" - the sacrifice for the sin of ignorance ([Luke 23:33-35](#), [Leviticus 5:17-19](#)).



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 choices of men which result in a 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 pick up on this imagery.



Every event in Yeshua's life pointed toward His prophesied death. 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 a manger"** (Luke 2, above). The shepherds immediately responded, **"Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which haShem [the Name] has made known to us"** (v. 15). *Where would they have known to go, since there were no directions provided?*

Micah, the Jewish 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](#)).

**And you, tower of the drove,  
Fort of the daughter of Zion,  
Unto you shall it arrive,  
Even the former rule will come,  
The kingdom to the daughter of Jerusalem.**

Although obscure and often overlooked, Micah disclosed that the Messiah, who embodied the hope of the Kingdom, **"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.

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. These lambs were wrapped or bound in "**swaddling cloths**" (a gauze-like cloth - not a "**birthing**" cloth) to insure protection from injury - also used to wrap Yeshua haMashiach. 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 the lambs in the hewn depression of a limestone rock known as a "**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**" (ibid, Mishnah. *the Jewish oral tradition* & Alfred Edersheim, *the Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*).



*Remains of  
Migdal Eder*

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 sacrificial lambs that were sacrificed in the Temple. When the angelic announcement came, they knew exactly where to go, as Luke 2 indicates, for the sign of a manger could only mean their 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.

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, *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.

Here is the scriptural account: Boaz was the great-grandfather of King David ([1Chronicles 2:12-15](#), [Matthew 1:5-6](#)). of whose lineage came Joseph, wedded to Mary, who gave birth to Yeshua known as haMashiach (the Messiah). Boaz owned 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. Augustus ordered a census of the entire Roman world, which meant that all people 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). Mary, betrothed to Joseph, went with him (see [Hebrew Betrothal Customs](#)).



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. 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. 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.

Just above the shepherd's field, northeast of modern Bethlehem, lie the ruins of ancient Bethlehem Ephratah ([Micah 5:2](#)); [Genesis 35:19](#) and [48:7](#) both 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. It seems 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.

Archeologists have become convinced that they have *found the ruins of a structure about forty yards up the hill* from the ruins of Migdal Eder, the Tower of the Flock - although 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. It does not take a leap of imagination to envision how Joseph and Mary, coming from a family whose local roots went back centuries and contained the seed of royalty, could have found her birthing place in the sacrificial birth room of the Temple of YHVH. It would be so like the Father to arrange it this way.

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



Yeshua was born earlier, 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](#)), with 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 Pesach ("pess-achhh" – 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.