

THE MAGI - CAMPBELL RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH  
DECEMBER 24, 2017



Greetings from the courts of Parthia.

My name is Nergal Sar Ezer. I am from the land of the Persians, from a people called Medes, from a royal priesthood known as the Magi. And I have a story to tell. It is the story of my life. It won't take long. It is a story that begins long before I was born and carries of after me into your time and beyond.



In my time the kings had many kinds of advisers. They had astrologers who could read the stars and give advice on the best day and time for battle, for marriage, for coronation. We Magi could do this but it was not our specialty.

They had sooth sayers who used potions and incantations to control the elements and people. We could do that but it was not our specialty.

As Magi we had two specialties. We were the interpreters of dreams. We were pretty good at dreams. Our other specialty was wisdom. We studied the scrolls and tablets from all over the world so that we could gain knowledge and wisdom and advice kings on all matters.

In many different kingdoms the priesthood of the Magi were advisers to kings and at times we were the teachers of the princes and future kings. And at times it was even the Magi who selected the next king and put the crown upon his head.

We're all about kings.

And so at a very early age my father began to teach me to read and to speak many languages so that I could study the tablets and scrolls.



But he told me there was one set of scrolls to which I should pay special attention: the scrolls of the people known as Israelites.

In them is the story of a God of history who brings the people out slavery in Egypt.



And he brings them to the Beautiful Land. And he tells them as long as they love him and worship him alone they will stay in the beautiful land and no power on earth can touch them.

But if they turn from him and worship other gods they will be removed from the beautiful land and no power on earth can see them.

And so the kingdoms of the Israelites went on for a thousand years. And the kings would love god and lead the people to worship him and then turn away and lead to people to worship gods and then turn back and love god and then turn away and the lead to people to worship other gods.

And on and on it went until god had had enough and the scrolls began to say that the people would be removed from the beautiful land.

And so as part of the Judgement of god, he allowed the armies of Assyria to attack some of the Israelite cities.



The Assyrians were a blood thirsty and barbarous people. They attacked with great violence, left many dead, took many captive and shamed the name of god.

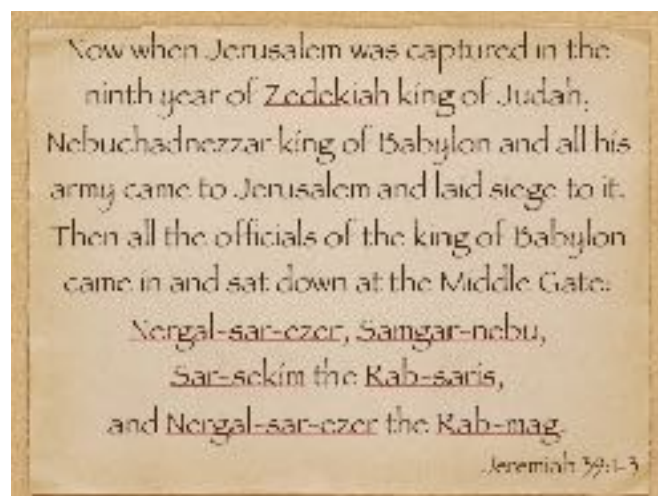
So even though god had allowed them to attack as part of his judgement, because they shamed his name, they too were judged.



And the kingdom of Assyria was conquered by the king of Babylon.

Now the Babylonians were a bloody thirsty and barbarous people but they greatly honoured the Magi.

And so when King Nebuchadnezzar finished the invasion of the cities of the Israelites it is written in the scroll of Jeremiah:



Nergal Sar Ezer the Rab Mag. Rab Mag means head of the Magi, leader of the wise men of the kingdom. And I bear his name. He was my great great ... grandfather. And so the magi came to Jerusalem to see the last king in the line of David removed from the throne.

Now King Zedekiah also read the scrolls but he did not understand. The scroll of Ezekiel said he would be taken captive but would never SEE Babylon. Jeremiah said that he should accept the judgement of god, surrender to the king of Babylon, and he would live out his days there in peace. It seemed impossible. The two together did not make sense.

And so because he could not understand he did not obey and he tried to escape.

Zedekiah was captured by army of Babylon and brought before Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar had all of Zedekiah's children brought before him and they were massacred to make it impossible for a new king to arise to the throne of David. Then he had the eyes of Zedekiah put out so that the last thing he would see would be the death of his own children. And then he was taken in to Babylon where he lived the rest of his days in peace.

And so he went to Babylon but he would never see Babylon.

As the god of history has said, so shall it come to pass. As the god of the Israelites promises even so shall he do.

Now the Babylonians took many captive: the strong, the wise, the rich, and the young.

Some of them you have heard of. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. You have heard their story. Their story is hot stuff.

And there was their friend Belteshazzar. You know him as Daniel. They were taken to be taught in the courts of Babylon so they could become administrators and advisers.

Some time later Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that bothered him. He called in his advisors.

They said, "O great king. Tell us your dream and we will tell you its meaning." He said, "No. If you are truly wise men you will first tell me my dream and then tell me its meaning." They said, "O great king it is impossible. We cannot."

So he said, "Then I will have you cut into tiny pieces and your houses will be reduced to dung piles."

And they said, "It's possible." But they could not.

On the day they were all to be cut into tiny pieces, including Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego and Daniel, Daniel came before the king and said, "O great king, I am not gifted in interpreting dreams but I have a god who speaks to me. Perhaps he will tell me about your dream."

He came back a while later and said, "O great king, this was your dream."



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Nebuchadnezzar fell on the ground before Daniel, gave him great gifts and praise and declared that Daniel would now be Rab Mag, head of the all the wise men. And all the advisers were to learn from Daniel about his scrolls and his god.

So all the advisors were thrilled because they would not be cut into tiny pieces and they were happy to learn from Daniel.

Some were not so happy. The magi is a hereditary priesthood passed on from father to son but Daniel was not born of the magi. He was a foreigner. So some people would try to get rid of him but they could not.

A descendant of Nebuchadnezzar named Belshazzar was ruling the kingdom and one night while he slept he was slain.

A Mede by the name of Darius established the kingdom of the Medes and Persians. The head of gold had fallen.



Now the Persians were a civilized and kind people. They greatly honoured the Magi and they greatly honoured the Israelites.

It was a king of Persia who declared that the city of Jerusalem and the temple of the god of the Israelites should be rebuilt.

And so the land of the Israelites became a Persian province.



Not long after and young man named Alexander rose up in Macedon, conquered the land of the Greeks, Israelites, Egyptians and Persians.



The shoulders of silver had fallen. The belly of bronze now cover the earth.

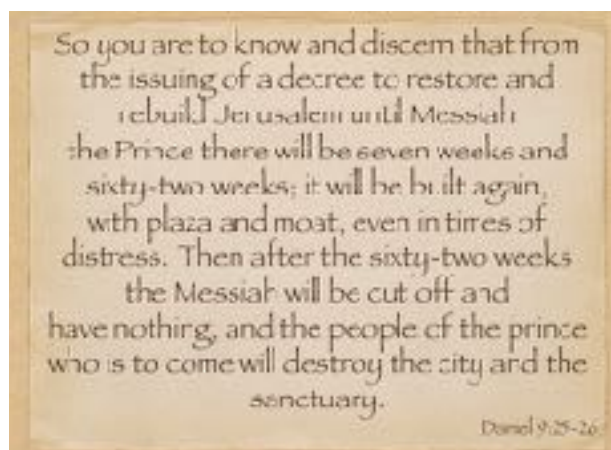
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The Parthians rose, retook the land of the Persians, Babylonians and Israelites.

This was the world into which I was born.

On the day I was to become a priest my father said I have a gift for you, a life quest.

He took out a scroll of Daniel the Rab Mag.



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That was my life quest.

One day my father returned from the courts and said, "I have good news and bad news. I believe the belly of bronze has crumbled. There is a city in the west called Rome."



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The Romans were lead by a local governor by the name of Herod the Great.

The Roman senate declared him to be King of the Jews.

Caesar Augustus gave him a new army and returned to Jerusalem. He fought the Parthians and surrounded the city of Jerusalem were the Parthians held out for many months.

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My father said, "The good news is, I believe the last kingdom of men has arisen and then next will be the new kind of kingdom from god. The bad news is that because of this line of peace it may be impossible for you to go to Jerusalem to honour the anointed prince."

But it was my life quest.

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One night I was studying the stars with the astronomers when we saw a new star in the direction of Jerusalem. A new star is always the sign of a new king.



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Finally we made it to Jerusalem but the story of our journey had arrived before us and the city was gripped in fear.

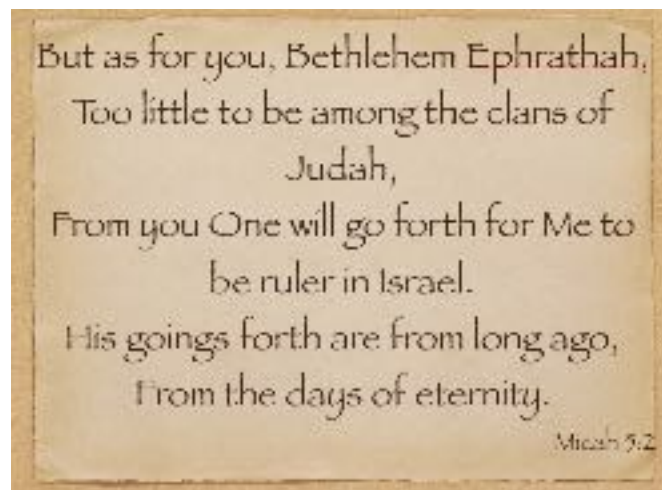
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We went in to see king Herod and said, "We know that a new king of the Jews has been born. We have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him.

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Herod called out the wise men of the Israelites

They brought out a scroll I had not seen. The scroll of Micah.



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We asked permission to go to Bethlehem.

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This is the part of the story you know well.



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-we saw the wild

-I had a dream

And so before the sun rose the next morning we were packing up our camp.



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A messenger came and told us Joseph had also had a dream.

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Centuries ago my ancestors the Magi had come to Jerusalem and seen the last king of the line of David removed from the throne. And they saw a massacre that would make it impossible for a new king to arise.

And now we had come to Jerusalem to see the new king in the line of David be born and again a massacre designed to make it impossible for him to rise to the throne.

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My name is Nergal Sar Ezer. I am from the land of the Persians, from a people called Medes, from a royal priesthood known as the Magi.

And in these hands I have helped a child who I knew would be a new kind of king in a new kind of kingdom. That he would sit upon the throne of his father David and from Jerusalem would establish a kingdom that would reach beyond the edges of the earth, beyond the edges of time. As the god of history has said, so shall it come to pass. Even if at times it may seem impossible.