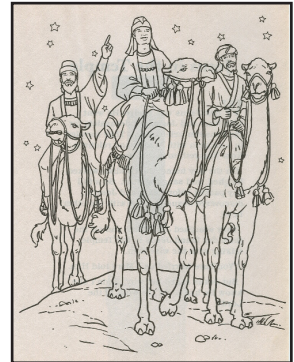


הַמְּגִישִׁים מִמִּזְרָח

The Wise Men from the East

In Matthew's account of the life of Yeshua, he tells the story of the Wise Men who came to recognize Yeshua as the King. In Matt 2:1 we read, "Now after Yeshua was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem . . ." The word "magi" is from the Greek language, and it can mean a number of things: "wise men," "sorcerers," or "astrologers." Who were these men, how did they know that someone special had been born in Israel, and what was the purpose of their coming?



We really don't know much about these men, because Matthew, in his Gospel, is the only one who tells us anything about them. When Matthew told his story, he may have used the Hebrew word מְגִישִׁים (*megushim*) or מְכַשְׁפִּים (*mechashephim*) to describe them, meaning "magicians" or "astrologers" in the ancient world of Israel. When Matthew's story was told in Greek, the word *magi* (μάγοι) was used. This is where we get our English translation of "Magi."

He also describes them as men "from the east," which most likely means from the nation of Persia. In a pagan nation like Persia, where false gods were worshipped, people believed that the stars and planets controlled the events of our world. They did not acknowledge the true God of Israel Who is the Creator of the stars and the planets. Yet because they were constantly studying the stars and planets in the sky, they had seen the star that had appeared when Yeshua was born, and because of this, they wanted to know what such a bright star meant! So they came to Israel to find out. Since God had given a special sign in the heavens to announce the birth of Yeshua, this tells us that He had sent His son to be the Messiah not only for Israel, but for the whole world.

We also don't know how many men actually came. Tradition has it that there were three, but this is because only three gifts are mentioned. Matthew tells us that the Magi brought gifts for Yeshua: gold, frankincense (sweet smelling spices), and myrrh (another sweet smelling spice). These were very expensive in the ancient world, and were therefore gifts that usually were given to kings. When the Magi brought them to present to the baby Yeshua, they were recognizing that He was someone very special indeed!

When the Wise Men first came to Jerusalem looking for the meaning of the special star they had seen, they asked Herod, who was the king, what special person had been born. Herod had already heard about the birth of Yeshua, and he was worried that Yeshua would become King instead of him. So he told the Wise Men that if they found this special person, they should let him know. He lied to them saying that he also wanted to bring gifts to that special person, but really Herod wanted to kill Him!

When the Magi found Yeshua, and realized that He was, indeed, the King who had been born in Israel, they were very glad. They bowed down and worshipped Him, and gave Him their gifts. Then God gave them a dream, and in the dream, God told them not to go back and tell Herod. When Herod found out that they had left without telling him where he could find Yeshua, he was very angry, and made a law that all of the Jewish boys two years old and younger should be put to death. He hoped that in doing such a terrible thing, Yeshua would also be killed. But God had warned Yoseph and Miriam to flee down to Egypt, and so the baby Yeshua was safe.

This story about the Wise Men makes it clear that Yeshua's coming to earth would touch the lives of all people, including the people from other nations besides Israel.