



HOW I FOUND  
THE  
MESSIAH

BY GIDEON LEVY TAM



## CONTENTS

<b>Part I:</b>	My Grandfather, the Six Days War, and My Bar Mitzvah.....	4
<b>Part II:</b>	The Kibbutz, the Passover, the Yom Kippur War, and the Sinai Desert.....	8
<b>Part III:</b>	Wedding Bells in Canada and Confrontation in Israel.....	13
<b>Part IV:</b>	Searching the Scriptures and Finding the Messiah.....	18

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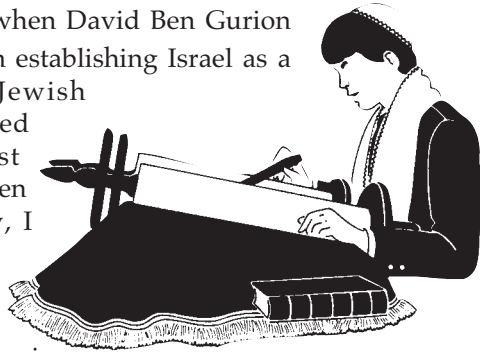
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## Part I

On May 14th, 1948, when David Ben Gurion read a proclamation establishing Israel as a sovereign state, Jewish nationhood was revived after a lapse of almost 2,000 years. Exactly seven years later to the day, I was born in the city of Jerusalem to Avraham and Esther Levytam.



My mother was born in Salonica, Greece and in 1931, at the age of seven, immigrated with her family to Tel Aviv, Israel. My father, however, is a “sabra” – a Jew born in the land. Sabra is a cactus fruit grown in Israel and is used to describe Israelis – prickly on the outside yet sweet on the inside. My father’s parents had immigrated from Yemen in the 1890s. The Yemenites trace their exodus from Israel back to the destruction of the first temple.

### A GRANDFATHER'S INFLUENCE

Much of my early childhood was spent under the guidance of my grandfather, a devout Jew who was the head of the house. He took great care that we strictly observed all the laws, ordinances and traditions. He attended the synagogue daily. I still remember someone knocking on the window at half past four every morning and calling to my grandfather, “Joseph, time for morning prayers.” Often my grandfather took me with him to the synagogue where he sought to instill in me the oracles of faith handed down by our fathers.

Sabbath was the focal point of the week and preparations for it started as early as Wednesday. The house had to be cleaned and the food cooked. The stove would be set so the food could be kept warm, as cooking was not allowed on the Sabbath.

Lighting the candles marked the formal initiation of the Sabbath. After the evening service, before the family sat down to enjoy the Friday evening meal, a selection from Proverbs 31:10-31 was sung in praise of the Jewish wife who “Looketh well to the ways of her household and eateth not the bread of idleness.”

Singing hymns of praise to God while dining is *the* distinguishing characteristic of the Sabbath. It was a time for the family to be together, to sing, to enjoy the good food mother had prepared, and most of all, to thank God for this day of rest.

The Jewish faith has many feasts; one is called “Simcha Torah” or “Joy of the Torah” (the five books of Moses). It takes place on the last night of the Feast of Tabernacles and coincides with the completion of the reading of the Torah. The scrolls are taken out of the ark and carried around the synagogue in a series of processions accompanied with singing and dancing. I vividly recall looking up to my grandfather and the rest of the bearded men singing and dancing with joy around the Torah, and trying to imitate them by singing as loudly as I possibly could.

These memories make me think of Psalm 119:97: “Oh, how I love thy law.” When the seven circuits were completed, all but one of the Torah scrolls were returned to the ark. The last section of Deuteronomy was read out of the remaining scroll. This was the only time the Torah was read in the synagogue at night.

## THE SIX DAYS WAR

Growing up with the threat of war and terrorist attacks is the way of life in Israel. And that’s what happened on June 5, 1967 when the sirens started to wail. My sister and I grabbed hands and raced home from school with a fear that increased as the noise of sirens and gunfire intensified. We were alone and frightened. Our parents had not arrived home yet. We frantically taped all the windows so that they would not shatter from the exploding bombs. We helped our neighbors fill sand bags and pile them in the entrance to our apartment building.