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Clarion Review

The Manger: A Jewish Love Story
Becky Reagan
978-1-4389-3614-7
Three Stars (out of Five)

For readers who have wondered about the relationship of Jesus' earthly parents this is their story. From the days of young courtship through the Angel Gabriel's visit a Jewish wedding the birth of Jesus and the years of his ministry the author humanizes the historical events through the eyes of a wife and mother. Mary recounts her story to her cousin Elisabeth the mother of John the Baptist.

The author gives the reader a primer in Jewish history and religion. She includes a glossary of terms a listing of the Hebrew calendar and feast days and explains Jewish customs and beliefs. Through the events in the story readers learn the significance of these customs.

Mary and Joseph's love story is universal and their courtship and marriage are true to their culture. With a plot that people already know it takes a passion for the subject to draw readers into a new presentation. Reagan develops Mary and Joseph's personalities within the context of their generation and their role in history. It is easy for readers to like them both.

The author includes a "Reflections" section at the end of each chapter. Through these sections she leads individual readers or study groups to draw lessons from the story as it unfolds.

The book will hold special appeal for Jewish and Christian readers or those who want an understandable view of the ordinary humanness and extraordinary Godliness of the birth of Jesus. We all know how the story ends. What we do not know is how Jesus' family loved him and coped with his life and death. The author offers a plausible viewpoint.

"Many times I thought I'd simply die from a broken heart. When Joseph died I didn't think I could go on" Mary tells her cousin. "He was the love of my life…Yahshua [Jesus] was only fifteen at the time…It was a true privilege to be in the same house with Nashua as he was growing up Elisabeth. His mind worked on a different level."

The Manger is a fundamental story of love and family told with historical and religious significance. Although the writing is sometimes wordy and filled with clichés the story rings true.

Pat McGrath Avery