

The Messiah Chronicles: Book 1: Book 1: Have You Seen the Signs?

Rivka Sarah Horowitz

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If the Messiah came today, how would you, and society, react?

When Arielle notices a poster advertising a rally for the coming of Moshiach in a few weeks, her journalistic mind is swarming with questions. Most importantly, what if this really is the Messiah and everyone misses it because they don't believe? In *The Messiah Chronicles: Book 1*, Rivka Sarah Horowitz explores the possible coming of the Messiah and its impact, or lack thereof, on modern society. Steeped in Jewish mysticism, this is a thoughtful story of finding oneself, both on an individual level and as part of a larger community.

Arielle is a young American immigrant living the typical life of a student in Jerusalem when she becomes swept up in the possibility that this time it just might be real. The Messiah really might be revealed. What starts as simply interviewing people about the poster for a journalism class evolves as she meets those responsible for organizing the rally, including a young Chassid who catches her eye despite the gulf between their Jewish denominations. As she struggles to make sense of the disconnect between people's desire for the Messiah to come and their refusal to believe it could really happen, she must find where her own beliefs lie.

Horowitz's strength as a writer lies in her ability to portray the complexities of relationships for people in their twenties. From families to friends to potential lovers, the pull of one human to another is palpable. Even when families profoundly disagree, they can't let go of each other. The heartache of a familial falling out and the irresistible buzz of a new love are strongly felt through the writing. It is easy to become attached to the main characters and root for them.

The book does suffer from dry prose and often reads like a factual report of the day's happenings. Bringing in more descriptions of the setting and using all five senses would pull readers further into the story, letting them get lost in Arielle's world.

That said, this first book in a planned series creates a solid foundation for further exploring the question of whether it is possible for the Messiah to succeed today. The book will appeal most to those who have knowledge of Judaism and Israel. There is a lot of Hebrew throughout the book, and though a glossary is included, it is not comprehensive. Those who are not familiar with the Jewish culture will learn a great deal, however, if they are willing to spend the extra time looking up terms.

CHRISTINE CANFIELD (November 11, 2014)

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