



A Prophet

BY JADE SWARTZBERG

To my dad it came as glorious news—there are prophets on the earth today.

I have always known that Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, came to earth 2,000 years ago and that we have a living prophet of God on the earth today. But my father, Roy Swartzberg, who was raised as a Jew, did not always know.

Growing up in an Orthodox Jewish home in South Africa, my dad knew about the Old Testament prophets, like Moses and Elijah, and he knew of the miracles they performed. When he heard about Moses parting the Red Sea or Elijah calling down fire from heaven, he marveled at the things these men could do for the people and wondered why there were no prophets on the earth today.

It was shortly after my dad's bar mitzvah that he first heard about the Prophet Joseph Smith. At the time he was living with his Jewish grandparents. His mother

had passed away, and his father had remarried and joined the Church.

One afternoon my dad's older brother, Mark, sat down with him and told him that he had joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He then told my dad about Joseph Smith, the First Vision, and the Restoration of the gospel and prophets to the earth. My dad says that something felt very right as he listened to his older brother bear testimony, and my dad already had faith in Heavenly Father and in prophets. To him, this was glorious news! There were prophets on the earth, and people once again spoke with God. He felt himself wishing it to be true.

After sharing his testimony with my dad, Mark invited him to pray about it. But as a Jewish boy, he had prayed only in Hebrew, standing up and facing in the direction of



on the Earth

Jerusalem, the Holy City. Mark explained how Latter-day Saints pray: kneeling, with arms folded to show reverence. This was new to him. He knelt to offer his first personal prayer to Heavenly Father.

Although the news about prophets felt right to my dad and he had a good feeling after his prayer, he did not decide to listen to the missionaries right away.

Soon he and his brother were sent to live with their step-grandparents, who were members of the Church. On Sundays the family would attend their Sabbath meetings, but my dad continued to go to the synagogue every Friday night and Saturday morning to observe the Jewish Sabbath.

He began, however, to attend Mutual activities with his brother, and when the seminary program was introduced in South Africa, he went to that too. There he learned about the Book of Mormon. The first scripture he ever memorized that wasn't in Hebrew was 1 Nephi 3:7: "I will go and do the things which the Lord hath commanded, for I know that the Lord giveth no commandments unto the children of men, save he shall prepare a way for them that they

may accomplish the thing which he commandeth them."

The missionaries were diligent in visiting him once a week, and after a while he started attending sacrament meeting in addition to his synagogue meetings. Finally, as he gained a testimony of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, he decided to listen to the missionary lessons. My dad was baptized on Christmas Day in 1973—the first time he celebrated the Savior's birth.

The story of my father's journey to the truth has given me a greater perspective, and his testimony of prophets has become a part of my own. Today I wear a small Star of David necklace as a token linking me to the Jewish heritage that I am proud of, but it also represents faith. It is because my father had faith in prophets as a young teen that I am blessed with a similar faith.

I know that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet today just as Moses was, and I am so grateful for that fact! The heavens are indeed open, and through revelation, communication with our Heavenly Father continues today as in days of old. ■

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