

HAVURAH

FEBRUARY 2000 • SHEVAT-ADAR 5760 • VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1



TRIBUTE TO THE REAL HERO

by Stephen Katz

There I stood, "Super Mordechai," in my red-dyed long underwear, sporting a cape and a big "M" emblazoned on my thermal undershirt. I'm not sure if the costume shaped my understanding of Purim or vice versa, but for most of my life I have seen Mordechai as the hero of the story.

As we read through the Megillah each year and "bood" at every mention of Haman's name, it was only natural to cheer each time we heard the name of heroic Mordechai. He had stood up to the evil Haman and resisted compromise out of loyalty to God and loyalty to the Jewish people. He had risked his life for the sake of that loyalty. And he was a strategist, the one calling the shots with his young girl cousin Esther. Mordechai was smart, courageous and strong—what more could a child want in a hero? As a boy it was natural for me to identify with the male protagonist in the story. I didn't want to be a passive guy—I wanted to be like Mordechai!

But as the years passed, I realized that Mordechai is not the only hero in the story of Purim. Maybe he is not even the main hero. After all, the holiday is not based on "the Book of Mordechai." So let's take a look at his cousin, Esther.

Like Mordechai, Esther was loyal. When she informed the king of a plan to assassinate him, she didn't grab the glory for uncovering the plot; she duly gave the credit to Mordechai (2:22). We also see humility earlier in the story, because even after she became queen, "she continued to follow Mordechai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up" (2:20). While humility might not be considered especially heroic

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at first glance, with age and wisdom we come to admire and appreciate those who demonstrate this difficult and elusive trait.

Esther also exercised another trait, more commonly associated with heroism: courage. Mordechai had stood up to Haman—a scandalous move—but Esther risked her life before the King—an outrageously more dangerous affair. She knew that entering his presence without invitation could result in her own death. Yet she exhibited the stuff that courage is made of—doing the right thing regardless of how one feels about it (afraid, confused, alone). Not only did Esther boldly go where no woman had gone before—into the king’s presence without being asked—but she did so shortly after Queen Vashti, her predecessor, had enraged the king by disobeying him. We can surmise that he was in no mood to be approached by what he perceived to be an aggressive woman who threatened his dominance in the home (1:18-22). Esther knew enough to be afraid, but she was not ruled by her fears. She set them aside to courageously walk a straight line of righteousness. She said, “I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish” (4:16).

We see her courage again in her next move. Still in the king’s presence, in a face to face conflict with Haman, the “enemy of the

Jews,” she reveals her true identity as a Jew and accuses Haman of plotting genocide (7:3-6). Mordechai had already resisted Haman in public; here Esther dares to defy “the one whom the king had elevated,” in the presence of the king himself. I believe that Esther’s courage exceeded Mordechai’s.

Clearly, Esther’s courage grew out of her faith. When her cousin Mordechai challenged her to speak to the king on behalf of her people, she told him, “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you

do” (4:16). Esther, the woman known for her external beauty, was also Esther, the woman who possessed internal beauty, having a strong and clear faith in the God who hears and answers prayer.

As the story concludes, we see Esther as a true leader of Israel, shrewd in her handling of people and firm in her use of authority. Her quick thinking created an opportunity to win the king’s sympathy and trap wicked Haman (5:4-8). She then demonstrated great intelligence and persistence in advocating for protective legislation on behalf of her Jewish people (8:5; 9:13). It was, in fact, Esther’s decree that established the practices of Purim for all time (9:32).

I hope that every girl who chooses to dress up as Esther for Purim recognizes that she is at least as much, if not more, of a hero than Mordechai. Esther’s heroism has been memorialized by streets named after her in the center of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Hadassah, the largest women’s Zionist group in the world, is also named for her (Hadassah was Esther’s Hebrew name). That organization, which was founded on Purim in 1912, has saved many Jewish lives and performed countless acts of charity.

Though Esther and Mordechai are both heroes, the name of the ultimate Hero is not mentioned in the text. That is God Himself. It

E-MAIL: HOLICOW2@AOL.COM

☎ 415.864.2600 FAX: 415.552.8325

WEB: WWW.JEWSFORJESUS.ORG

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60 HAIGHT ST. · SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94102-5895

EDITOR: MELISSA DELL MOSKOWITZ

ASSISTANT EDITOR: LAURA BARRON

ART DIRECTION: PAIGE SAUNDERS

ART, DESIGN, PRODUCTION: DANIELA KOGER

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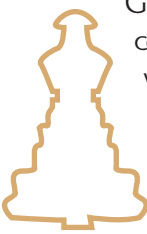
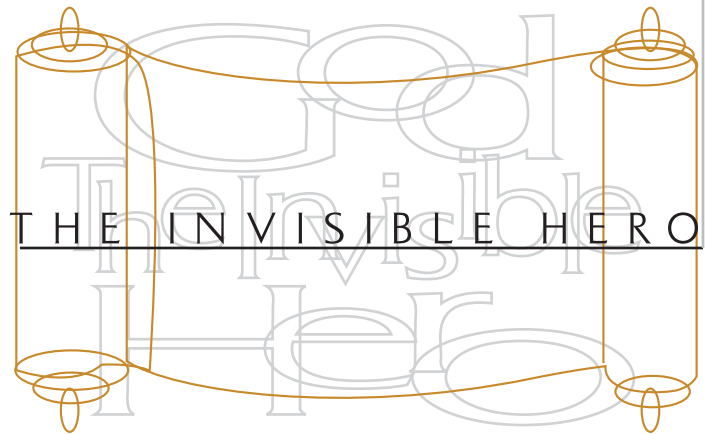
is curious that the Book of Esther is the only book of the Bible which does not explicitly mention God. One explanation for this is the possibility that much of the book may have drawn from the annals of the king of Persia (10:2). Persian historians would not have welcomed references to the God of Israel.

Though not explicitly mentioned in the book, evidence of God's providence fills every page. Over and over we see the finger of God as He moved to deliver our people from extermination. Mordechai reminded Esther that even if she were to remain silent before the king "relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place" (4:14). This indicates to us and to readers throughout every generation that both Mordechai and Esther were people of faith and that the events were in God's plan.

The real message of the Book of Esther is not merely a call to stand up for our people as Mordechai and Esther did. The real message is a call to recognize that God, the invisible Hero of this story, works out His will through us as we seek to walk in His ways. Throughout the entire Bible this theme is always before us. It is God, not us, who ultimately brings about good. Yes, we cooperate with Him in *Tikkun Olam*, the restoration of the world, as we fight against racism, poverty, child abuse, hunger, pollution of the environment and other evils. But we must always remember what the apostle Paul stated so plainly: "it is God who works in you to will and to act

according to His good purpose" (Philippians 2:13). God works in and through us to want what He wants and to act as He wants us to act in the world.

Mordechai and Esther were intelligent, courageous and humble leaders, but they could accomplish nothing apart from God. This reminds me of one of my favorite verses: Isaiah 26:12. The prophet sings a song of praise to the Lord and declares, "All that we have accomplished You have done for us!" We can only begin to understand the mysterious merging these lyrics so beautifully describe: that while we labor and even see accomplishments from our labors, God is the real "Doer." It is time that we all embrace the truth of Isaiah's song, and give God the glory for every good thing we do. He is always the real Hero.



Campaign 2000 in N.Y.C.
— Just do it!

Training: June 13-27th
Campaign: June 28-July 29

Contact: Stephen Katz
(mal60@aol.com)
or (415) 864-2600

Halutzim
(for 16-18 year olds)

Level II (for veterans):
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Level I: July 16-29

Contact: Josh Sofaer
(jasof@aol.com)

Camp Gilgal

East:

Camp Pinnacle —
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(near Albany)

Junior Camp:

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Cost: \$450 per camper

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(see Halutzim info)

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Teen Camp:

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Camp Alexander Mack —
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and Ft. Wayne)

Cost: \$250 per camper

Contact: Melissa "Bronx"
Moskowitz (holicow2@aol.com)
or (847) 679-2680

West:

Junior Camp:

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Silver Spur Christian Conference
Center — Tuolumne, CA
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Cost: \$250 per camper

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Contact: Dave "Moose" Garrett
(MOOSE7580@aol.com)
or (415) 864-2600

HAZEL STONE — MAY HER MEMORY BE BLESSED

By Jeanne Kimmel Waterman



I was a new believer when I began attending the Jews for Jesus Bible study in San Francisco in 1983. Each week, about twenty minutes into the study, an elderly woman carrying a white shopping bag would shuffle her way to a front row seat. It was not uncommon to hear her “amens,” or the soft rumble of her gentle snoring. If I were to judge a book by its cover, I would have labeled her as a little, old bag lady. But soon I discovered that this little lady was a Jewish believer in Jesus, who had known Him for more than 40 years and was more than able to teach me a few things.

Hazel Stone, affectionately known as “Babe,” taught me a great deal

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I was born in Czechoslovakia in 1935. Our family owned one of the largest textile factories in the Czech Republic. In 1940, when the Germans occupied this area, they first took the industrialists, and my father was sent to the Warsaw Ghetto. We never saw him again.

In September of 1942 all the Jewish people from Prague were deported and everything was taken away from us. My mother had prepared us to immigrate to England, but soon the borders were closed and we couldn't get out anymore. We were sent to Theresestadt, a horrible ghetto, and stayed there 16 months. My memory of that time has become quite blurred, but I do recall that I was sick all the time and developed a terrible skin condition. I also remember being very hungry and eating a meal once a day of dirty soup made out of potato peels and a piece of bread.

We were then sent to Auschwitz in a cattle car. There, my mother saved my life by always getting me an extra little piece of bread. I was just a little girl, yet we had to stand in front of the barracks in freezing cold for hours and hours. There was electrically—charged barbed wire everywhere. I remember praying, “God, I know I will surely survive this.”

In the beginning of 1945, the bombings in Germany were so intense that they needed a few prisoners from Auschwitz to clean up after the phosphorus bombings in Hamburg. We had been in the family camp for six months already and our time was up; we were going to be sent to the gas chambers. A car came from Berlin to take a certain amount of prisoners to help clean up after the bombings. We stood before Mengele and my mother put a big sack over me and he couldn't see me, because she had put me between people, so I



was pushed through and I survived once again.

We ended up in Bergen-Belsen at the end of the war. The Germans' plan was to have us all there so that as the allies advanced to dynamite it, no one would witness what had happened there. When we arrived there were no more barracks left, so we were pushed in on top of deceased bodies. One morning I woke up to the roaring of tanks, and realized the SS must have run away. The English and French came in and immediately set up temporary headquarters. My mother dragged me in to talk to them, but she collapsed and I fell unconscious as well.

I had been in a coma for five days with typhoid fever and all sorts of other infections. My mother had been in a different barrack, but somehow found me. We were sent on a hospital ship to Sweden and we convalesced there. In August of 1946 we came to America



by boat. I got private tutoring and eventually became a maternity nurse. I married and had a wonderful daughter named Nina.

I did not enjoy going to synagogue when we arrived in the United States, and I would never step into a church. I was always praying, though. God had been with me in some very dark hours; I had been so desperate, and He was always with me.

One day I saw David Brickner on the street, handing out some literature. I walked over to him, crying, and said, "How dare you? How dare you, a Jewish boy, what are you doing?" I showed him the number on my arm — I was so upset! Whenever I saw the Jews for Jesus on the street, I would literally push their hands away. I was hurt. I was insulted.

I had a friend at that time, the doorman in my building, who told me about

Jesus. I told him that I was Jewish and did not want to hear about Jesus. He said once, "We are all children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." I replied, "Every Gentile is an anti-Semite." But I asked him, "Take me to your church on a Sunday." I went with him and it didn't mean anything to me. The minister told me, "In life, everything is fate."

I soon heard that they were having Lev Leigh from Jews for Jesus at the church, giving a Christ in the Passover presentation. He had once been a Lubavitcher, and I thought, "That's impossible." I wanted to meet him; I was so perplexed. But the service had to be cancelled because of the weather, and instead the pastor gave me Lev's phone number at the Jews for Jesus office. Within half an hour he was in my office, explaining the Gospel to me. I said, "How can you believe this as a Jew?" I had been such an independent thinker; nobody could brainwash me into believing. But I was searching for the truth, and Lev showed me different things in the New Testament. I realized that Jesus had never been anything else but a Jew, and I accepted Him into my life.

Today I am very outspoken about my faith. After Auschwitz, what do I have to lose?



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about life in the Lord as we rode taxis, waited for buses and enjoyed sweet fellowship. The hours that we spent together eventually earned me the right to call her "Grandma."

Babe had the ability to turn casual conversations toward spiritual matters, but she also had had a public ministry when she was young. She had been ordained into ministry on November 8, 1942 when she began holding revival meetings from New York to California. She had a weekly radio show on San Francisco's KFAX, and her paper bag was always equipped with gospel tracts, which she called "ammunition."

Babe lived in a small room in a run-down section of San Francisco. Yet, when she passed away, she left a substantial amount of money to various people, Jewish organizations and ministries. She was generous with Jews for Jesus. A scholarship fund was set up in her memory, for Jewish women who believe in Jesus and are pursuing training for a career in evangelism. I can see Babe smiling from the heavens as she sees the work of Jesus being carried on through these recipients. I only wish they, too, had the privilege of knowing her the way I did.

For more information about the Hazel Stone Scholarship, e-mail Ruth Rosen at Kidro@aol.com (please put "Hazel Stone" in the subject line). Or write to Ruth at
60 Haight Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 864-2600

MEGILLOT IN NORTH CAROLINA?

The hills of western rural North Carolina seem an unlikely home for Messianic Scribal Arts, a ministry which produces hand-scribed Hebrew scrolls of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures. Lisa and Deborah Bisol—who are both sisters and artists—also create *mezzuzot*, *machzorim* (worship books for holy days), and scriptural art pieces such as illuminated manuscripts, stained glass, wood and pottery. “The deeper we delve into the Scriptures, the more we see the need to express its fullness in the visual arts,” says Lisa. The arts ministry is an extension of Congregation Sh’ma Yisrael in Warne, North Carolina, led by Jim and Debbie Cummins.

Deborah is the “spiritual gemfinder” of the two sisters. Her interest and knowledge of both the Hebrew and Greek texts have resulted in word studies, which are then fleshed out in various art forms. She is well-versed in traditional Jewish thought and culture as well. Each item which Messianic Scribal Arts produces is accompanied by a written teaching.

It is especially timely to tell our Havurah readers about Messianic Scribal Arts’ *Megillah Esther* (the Scroll of Esther). Traditionally, the book of Esther is scribed on its own scroll (separate from the other books of the Bible) and is usually affixed to a single post (*etz chaim*, or “tree of life”). It is read on Purim (“Lots”), the 14th day of the biblical month of Adar. Through the feast we see God’s saving intervention through His servant Esther, when Haman the Agagite plotted to destroy all the Jews in the provinces of King Ahasuerus.

The color-illustrated paper scroll produced by the Bisols includes the traditional scribal markings and some special art markings. The hidden four-letter name of God (the Tetragrammaton), encoded backwards and forwards throughout the Hebrew text, is illuminated in gold lettering. This illustrates the principle that although there is no overt reference to God’s Name in the Book of Esther, He was certainly working behind

the scenes to bring about His will.

Another special art marking is the reference to the Hebrew words “*ha melech*” (the king). Each time the words appear in the Messianic Scribal Arts’ scroll, they are highlighted in a rich, pink rectangle. This illustrates the rabbinical concept that references to the earthly king Ahasuerus are intended to remind us of the true King of Heaven and His greater, everlasting dominion.

Hand-painted, full-color borders beautify each page with ornamental crowns to illustrate the royalty of God. The velvet scroll is hand-embroidered in metallic gold thread. An interlinear is provided with the scroll for a line-by-line breakdown of the Hebrew, the transliteration and the English translation. A two-page insert describes all the special and traditional markings in the scroll. An audiotape of the blessings chanted before and after the reading of the scroll is also included, along with the special Purim cantillation of the four mandatory public readings from the Scriptures themselves.

Messianic Scribal Arts has a catalogue that can be obtained from their address: 187 Scenic Road, Warne, NC 28909

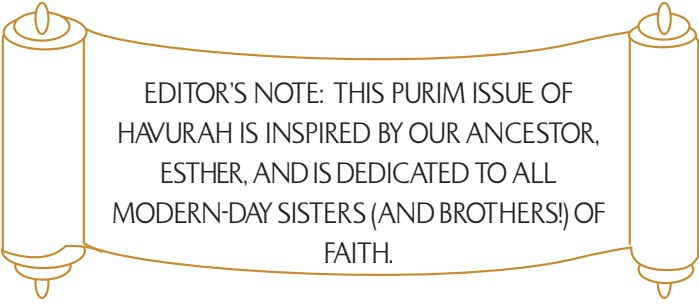
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E-mail: msa@dnet.net

Purim materials are also available through Jews for Jesus’ Purple Pomegranate Productions catalogue.



MESSIANIC SCRIBAL ARTS



EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS PURIM ISSUE OF HAVURAH IS INSPIRED BY OUR ANCESTOR, ESTHER, AND IS DEDICATED TO ALL MODERN-DAY SISTERS (AND BROTHERS!) OF FAITH.

When lost in the forest, or even sometimes in the city, it's helpful to have a compass. Compasses always point north, so if we are planning on going in a certain direction, using a compass helps us to know which way to turn and how many degrees.

God is our life compass. When we get a sense from Him of what He wants us to do, we need to keep looking to the One who remains constant—and then stay on course. When we do so, He will guide us toward His intended destination. BUT! If we take divergent paths, even tiny ones, to the right or to the left, we will end up hopelessly lost.

In Queen Esther's day, compasses had not been invented yet. But the story of her life behooves us to ask the same crucial question of direction that Esther faced: "And who knows whether you have not attained royalty for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14b).

We have become part of a royal household, the kingdom of God, and we have been enrolled into His priestly service. What does that mean for us?

As Jewish believers, we are to uphold the unique testimony that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah, and we are Jewish messengers of that truth. We are to tell others, so they too can enter into His "palace," His household. Are we, in a sense, modern day "Esthers?" Have we not attained this adoption for such a time as this? Are we fulfilling our royal destiny? Or have we veered off course, attracted by other well-meaning, but less vital causes?

This issue of Havurah is too short to rehearse the entire megillah, but the story is a familiar one. The Jews of Persia were in danger of being annihilated. Haman, the evil perpetrator of lies, concocted a plot to destroy them and King Ahasuerus endorsed his plot. The king was unaware that his lovely queen, Esther, was Jewish. She was warned of her people's plight by her cousin Mordechai and was then challenged by him to be the instrument through which their people might be saved. The Purim story has a happy ending, but the saga of our people continues.

How might our people be saved today, and how might we be used as God's instruments in their salvation? Are we on His path, or our own? Esther enjoyed a plush and pleasant position in the king's palace. She could either rest or serve from that position, and she chose to serve. We can rest in the comforts, material possessions and positions of honor God has blessed us with, or we can serve. In what ways are we reaching out to our fellow Jews who are walking into an eternity without Y'shua? How much have we stepped out of our comfort zone for Him? What are we risking for our people's sake?

The lowly and humble Queen Esther may truly have had "spiritual eyes" to look ahead and see her responsibility in affecting future generations of our people for good. Her actions were not just for the Jews of Shushan. So, too, we know that we've been given the opportunity to make a difference for future generations. Y'shua is our only future hope. That should propel us to action. Esther looked forward. We need to look forward. Esther's name is inscribed in a book; ours is to be imprinted on the lives of those whom we can point in God's direction today.

Some of us disregard the call to God's service. We neglect the development and exercise of our spiritual gifts. We fear what we will lose if we serve too hard or give too much. But our dedication to God can be like a compass. When we keep Him due north, with our eyes fixed on Him, three things will happen: We will gain a sense of purpose, place and productivity. Our purpose is to glorify Him and make Him known to others. Our place is whatever corner He's planted us in from which to serve, whether a royal palace or a studio apartment. Our productivity is weighed in spiritual fruit, which will not bring us public accolades or honor, but which will reverberate in future generations of Jewish people who praise His Name.

BY MELISSA MOSKOWITZ



SUCH A TIME AS THI

A YOUNG WOMAN OF FAITH

TRADITION SAYS THAT

(AND SHE LOVES CAMP GILGAL, TOO!)

By Sarah Cochran, age 15

I don't have one of those amazing testimonies where I was saved from drugs or alcohol or immorality. I once heard someone say that it's not important to be saved "out of sin," just as long as you are saved "from sin," and I think of myself that way. I was born into a believing family (my mother is a Jewish believer in Jesus and my dad is a Gentile believer). When I was six, I asked Jesus into my life.

My parents sent me to a Christian school through the 8th grade, and most of my friends there believed as I did. But that all changed when I went to a large, public high school. There I was, "a nice, little Christian girl," in a school that was filled with drugs and violence. It took me a little while to adjust, but soon I had people to sit with at lunch and to talk to during classes. I began "fitting in" quite well and was enjoying myself, too. And while many of my new friends did do drugs and drink alcohol, I had already decided I would never do that.

Pretty much all my friends knew that I was a believer, and most of them knew that I was a messianic Jew. The problem was—I thought that was good enough. All through my freshman year I went to church and a youth group, but I never really felt I needed to make my faith part of who I was to my friends. I didn't try to bring up my beliefs to them in our everyday conversations.

I breezed through 9th grade and all my finals, and then came summer. I didn't know that God had something life-changing in store for me. I decided to go on two missions trips: one with Sonlife Ministries, and the other with Jews for Jesus. The first trip was a really good relationship-building

time between God and me. The second, called Project Halutzim, helped me build some ways of communicating with others about how they could have that relationship, too. I worked with other Jewish believing high school students who were willing to find out about doing personal evangelism.

One evening we were handing out tracts in Greenwich Village, and we had the opportunity to share the Gospel with an Israeli woman. She said, "If you lived in Israel, you would not be able to believe this!" We were able to tell her this wasn't true because we knew of two Israelis who believed and who were on the Jews for Jesus campaign that summer. We were able to get her name and number for more follow-up. It really made a difference in my life to see how God could use me with others. My faith was not just something to keep to myself.

Well, that pretty much brings me up to date. I'm writing this a year later, while I'm taking part in another Jews for Jesus program—Camp Gilgal East Teen Camp. I feel God has been speaking to me while I'm here, too. For one thing, something I heard at the campfire the other night convicted me about my temper and some of my bad attitudes. I know I need to change in those areas in order to be an effective witness to my friends. Being here at camp has helped me gain a heart for my friends who are lost, spiritually. I hope I can take all I've learned in camp and on Halutzim and continue to make these things a real part of my life.

Please pray that I would continue to build strong relationships with my unsaved friends, lead them to the Lord, and persevere in my walk with Him.

ESTHER WAS ONLY A YOUNG

GIRL WHEN GOD CHOSE TO

USE HER IN A MIGHTY WAY.

LIKEWISE, OUR YOUNG

PEOPLE TODAY CAN BE USED

BY GOD TO DO GREAT

THINGS FOR HIM.