

# **BETHLEHEM**

A Play of the Nativity

by

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**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd**

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

BETHLEHEM

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## CAST

### Female:

**Elisheba** - *gossipy innkeeper's wife*  
**Basemath** - *her friend*  
**Shelomith** - *another friend*  
**Zeruah** - *taxpayer*  
**Mary** - *mother of Jesus*

### Male:

**Flavius** - *bossy Roman officer*  
**Marcellus** - *rather dim centurion*  
**Jehoiakim** - *taxpayer*  
**Herod** - *flamboyant King of Judea*  
**Joseph** - *father of Jesus*  
**Caleb** - *shepherd*  
**Saul** - *shepherd*  
**Abel** - *bad tempered shepherd*  
**Esau** - *slow shepherd*

### Female/Male:

**Amalek** - *Herod's absequious right hand man*  
**Nif** }  
**Naf** } - *palace slaves*  
**Nef** }  
**Nuf** }  
**Josaiah** ) -  
**Nehemiah** } - *Herod's advisers*  
**Caspar** }  
**Melchior** } - *3 Kings*  
**Balthazar** }  
**Angel**  
**Prologue leader(s)**

### Non Speaking Parts:

**Mime artiste(s)**  
**Roman guard (s)**  
**The entertainers** - *jugglers, dancers, acrobats, snake charmers, musicians &c.*  
**Musicians**  
**Choir**

## **PRODUCTION NOTES**

### **CAST**

*There are 22 Speaking parts plus the prologue leader (s).*

*Some parts can be taken by 1 person or by a group e.g. Prologue leader (s), mime artiste (s), Roman guards (s).*

*The entertainers can be made up of any "acts" the group can devise e.g. The Dazzling Dancers from Damascus, The Strong Men from Syracuse, The Most Esteemed Musicians from Mecca, The Jaunty Juvenile Jugglers, Sneiken Yabasket the Syrian Snake Charmer etc. They form a play within the play which the Royal Characters watch and applaud.*

### **MUSIC**

*An appropriate carol or Christmas song can be played/sung by the Musicians/Choir before the play starts, between each scene and during scene 5. All the cast can join in the carol or song in Scene VIII.*

*Appropriate Bazaar music can be played throughout the Interlude while the Royal Troupe performs.*

### **COSTUME**

*A mixture of traditional and modern, for example:-*

*Prologue - conveyor belt/machine.*

*Innkeeper's wives - rollers in hair and aprons.*

*Romans - 1920's gangsters.*

*Herod - Teddy Boy.*

*Shepherds - Punks.*

*Kings - traditional Eastern dress.*

*Angel - traditional white robe etc.*

*Mary and Joseph - traditional Biblical dress.*

### **SET and PROPS**

*Can be done on a traditional stage but also lends itself very well to playing in the round.*

*No formal set is necessary. Token props set the scene.*

*Prologue - nothing needed.*

*The Innkeeper's Wives Part One - Shopping Bags (Elisheba, Shelomith and Basemath).*

The Roman Census - table, chair, money (Flavius), pencil and paper (Marcellus),  
bag of money (Johoiakim).  
The Palace of King Herod - 3 caskets (Kings), a bench (Herod and Kings), a large  
book (Josaiah).  
The Shepherds - cards (Caleb and Saul).  
The Stable - star, crib, 3 caskets (Kings), lamb (Abel).  
The Flight of the Kings - nothing needed.  
The Innkeeper's Wives Part Two - nothing needed.

### **SIGNS TO INTRODUCE EACH SCENE**

*These can be displayed on an easel, sandwich boards, placards etc. and brought on  
stage by a non-speaking member of the Cast, e.g. a Roman Guard.*

SIGN ONE: THE PROLOGUE

SIGN TWO: ELISHEBA'S INN  
B & B CLEAN ROOMS \*\*  
NO VACANCIES

SIGN THREE: REASONABLE REMULUS  
RELIABLE ROMAN BATHS MADE TO MEASURE  
STRAIGHT ROADS OUR SPECIALITY  
WE BUILD TO LAST

SIGN FOUR: HEROD RULES O.K. (OR ELSE)

SIGN FIVE: Baa! Baa! Baa!  
Baa Baa

SIGN SIX: UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN

SIGN SEVEN: HAVE CAMEL, WILL TRAVEL

SIGN EIGHT: ELISHEBA'S INN  
B & B SUPERIOR ROOMS \*\*\*\*  
ROYALTY WELCOME



## BETHLEHEM

by Maggie Keogh

### *THE PROLOGUE.*

*[SIGN ONE - see Production notes].*

*Enter PROLOGUE LEADERS and MIME ARTISTE(S).*

**Prologue Leader:** I have come to take you on a journey....

Leave behind the city slick, computer pick,  
Walls of brick, techno-trick,  
In the thick of the 1990's,  
And travel with me through the mists of time.

Follow me across the deep and mighty oceans.  
Fly over the snow capped peaks of distant mountains;  
Tread silently through the vast, dead and empty deserts;  
And when you finally cross the last wide river,  
Then come with me through the heat and the dust  
To the heart of a small village. (*Exeunt*)

### *SCENE 1*

#### *THE INNKEEPER'S WIVES PART ONE.*

*[SIGN TWO - see Production notes].*

*Enter ELISHEBA, SHELOMITH and BASEMATH, each from a different direction. They are all carrying heavy shopping bags.*

**Basemath:** Elisheba! Shelomith! Stop and talk awhile with an old friend.  
Shalom.

**Shelomith:** Shalom, Basemath.

**Elish:** Shalom. If I could crowd 28 hours into one day I would gladly stop, but my inn is full of travellers who've come to take part in this bothersome Roman census. You can't swing a camel's tail in my front parlour! These travellers do nothing but eat and drink - as fast as I lay food on the table, they gobble it up. Such manners! Paying taxes is obviously hungry work.

**Shelomith:** And the Romans are no better. Demanding roasted dormice at all hours of the night and day, and running my well dry with the amount of

washing they do. It's a wonder they've got any skin left to wash.

**Basemath:** It's unnatural, Shelomith, that's what it is.

**Shelomith:** And the streets are so crowded it takes all morning to fight your way to the shops and back.

**Elisheba:** Oooh, I know.... that market place is like the tower of Babel. It might be good for business but it's doing my poor old legs no good at all. What with my legs, my Reuben's lumbago and that great big star that's been shining so brightly these last few nights, I just haven't been getting my beauty sleep.

**Basemath:** I've noticed that star, too.

**Shelomith:** You'd have to be dead or daft NOT to have noticed it, Basemath. It's been hanging over Bethlehem as bright as the sun. It's not natural.

**Elisheba:** I couldn't agree more. Mind you, if it stays around much longer the Romans will tax it.... or wash it, and that will be the end of that. But I can't stand around chatting all day. If I leave Reuben on his own for too long he'll fill the entire inn with travellers and we shall have to sleep in the garden. As it is we've got one couple sleeping in the stable, and another on the roof. I have to put my foot down with a firm hand occasionally.

**Shelomith:** I'll walk with you as far as the Tabernacle., Elisheba.

**Basemath:** And I must go and see Levi.... his olive oil is on special offer today. Shalom, Elisheba, Shelomith.

**Elisheba/Shelomith:** Shalom, Basemath. (*ELISHEBA and SHELOMITH exit in one direction. BASEMATH exits in another*)

## SCENE 2

### THE ROMAN CENSUS

[SIGN THREE - see PRODUCTION NOTES].

*ROMAN SOLDIER(S) stand guard. FLAVIUS is sitting at a table counting money.*

*MARCELLUS enters.*

**Marcellus:** Flavius!!!

**Flavius:** (*counting under his breath*). Don't interrupt!

**Marcellus:** Flavius, I have such news!!!

**Flavius:** (*impatiently*). Don't interrupt me NOW!

**Marcellus:** But Flavius, I've just received....

**Flavius:** .... 3927.... or was it 3928? Oh, you dunderhead! Now I've lost count. It's all your fault, Marcellus. How can I keep count with you bellowing in my ear? I sometimes think that the commander of our legion gave me a stupid centurion like you to test my powers of patience and forbearance. (*proudly*).

He knows I'm a future leader, you see.

**Marcellus:** I'm sorry, Flavius, but I've just received a letter from my brother Gaius in Rome, and guess what?

**Flavius:** He's been thrown to the lions?

**Marcellus:** No! He's just been made a member of the Equestrian order!

**Flavius:** So he gets to ride a horse.... big deal!

**Marcellus:** AND he's going to take part in the next big military display in front of the Emperor Augustus himself! Imagine! To ride past Augustus on a fine horse in magnificent armour. What an honour!

**Flavius:** Well, if your brother's anything like you he'll probably fall off his horse into the Emperor's lap. Then he'll be sent to finish his glorious military career in some disgusting hole even further from Rome than this place.

**Marcellus:** (*miserably*). I'm sure nowhere in the world could be as dull and uncomfortable as Bethlehem.

**Flavius:** Think yourself lucky, laddie. You could be doing a year's duty in barbaric Britain. Picture it - all those native hooligans living in mud huts without a bath or a decent road to be seen. Mark my words, Marcellus, that little lot of vulgar English savages will never amount to anything in this world. No, when all's said and done, there's no place like Rome ..... (*he nudges MARCELLUS who doesn't get the joke*). It's a joke, Marcellus. (*MARCELLUS looks puzzled. FLAVIUS sighs* I sometimes wonder if there's anything between your ears except fresh air. (*Enter JEHOIAKIM and ZERUAH*).

**Jehoiakim:** Is this the place where we're to be counted for the Roman census?

**Flavius:** (*suddenly charming*). Yes, DO come in. My assistant will be only too happy to take your details. (*he pushes MARCELLUS behind the table*).

**Marcellus:** Umm.... name?

**Jehoiakim:** Jehoiakim.

**Marcellus:** (*looking baffled*). Yer.... who?

**Zeruah:** (*waving to MARCELLUS*). Yoo-hoo!

**Jehoiakim:** (*frowns at ZERUAH*). Jehoiakim. J-E-H-O-I-A-K-I-M. (*MARCELLUS laboriously writes it down*).

**Marcellus:** Name?

**Zeruah:** Zeruah. (*MARCELLUS looks baffled*). Z-E-R-U-A-H.

**Flavius:** Please excuse my assistant. He has a little problem.... no brain whatever.

**Marcellus:** Which town do you come from?

**Jehoiakim:** Nazareth in Galilee. (*MARCELLUS continues to write*).

**Flavius:** Really? You're the third lot we've had in here today from Nazareth. What did you all do? Charter a camel train? (*He laughs uproariously*). Leave your taxes here please. Thank you so much. Have a nice day. JEHOIAKIM

*and ZERUAH start to leave).*

**Zeruah:** *(to JEHOIAKIM)* These Romans have a strange sense of humour.

**Jehoiakim:** More like a touch of the sun, if you ask me. *(exit JEHOIAKIM and ZERUAH)*

**Flavius:** Goodness me, all this witty chat has given me an appetite. I'm off to have my supper. I wonder they've got any roast dormice at the inn tonight? *(he walks a little way. MARCELLUS follows expectantly. FLAVIUS stops and turns to MARCELLUS).* It's a good job that the star is shining so brightly again tonight Marcellus. You'll need the light to recount all that money. If you're quick you might be finished by midnight. *(Exit FLAVIUS).*

**Marcellus:** But, Flavius, I'm hungry too! Oh, Jupiter and Apollo, this will take me all night, and these Roman numerals are so tricky. *(counting the money).* One, one one, one one one, one vee, vee... *(Exeunt).*

### SCENE 3

*The PALACE OF KING HEROD.*

*[SIGN FOUR - See Production notes].*

*Enter HEROD, unaware that he is being closely followed by a line of 4 SLAVES.*

**Herod:** Slaves! Slaves! Where are my slaves? *(HEROD stops suddenly. The first SLAVE stops too and THE SLAVES bump into each other).* Where are you, you lazy, idle crowd of time wasters. I don't pay you to do nothing all day, you scum of the earth.

**Nif:** *(to NAF).* Ha! He doesn't pay us at all.

**Herod:** *(turns and sees SLAVES).* I heard that, you young whippersnapper. Don't you know you are addressing Herod the Great, the Wise and the Incredibly Gooooood.... Ruler of all Judea, and your Master!!!! Throw this man into the dungeons - if we have such things in Ancient Israel - and prepare my bath of asses milk. So good for the complexion. *(He turns away to look at himself in a mirror).*

**Nif:** *(turning to shout to NAF).* Asses milk for the bath.!

**Naf:** *(turning to shout to NEF).* A glass of milk on the path.

**Nef:** *(turning to shout to NUF).* A yard of silk and a half.

**Nuf:** *(turning to shout off stage).* Tickle my tum for a laugh.

**Herod:** Aaaaagh - you're all deaf as well as daft. Throw yourselves to the lions at once.

**Slaves:** Thank you Herod, thank you Herod etc. etc. *(Exit SLAVES, bowing and scraping. Enter AMALEK, bowing and scraping).*

**Amalek:** O wondrous King, your most gracious, noble and truly wonderful majesty

**Herod:** (*to AUDIENCE*). I like this man.

**Amalek:** I have news from without that I cannot keep within.

**Herod:** (*to AUDIENCE*). A poet! Moses help us. (*to AMALEK*). Well, man, spit it out, spit it out.

**Amalek:** Three astrologers have arrived at the Palace, three wise men, three Kings from the East.

**Herod:** So many men?

**Amalek:** No sire, just three; and they want to know where the newborn King of the Jews is.

**Herod:** The newborn King of the Jews? I know I don't look a day over 21 but newborn is stretching it a bit. My son, Herod Antipas, is very childish at times, even though he is nearly eighteen, but he's NOT King.... I AM!!!! Who are these jokers? Are they plotters from overseas? Let me see them and discover their treachery. Show them into the Royal Presence (*to AUDIENCE*). It's rather flattering if they do mean me, don't you think?

**Amalek:** Your Gracious, Most Royal and Esteemed Kingliness, may I present Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. (*Enter KINGS*).

**Herod:** (*impatiently*). Well, and what brings you to Jerusalem? You can buy a tourist guide of the Palace at the gate. We're open to visitors every day 10 till 5, half day on Wednesdays. We have a wide range of olives, camels and dancing girls but we're a bit short on Kings, especially the newborn variety.

**Kings:** (*bowing*). Greetings, King Herod.

**Caspar:** We have followed the wondrous star in the sky to your country.

**Herod:** Yes, I've noticed that star. It's certainly the biggest I've ever seen. I know! I'll name it after myself - make a note of that Amalek.

**Caspar:** We believe that the star will lead us to the newborn King of the Jews, the King of Kings.

**Melchior:** We have brought the most precious gifts that we could find - a casket of the finest, purest, rarest gold.

**Balthazar:** Frankincense for burning, to sweeten the air.

**Caspar:** And myrrh, the most beautiful perfume in the world.

**Herod:** I see (*thinks*). .... well, don't rush away gentlemen. Stay and take the weight off your presents. Let ME look after your gifts. Your arms must be aching.

**Melchior:** How very thoughtful of you Herod, but we cannot stay. The star has not stopped over Jerusalem. It has moved further to the south. What lies to the south of Jerusalem?

**Herod:** Only (*thinks*). .... miles and miles of dangerous country, infested with bandits and man-eating wolves and spiders, where men die from thirst or are

eaten alive, and things go BUMP in the night! You don't want to go there. Why don't you stay here with nice King Herod and be entertained. Come, sit with me. *(to AMALEK)*. Call forth the Royal Troupe!

**Amalek:** The Royal Troupe!

*(Enter the ENTERTAINERS)*

- INTERLUDE -

*(Exit the ENTERTAINERS)*.

**Balthazar:** That was most enjoyable Herod, but we really must be going.

**Herod:** Can't I tempt you with a tour of the Royal Laundry?

**Balthazar:** Unfortunately not.

**Herod:** How about a feast of goat's eyeballs in Royal sauce?

**Balthazar:** No amount of Royal sauce could persuade us to stay, Herod.

**Caspar:** We must find out what lies to the south of Jerusalem.

**Herod:** Oh very well, suit yourselves. But I'll have to call my Advisers. Geography was never my strong point. *(to AMALEK)*. Call Josaiah and Nehemiah!

**Amalek:** *(shouting offstage)*. Call Josaiah and Nehemiah!

*(Enter JOSIAAH and NEHEMIAH)*.

**Advisers:** Yes, O Mighty Majesty.

**Herod:** What lies to the south of Jerusalem, and why is that great big star hanging over it?

**Josaiah:** There are a few lines from the book of Micah which may explain it, sire. It is written *(reads)*. "O little town of Bethlehem you are not just an unimportant Judean village, for a King shall rise from you to rule my people Israel.

**Herod:** WHAT!!!

**Nehemiah:** Bethlehem is 5 miles south of Jerusalem, O King.

**Herod:** Be gone! *(Exit JOSIAAH and NEHEMIAH)* *(To AUDIENCE)*. I must think fast. If there's a rival King in Bethlehem I must find him and.... *(draws his finger across throat)*. I know, I'll use these clever clogs to find him for me. *(to the KINGS)*. O great and wise men, it is obvious that the newborn King is in Bethlehem. Go, pay homage to him, but do come back and tell me where he is so I can *(grins wickedly)*. .... go to worship him myself.

**Caspar:** Certainly Herod, and many thanks for your help.

**Herod:** Don't mention it boys. *(The KINGS start to leave)*.

**Melchior:** There! All those awful rumours about Herod aren't true after all. He's a

terribly nice chap. (*Exit KINGS*).

**Herod:** HAH! Let THEM do all the running around to find this newborn King in nappies! And when they tell me where he is, it'll be curtains for the Boy Wonder! But, if they WON'T tell me where he is, then I'll have all the baby boys in the land..... (*draws finger across throat*). No-one crosses Herod and gets away with it!!! (*evil laugh*).

EXEUNT

SCENE 4

THE SHEPHERDS.

[SIGN FIVE - See Production notes].

CALEB and SAUL are sitting, playing Snap. ABEL is lying on the floor asleep, quietly snoring.

**Caleb:** Snap! I win!!

**Saul:** You're a cheat. I'm sure you are. No-one ever beats me at snap.

**Caleb:** You're just a bad loser, Saul.

**Saul:** (*jumping up*). No-one calls me a bad loser Caleb, and lives to tell the tale. (*a fight starts*).

**Abel:** (*waking up*). Wassall the noise? Can't a man get any sleep around here?

**Saul:** Sorry Abel.

**Caleb:** Sorry Abel - just trying to pass the time with a game of snap.

**Abel:** Well don't, or I'll snap off your heads. (*goes back to sleep*).

**Caleb:** (*sitting*). A man of rare charm.

**Saul:** (*sitting*). And delightful manners. Your deal. (*Enter ESAU*).

**Esau:** (*counting their sheep*). 46, 47, 48 ..... (*falls asleep standing up and snores loudly*).

**Saul:** SNAP!

**Esau:** (*startled awake*). 48!!! .... oh, I give up. Every time I try to count these sheep I get as far as 48 and then I fall asleep. (*searching*). Now, where did I put my sandwiches? I'm sure I left them here. O.K., who's pinched my sandwiches? Come on, own up and take your punishment like a man (*holds fists up in boxing pose*).

**Saul:** Huh! Who wants your mangy goat's curd and olive sandwiches?

**Caleb:** Abel's probably sleeping on them!

**Esau:** (*loudly*). Come on! Give them to me, or I'll drop you faster than the plague of Egypt. (*enter ANGEL*).

**Abel:** *(jumping up and shouting)*. FOR THE LAST TIME, WILL YOU.... *(sees ANGEL)*. Jumping Jehosaphat! *(kneels)*.

**Caleb:** Holy Moses! *(kneels)*.

**Saul:** Jiminy Cricket! *(kneels)*.

**Esau:** Dearie me! *(kneels)*.

**Angel:** I am a messenger from God and I've come to give you some good news, so please don't be scared. Tonight in Bethlehem a very special baby boy has been born. He is the Messiah, your Lord and Saviour, and the hope of all mankind. You will know who He is because He is wrapped in blankets and is lying in a manger at Elisheba's inn. Go to Him and rejoice. God loves you. Glory to God in the highest Heaven. Peace and Joy to all mankind. Allelujah. *(Exit ANGEL. ABEL stands, points and faints)*.

**All:** Abel, Abel, speak to us.

**Abel:** *(sitting up)*. I had a dream, a beautiful dream. An Angel came and spoke to me!

**Esau:** That wasn't a dream, Abel, it was real.

**Caleb:** Fancy an angel coming to talk to shepherds like us!

**Saul:** And why us? It's not as if we're the best shepherds in Bethlehem.

**Abel:** *(stands up and looks very saintly)*. From now I shall be a man of peace and goodwill brothers. Shalom.

**Saul:** That won't last long! *(all laugh)*.

**Abel:** *(angrily)*. Any more comments like that and I'll crack your heads together!! Oh, what am I saying?

**Caleb:** I've been thinking. Let's go and see the baby Messiah and take him a present!

**Saul:** Great idea, but what?

**Esau:** I could give Him my sandwiches.

**Abel:** You can't give the Messiah your sandwiches!

**Esau:** Why? Don't you think he'd like goat's curd?

**All:** Oh Esau!

**Caleb:** What about taking Him one of our lambs?

**All:** Good idea!

**Saul:** Come on then! Let's go!

**Esau:** Don't you think we ought to wash our faces in the river before we go?

**Caleb:** Yes, let's do that now.

**Abel:** But who's going to catch the lamb?

**All:** You are!!! *(Exit ESAU, CALEB and SAUL - running)*.

**Abel:** Me?!!! Oh *(trying not to lose his temper)*. .... peace and joy!!! *(Exit ABEL)*.

SCENE 5

THE STABLE.

[SIGN SIX - see Production notes].

*The CHOIR sings through this unhurried scene. MARY, JOSEPH and Crib are centre stage with star over Crib. Enter THREE KINGS - CASPAR, BALTHAZAR and MELCHIOR - in stately procession. One by one they leave their gifts at the Crib, and kneel to one side. Enter FOUR SHEPHERDS - ABEL, ESAU, CALEB and SAUL, embarrassed and hesitant. They push each other forward and kneel to one side with lamb. At this point all the remaining cast except HEROD, can come to see the Crib, filing past while the CHOIR continue to sing.*

EXEUNT

SCENE 6

THE FLIGHT OF THE KINGS.

[SIGN SEVEN - see Production notes].

*Enter MELCHIOR and CASPAR hurriedly.*

**Caspar:** Where is Balthazar? We cannot lose a minute.

**Melchior:** No! We must act quickly. Herod is a dangerous man. (*Enter BALTHAZAR*).

**Caspar:** Balthazar! Melchior and I have each had a dream, a message from God, warning us not to go back to Herod or tell him where the Messiah is.

**Balthazar:** My friends! I too had such a dream. It is clear that we must leave Israel swiftly and silently. Herod is a desperate man - if he catches us, he will force us to tell him where the Baby is.

**Melchior:** But I fear for the safety of the people we leave behind in Judea.

**Caspar:** What can we do to help them?

**Balthazar:** We can do nothing for them. This is not our country. All WE can do is leave this land quickly. Gather your belongings and meet me at the stables. Hurry!

EXEUNT

SCENE 7

THE INNKEEPERS WIVES, PART TWO.

[SIGN EIGHT - see PRODUCTION NOTES].

*Enter BASEMATH, SHELOMITH and ELISHEBA from different directions.*

**Elisheba:** Shalom, Basemath, Shelomith.

**Shelomith:** Shalom.

**Basemath:** Shalom. Ooooh, Elisheba, you look very smart.

**Shelomith:** Very smart. Has Reuben's rich old uncle Isaac died at last and left you his olive groves?

**Elisheba:** No, but I've had such goings on at mt inn as you'd never believe!

**Basemath:** Goings on, Elisheba?

**Shelomith:** What sort of goings on?

**Elisheba:** Well, girls, there I was last night, just sat down for the first time since breakfast, just putting my poor old feet into a nice bowl of hot water and olive oil - what a blessing - when suddenly there was a knock on the door.

**Basemath:** Who was it?

**Elisheba:** It was that nice young man, staying in my stable. He said that his wife had just had a baby boy and could I spare any blankets. Well, naturally I found him some and just popped over to have a quick look at the baby. What a beautiful little boy, such big wise eyes and so peaceful. Mine were never like that as babies - took after their father, more's the pity. Anyway, I left them to it and I'd just put my feet back in the bowl when there was another knock at the door. And who do you think it was?

**Shelomith:** Who?

**Elisheba:** You could have knocked me down with a palm leaf. There were three men dressed in the most gorgeous clothes, with jewels all over, and carrying the most splendid boxes. Foreign gentlemen they were, but so well-mannered. Bowed quite low to me they did, and asked so politely where the newborn baby was. I didn't really follow at first, then I remembered the baby in the stable. "He's in my stable" I said "A quite superior stable" I said. "It's just across the yard" I said, and they bowed low again and thanked me most respectfully.

**Basemath:** Were they relatives, then?

**Elisheba:** I suppose so, though you'd never have guessed by looking at that poor young couple. Still, it's blood that counts, isn't it, not money?

**Shelomith:** You can't buy good breeding, that's what I always say.

**Basemath:** Fancy you having foreign visitors, and all unexpected like that.

**Elisheba:** But that's not all. I'd just put my feet in the water for the third time, when there was another knock. So I called out "just a moment" and put on

my best apron - well you don't have foreign royalty calling every day, do you? - and who do you think was at the door this time?

**Shelomith:** It wasn't.... Herod, was it?

**Elisheba:** No, it was those four scruffy shepherds Caleb, Saul, Esau and Abel. What a sight for sore eyes they were! Their hair was all wetted down, their faces and hands scrubbed, and Abel was carrying one of their lambs. But you'll never guess what they wanted.

**Basemath:** A drink?

**Elisheba:** No.

**Shelomith:** A sandwich?

**Elisheba:** No, they brought their own. THEY wanted to see this baby too.

**Basemath:** Go on! They're not relatives as well, are they?

**Elisheba:** I don't know. I shouldn't want them as my relatives!

**Shelomith:** That baby must be very special to have all those people calling on him SO early in his life and SO late at night.

**Basemath:** I bet his family will never forget the day he was born.

**Shelomith:** No, not after all those visitors.

**Elisheba:** I expect word will spread now, among foreign royalty, about how superior my accommodation is. Then I shall be swamped with Princes and Queens all year round.

**Basemath:** And such a nice class of people, too.

**Elisheba:** But I must go now, girls. I have to organise Reuben into smartening up the inn so we're all ready for the next royal visit. Shalom!

**Basemath:** Shalom!

**Shelomith:** Shalom!

*EXEUNT*

*SCENE 8*

*THE EPILOGUE.*

*The entire CAST assemble on stage.*

**Prologue Leader:**

Let the song sing through the ages,  
Song that started with a birth.  
Let us all sing Alleluiah!  
Joy, Goodwill and Peace on earth!

*(ALL sing final Carol or Song).*

**THE END**