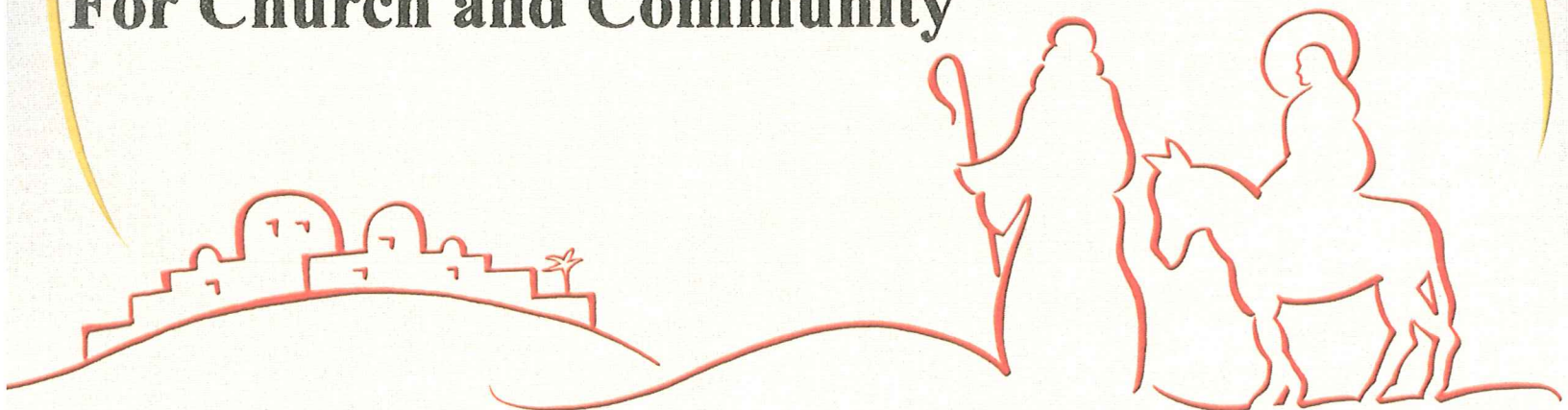


# BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD

**TOUR A STREET IN BETHLEHEM  
ON THE NIGHT JESUS WAS BORN!**

**Christmas Open House  
For Church and Community**



# BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD

**BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** is an all church Christmas experience designed to bring the sights, smells and sounds of the time of the birth of Christ to modern day people.

**BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** is a busy street in the ancient City of David on the day that Jesus is born. Visitors are drawn into the drama of ordinary street activity. Sometimes they participate and sometimes they observe the unfolding events.

**BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** teaches customs of everyday Jewish people leading normal lives in their well-established Eastern culture.

**BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** citizens scurry through their daily routines in carefully set up booths and rooms.

**BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** marketplace foods are a wonderful diversion for visitors wandering through the area.

**BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** features a complete live nativity in the sanctuary. Visitors may wander into the stable scene, speak to Joseph, Mary and shepherds or sit in the pews to watch and worship and pray as Christmas music plays quietly in the background.

**BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** is adaptable for use as a traditional Sunday School program or a community event advertised and presented on several evenings. This program is filled with a variety of options to embellish or eliminate depending upon space and talent available.

*HISTORICAL INFORMATION TAKEN FROM: Great People of the Bible and How They Lived, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible and Jesus and His Times.*

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# FOR THE DIRECTOR

**Imagine this:** Journey to Bethlehem without traveling all the way to the Middle East. Bring the sights and sounds of the ancient city to life as the church is transformed into a street near the birthplace of Jesus. Create a surprising “goose bump” experience for the church congregation and local community.

**Light The Way:** Visitors walk up a luminaria-lit pathway and are greeted at the door by church members dressed as angels. The first stop is the tax collector where each guest is given a coin to pay their taxes. A Roman guard makes everyone understand who is in control.

**Hay, Hay, Everywhere:** The tour continues through Sunday School rooms, hallways, stairwells and fellowship hall which have been converted into individual areas. See a synagogue, visit a Jewish home and sample traditional Biblical foods such as pita bread, cheese and grapes.

**Living The Night:** Encourage interaction with costumed characters. The Wise Men wander the building, asking if anyone has seen the baby Jesus. Transform a set of steps into a hillside complete with shepherds sitting around a simulated campfire. Gossip with the women at the village well.

**Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow:** Conclude the tour with a live Nativity scene in the church sanctuary. Cardboard cutouts represent the animals but the people are real. Choose to have interaction with Joseph, Mary and shepherds or create an intensely personal experience by playing quiet music on a dulcimer or guitar with guests observing the hushed activity from their seats.

**You, dear Director, can accomplish this. With a dedicated team of helpers and a bit of organization, Bethlehem can spring to life for your church and community. It is an honor and privilege to serve the Lord as you scramble through the preparations of a very special Christmas church experience.**

**Divide and Conquer:** Decide which Bethlehem street areas can be easily prepared by your team. Assign one area to each team or Sunday School class. It will be their responsibility to complete all preparations for their spot from costuming to props to decorations to interaction with visitors. Eliminate parts that will not work in your local church situation. Each area becomes its' own small learning center for visitors. Feel free to add areas that are not included in this program. Use your creative efforts to make the event personal and special.

## PROGRAMMING OPTIONS

Utilize this program as a Christmas Sunday congregational event using the talents of Sunday School class members from the toddlers through the senior adult class. Or, present BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD as a community event. Advertise performance times and perform free of charge as a ministry to your church and community or charge admission to defray expenses or as a vehicle for mission giving.

The event may be as simple or elaborate as you desire—you choose. If artistic people are available, ask them to paint backgrounds on cardboard. If no one can do this, eliminate the artwork. Music may be interwoven into the theme. Street musicians may perform. Children may play games of the era to show the visitors.

## MEETING WITH THE TEAM

Meet one time with the leaders and participants. Explain the basic organization and then let them create their part with imagination. If using angels and tour guides to greet and guide the visitors, meet with them separately to be sure they understand how to lead their small groups through the entire area. Stay in contact with the leaders and be prepared to provide props, costumes or other equipment as needed.

# BETHLEHEM COSTUMES

*Participants of the program are responsible for their personal Holy Land costume. Suggest several options and then let them dig through their closets for fabric, caftans, robes, belts and other accessories.*

**YOUNG CHILDREN:** Bathrobes, Dad's long shirt belted with rope, scarf, jute or Dad's old tie. Head coverings made of scarves, towels, beads, jewelry or yarn.

**OLDER CHILDREN AND TEENS:** Bathrobes, simply made tunics with chain belts, draped sheets tied with scarves or rope, head coverings made of cotton draped over shoulders, headbands tied at one side, necklaces with a jewel or object dangling over forehead. Yarmulka for each boy and young man.

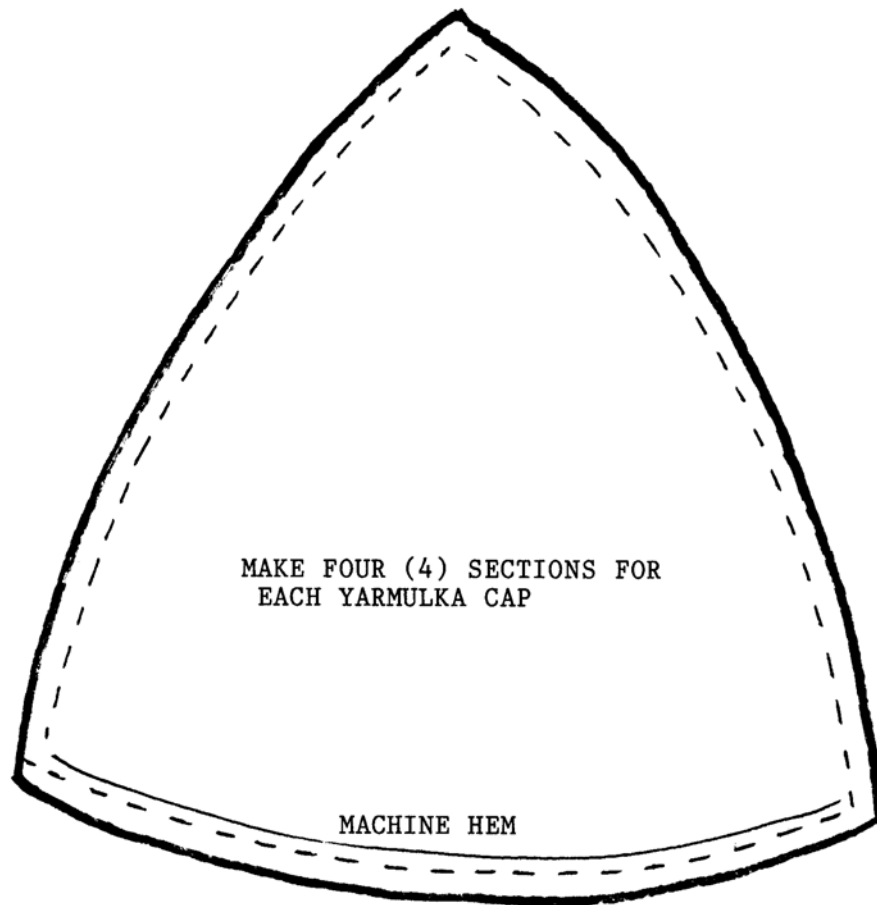
**ADULTS:** Use the ideas for children and teens. Consider making costumes from patterns available at the local fabric store. Rent Roman soldier or High Priest robes from a costume shop.

**FOOTWEAR:** Bare feet or summer sandals with leather (vinyl) string that ties up the leg to the knee. Cloth tied around the feet may be used for children and beggar.

**YARMULKA:** These distinctly Jewish caps are worn by all men and boys. Make one simple cotton cap for each male participant in the program. *See the pattern included.*

**COLORS:** Encourage the use of brown, beige, small vertical stripes, light blue and green, ivory and other "back to nature" hues.

YARMULKA



MAKE ONE YARMULKA FOR EACH MALE PARTICIPANT IN BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD. USE BLACK COTTON. IF DESIRED, DECORATE WITH GOLD SCRIBBLE PAINT.

# DECORATIONS

*Each team decorates their specific BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD area. Offer the following suggestions and let the search for appropriate items begin in every attic, basement, garage and backyard in town!*

**BLANKETS:** Drape blankets and sheets to resemble wall or ceiling coverings. Place blankets on the floor with pillows. Insure the safety of visitors by keeping floor coverings away from walking areas.

**PILLOWS:** Toss pillows in a variety of sizes and colors into corners. They give an old fashioned eastern atmosphere to a home or shop setting.

**PLANTS:** Place a variety of green leafy plants on tables and floors. Artificial Ficus trees, palms and bushes add to the outdoor street environment.

**BASKETS:** Fill large and small wicker baskets with potatoes, yarn, fruits and cloth toys. Place baskets in each shop and home area. Stack empty baskets of all shapes and sizes.

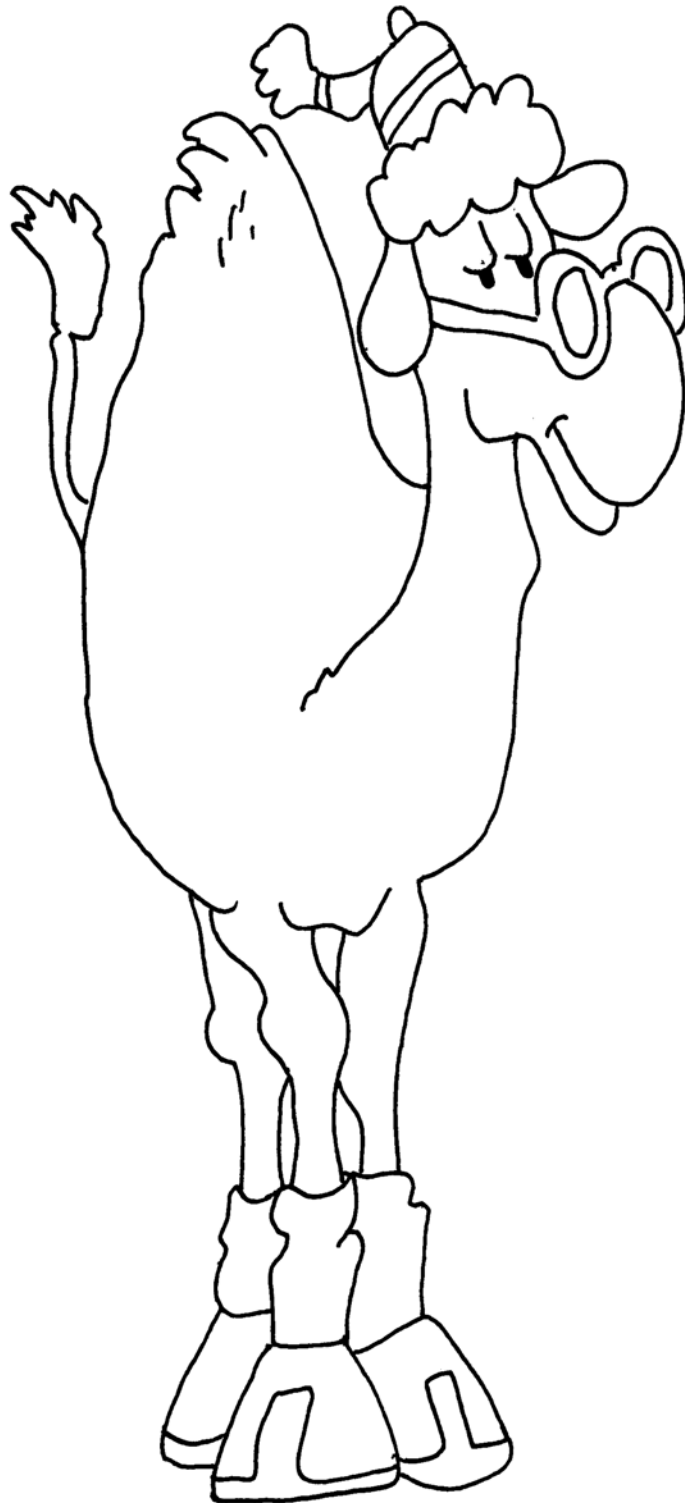
**WOOD:** Many utensils were made from wood. Scatter wooden spoons, bowls and tools. Consider bringing scraps of wood and wood shavings or sawdust to place in corners.

**POTTERY:** Place large crocks, old looking pots and clay flower pots, vases, bowls and cups in appropriate spots.

**OPTIONS:** Large rocks, bales of hay (baled and/or loose), animal hides, old tools, woolen material, old ladders, water in various containers, small live animals in cages (rabbits, kittens, puppies, birds, mice, hamsters, gerbils), musical instruments.

Tour a street in Bethlehem on the night Jesus was born!

# BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD





# ORGANIZING THE TEAM

*This Christmas event is easy to organize  
if responsibility is delegated to a large group of people.  
Ask responsible people to be in charge of specific areas.  
Give them freedom to create their spot in their own unique way.*

Check with the leader of each area several times before “set up” day to be sure their area is well planned. Use a telephone list for quick access to each leader. Offer suggestions and options for those who need help.

No rehearsals are necessary. Meet once with the leaders and their small teams to explain the program, the purpose and the rewards. The programs falls into place as each area is prepared and set into motion the day of the program. The goal is to communicate a casual life in a small, sleepy village.

## BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD TEAMS

**SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES:** Assign teachers specific areas. Students help bring items and staff the area during the program. Some students may be asked to help in specialized areas other than their class assignment. Keep this to a minimum if possible.

**PASTOR:** The pastor may be a good choice to lead the group planning the synagogue. If he/she knows some Hebrew, have him quote scripture as visitors pass the area.

**WOMEN’S GROUP:** The church women’s group may be willing to plan, prepare and serve the foods in the Market Place.

**SEAMSTRESS:** Ask a willing seamstress to make all *yarmulkas* and a few simple tunic costumes for those who cannot do this themselves.

**MEN’S GROUP:** Ask the men’s group to set up props before the event and take down scenes after the event. They carry tables, move chairs and move goods in and out of the church parking lot. Their main job occurs the day before the program and during the hours after the program.

**SENIOR CITIZENS:** Seniors may enjoy playing the part of a grandmother watching children play, blind alms beggar or shop craftsman. Assign them various Christmas Bible characters—Shepherds, Wise Men or Angels.

**PHOTOGRAPHERS:** Ask people who have experience and equipment to take video tape and still photographs of the event while it is in progress. These pictures may be offered to church and community.

**TEENS:** Teens may be great helpers for young children participating in their class areas. Use them as tour guides, citizens who wander through the area and crafts people performing their craft. They are excellent choices for nativity scene people.

**BABIES:** Consider using several babies as baby Jesus in the live nativity scene. Do not have the youngsters remain in the scene for long periods of time. Switch babies often to provide plenty of rest time. Mothers/fathers of babies should be present while their child is participating.

**LIVE ANIMALS:** There may be safe areas where live animals can be observed. If this is appealing, carefully consider their care, feeding and interaction with visitors. Safety must come first in all situations for the animal and for the visitors. Assign specific people to be in charge of the animals, preferably the people who own them.



# MUSIC

*Adding simple music to the street scene and Nativity make this experience life like and enjoyable.*

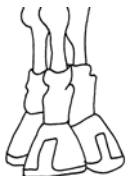
**STREET MUSIC:** Ask church musicians to bring horns, flutes, guitars, dulcimers, tambourines and other appropriate instruments. They become costumed street musicians and play short, simple tunes to entertain the visitors. Singers may be used as well. Singers should sing songs with scripture words or Hebrew words. If no musicians or singers are available, do not play taped music. Allow the chatter of the visitors, angels and citizens to fill the air.

**MUSIC AT THE NATIVITY SCENE:** Ask the church organist and pianist to continuously play quiet Christmas carols. Visitors wander in and out of the sanctuary in groups and individually. The mood should be quiet and serious. If musicians are not available, play CD's or taped carols.

**FINDING APPROPRIATE MUSIC:** Finding just the right melodies does not have to be a difficult task. Look through chorus books and hymnals already in the church. Ask church musicians to assist with this task. Check out the local Christian Book Store for the latest Christmas song books.

**REHEARSAL:** Encourage the street musicians to practice their parts wearing a costume and sitting, standing or walking in their assigned area. Placing musicians in a dramatic setting feels different from a normal performance.

**SCHEDULING:** Assign one person the task of scheduling street musicians. Fifteen minutes is a good time to aim for when asking someone to perform. Rotate the musicians to allow break time and to encourage a variety of musical styles. Adapt to meet your specific needs.



# PUBLICITY



*Telling the “Good News” of Jesus begins with simple communication.*

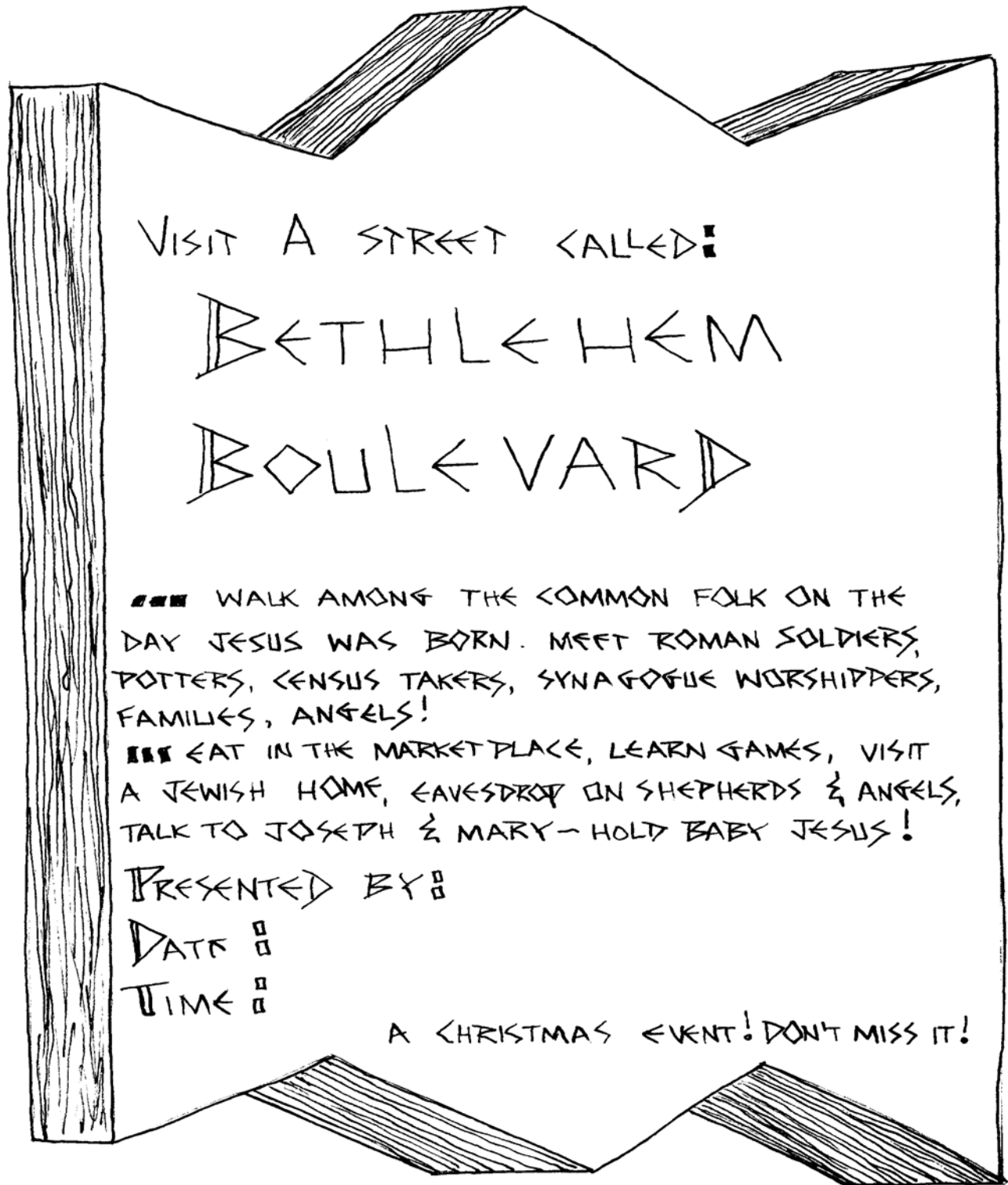
When BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD is used as a Sunday School Christmas program, employ all the usual means of publicity within your congregation. Announce the special event for several weeks from the pulpit and in Sunday School openings. Print the date and time in the weekly bulletin. Include an informational article in the December newsletter. Make posters and flyers.

When BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD is used as an all church-community event, publicize widely by using the newspaper, special mailing, posters in stores, telephone calls to groups, radio and television spot announcements and any other means at your disposal to get the word out to local and regional people.

**Publicity is important and guarantees solid attendance at this special Christmas event.** Take time to tell people. Since time, money and effort have been offered by the participants, it would be a shame to let it go to waste because no one knows it is happening.

**Sometimes this program becomes an annual tradition in churches.** As each year passes, the program grows larger as more people get excited about the theme. When that happens, *word of mouth* endorsement draws large crowds. School and community groups may arrange tours to your church. Other churches will transport their people to your building to experience the recreation of the miracle birth of Christ.

**Make the most of this inspiring event.** Give each visitor a printed program when they enter. Print the location of each scene and where it is being presented in the building. Add the names of participants, available foods, activities and locations of restrooms. Provide a short presentation of the gospel that visitors may take home. This may take the form of copies of “Steps To Peace With God” available through the Billy Graham Association or your local bookstore. Tuck the booklets into the program.



VISIT A STREET CALLED:

# BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD

■ ■ ■ WALK AMONG THE COMMON FOLK ON THE DAY JESUS WAS BORN. MEET ROMAN SOLDIERS, POTTERS, CENSUS TAKERS, SYNAGOGUE WORSHIPPERS, FAMILIES, ANGELS!

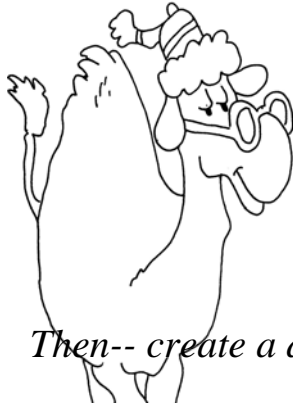
■ ■ ■ EAT IN THE MARKETPLACE, LEARN GAMES, VISIT A JEWISH HOME, EAVESDROP ON SHEPHERDS & ANGELS, TALK TO JOSEPH & MARY - HOLD BABY JESUS!

PRESENTED BY: □

DATE □ □

TIME □ □

A CHRISTMAS EVENT! DON'T MISS IT!



# LIGHTING

*Safety First!*

*Then-- create a darkly exotic village using light, beautiful light.*

Modern light is bright, neon, electric! In this harsh light, we work and play and worship. In ancient days, lighting was subdued, dark, small and made from natural substances. Whenever possible, dim or turn off the bright lights in classrooms and large meeting areas. Create lighting using a variety of methods in odd places. Lighting may seem like an unimportant detail but it makes a great deal of difference to the authenticity of production.

**ELECTRICAL FLOOR LIGHTING:** Position small table lamps without shades and with low watt bulbs on the floor. Place them discreetly behind large plants, baskets and other props. Instead of real candles, consider electric candles like those used as home Christmas decorations. Ask participants to bring enough lighting for their scene. Use existing wall outlets and extension cords.

**SPOTLIGHTS:** Benefit from existing sanctuary lighting and place spotlights in front of the Nativity scene and on the floor in front and behind welcoming angels.

**CANDLES:** Caution! When using open flame, place candles high in windows out of reach of the visitors and children. Fire can be dangerous when participants are wearing costumes and are unaccustomed to flowing robes. Candles are best utilized in the sanctuary where they can be controlled.

**LANTERNS:** If old fashioned lanterns are available, place them outdoors to be viewed as visitors enter the church. Be sure no one will accidentally bump into them.

*Whenever a candle or lantern light is used, place a bucket of water nearby. Fire extinguishers should be readily available and within reach of someone who knows how to use them. Whenever possible, use electric lighting to simulate candlelight.*

# DIRECTOR'S WORKSHEET

*Fill in names and telephone numbers of the people involved in each area.*

TOUR GUIDES:

WELCOMING ANGELS:

WANDERING WISE MEN:

ROMAN SOLDIERS:

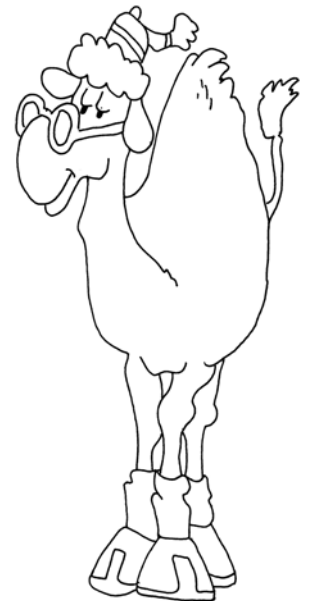
ALMS BEGGAR:

STREET MERCHANTS:

CHILDREN PLAYING GAMES:

STREET MUSICIANS:

AREA #1-CENSUS TAKERS:



AREA #2-THE VILLAGE WELL:

AREA #3-POTTERY SHOP:

AREA #4-JEWISH HOME:

AREA #5-SYNAGOGUE:

AREA #6-MARKET PLACE:

AREA #7-SHEPHERDS/ANGELS:

AREA #8-VILLAGE INN:

AREA #9-THE NATIVITY:



## ADAPTATIONS FOR LARGE AND SMALL CHURCHES

***BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD** is easily adapted to  
fit the needs of large and small churches.  
The program does not have to be performed  
exactly as written to be successful.*



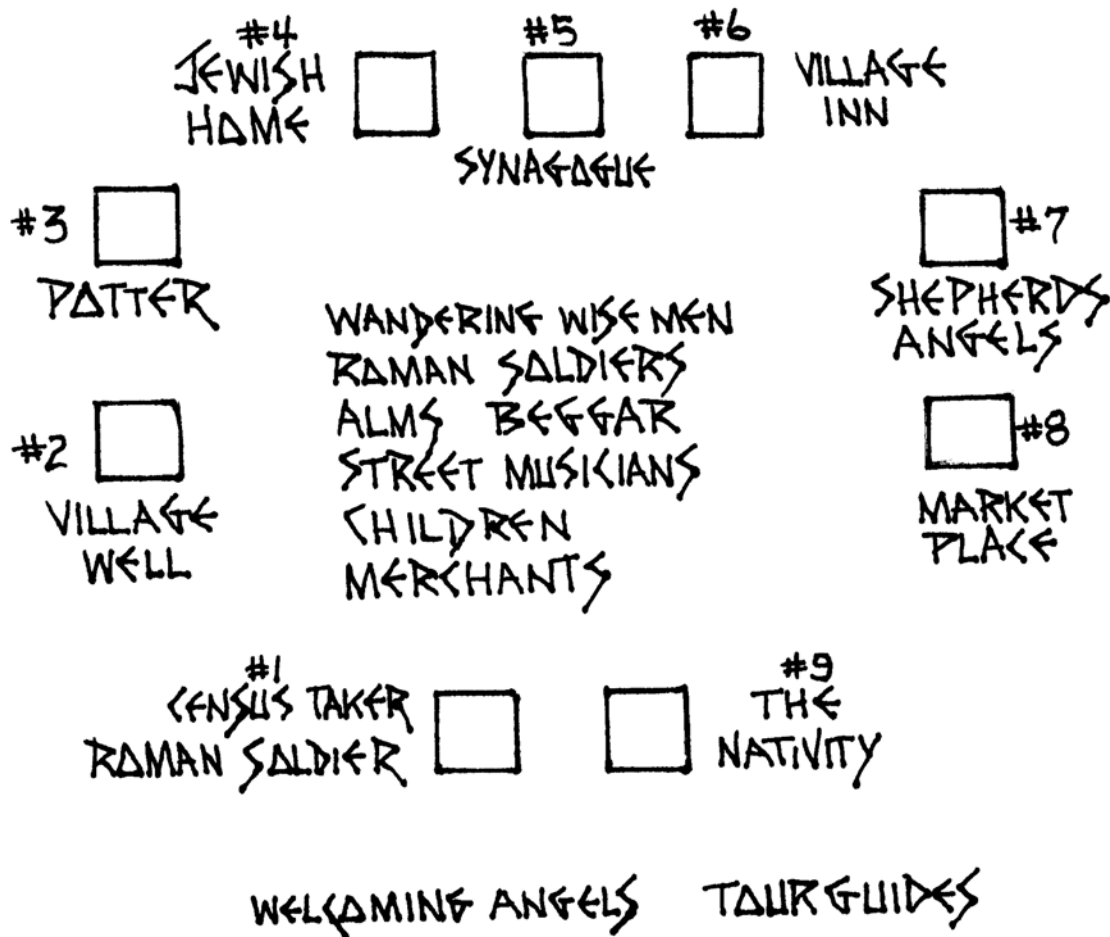
**Use your imagination to add areas. If you think of a biblical theme, character or craft that you would like to add, print an outline of the area and give it to the team presenting it. Be specific when scripting information that is to be spoken. Do not assume the team will “just know” what to say and do. (See the suggestions at the end of this program.)**

**If you have a small situation, choose a few of areas and do them well.** Feature the areas basic to the Christmas story. Eliminate areas that seem too difficult.

**Divide some classes to complete two or three areas.** Adult classes will be capable of using two or three adults to perfect each area. This may open options for more scenes than originally planned.

**Use physical space to your advantage.** If you are in a large church, assign areas to Sunday School classrooms, gymnasiums, hallways and fellowship halls. If you are in a small building, choose the largest area and set up booths in a circular area with the Market Place in the middle. The Nativity scene works best in the quietness of the sanctuary. If weather permits, use outdoor areas around church property for some scenes and include larger animals. Placing the *Welcoming Angels* along an outdoor pathway of luminaria is especially effective.

# BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD'S SUGGESTED ROUTE



*Tour Guides may begin their group at any spot along the BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD route. All tours end in the sanctuary at the Nativity scene so skip that and return to it when all other areas have been toured if the group began at any other area other than #1.*



# TOUR GUIDES



*Visitors to BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD are guided to each scene by costumed TOUR GUIDES. These guides gather a group of 6-10 people and take them on a journey through time and space back to a small village on a very special night... the night that Jesus was born.*

**At the end of the formal tour, guides encourage their group to wander through the Market Place, revisit shops and visit the Nativity in the sanctuary on their own. The tour may begin and end at any point so large numbers of people may be accommodated quickly.**

**Tour Guides do not have to memorize their parts.** At each scene, place a scroll with the information printed on it. The guides read their part and leave the scroll for the next Tour Guide. Tour Guides should read and understand all historical information included so they can answer questions intelligently.

**HOW MANY?** Ask enough people to participate as Tour Guides so long lines of visitors will not be waiting. This differs for each church. Try to predict how many people will attend the event and divide that number by 10 to represent 10 visitors in each group. If each Tour Guide leads two or three (or more) groups through the program, you will be able to approximate how many guides are needed.

100 Visitors=3-5 Tour Guides  
200 Visitors=6-8 Tour Guides  
250 Visitors=8-10 Tour Guides  
500 Visitors=10-15 Tour Guides

It can be done with less people but be aware that lines of visitors may have to wait outside for their turn to enter BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Tour Guides are important to the success of the event. They lead people in and out of the program area. Each guide must be comfortable with people. They must be able to read well, answer questions and direct people to other leaders if necessary.

**WHERE DO WE GO?** Tour guides lead their groups to each numbered area in order. If they start at #1, they continue to #2, #3, etc. If the guide begins at #6, the logical movement will be to #7, #8, etc. Wait for the group ahead to finish before taking another group to that spot.

**SCROLLS:** All pertinent information about each area is written down for the convenience of the Tour Guide. Assign the Tour Guides the responsibility of making their scrolls before the event. Cut thick dowel rods into 14" lengths—2 dowels per scroll. (Size is really a personal choice.) Stain the wood using a medium to dark stain. Give it an old, used appearance. Attach brown bag paper to each end of the dowel, forming the length of scroll desired. If paper bags are not available, use white shelf paper. Glue the script into the center of each scroll. Reinforce the paper part of the scrolls any way you can since these will be used many times throughout the program. Roll the two ends of the scroll together in the middle. Attach a silken cord and tassel to each scroll.

**COSTUMES:** Follow the suggestions in the program for costuming the Tour Guides. Ask each person to provide their own costume.

# WELCOMING ANGELS

*Visitors feel welcome and accepted when greeted  
in a specific area and made to feel “at home”.*

*Take time to make this a special greeting  
by special messengers and watch faces light up!*

**ANGELIC GARMENTS:** Each *Welcoming Angel* must be dressed appropriately but NOT identically. Wear simple white tunics made of white cotton or sheets. Add a chain, tinsel or silken cord belt. Simplicity is best. If angels are going to be stationed outdoors, leave room for sweaters, long underwear or jackets under the tunic.

Wear Christmas tinsel in the shape of a halo in hair. Purchase spray glitter or sprinkle craft glitter into set hair spray on hair. This washes out easily after the event. Wear glitter face makeup. Glitter may also be sprinkled on the tunic attached with spray glue. Sparkle!!

Wear sandals, bare feet, gold shoes or simple white shoes sprinkled with glitter. Try gold toenail polish for bare feet. Wrap tinsel around one wrist and one ankle, if desired.

No wings are necessary. They tend to get in the way in large crowds. If you do want to attach wings to each angel, make them out of cardboard and criss-cross macrame cord or jute in front and through each wing to be assured they will not fall off. Don't forget, angels need to sit down for a break. Ask assistants to remove head to toe wings.

**LIGHTING:** Place spotlights on the floor aimed toward the angels if they are standing indoors. Turn off all other lights.

**HELLO!** Ask several teens and/or adults to portray angels from heaven. These angels greet each and every visitor at the door of the church. If weather permits, consider lining the angel group outside along a pathway of luminarias. When lines of visitors are long, present the welcome as a short program and then retreat to wait for another group to form.

Smile joyfully and welcome folks by shaking hands, gesturing toward the church, raise arms in blessing, fold arms and hands prayerfully, bow the head, speak some of the Psalms in unison as a group and say others at random:

“Welcome! We greet you in the name of the Lord of Hosts!  
Come into His presence with singing and great joy.”

“Meet the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.”

“Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of power and might,  
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest!”

“For unto you is born this day in the City of David, A Savior which is Christ, the Lord!”

“Enter into the joy of His presence.”

“Come all ye who are weary and heavy laden and He will give you rest.”

“Jehovah is King! Let all the earth rejoice! Tell the farthest islands to be glad.” Psalm 97:1

“Shout with joy before the Lord, O earth! Obey him gladly;  
come before him, singing with joy.” Psalm 100:1

“Thank the Lord for all the glorious things he does; proclaim them to the nations.  
Sing his praises and tell everyone about his miracles.  
Glory in the Lord; O worshipers of God, rejoice.” Psalm 105:1-2

“Hallelujah! Thank you, Lord! How good you are! Your love for us continues on forever.  
Who can ever list the glorious miracles of God?  
Who can ever praise him half enough?” Psalm 106:1

“O God, my heart is ready to praise you! I will sing and rejoice before you.  
Wake up, O harp and lyre! We will meet the dawn with song.  
I will praise you everywhere around the world, in every nation.  
For your loving kindness is great beyond measure, high as the heavens.  
Your faithfulness reaches the skies. His glory is far more vast than the heavens.  
It towers above the earth.” Psalm 108:1-5

**GOODBYE:** As visitors leave to return to their cars, outdoor angels should shout a farewell blessing to them. Use one or more of these suggestions, spoken by one angel or several angels in unison:

“Blessings on all who reverence and trust the Lord—on all who obey him!  
....May the Lord continually bless you with heaven’s blessings  
as well as with human joys.  
May you live to enjoy your grandchildren!  
And may God bless Israel!” Psalm 128:1, 5-6

“Grow in spiritual strength and become better acquainted with our Lord and Savior  
Jesus Christ. To him be all glory and splendid honor, both now and forevermore.  
Goodbye.”  
II Peter 3:18

“Dear children,  
keep away from anything that might take God’s place in your hearts.”  
I John 5:21

“May the Lord’s blessings surround you.”  
Colossians 4:18b

“He will supply all your needs from his riches in glory,  
because of what Christ Jesus has done for us.  
Now unto God our Father be glory forever and ever.  
Amen.”  
Philippians 4:19-20

# WANDERING WISE MEN

*The Christmas story would not be complete without the Wise Men. These kings from the east did not arrive in Bethlehem that starry night but they were instrumental in providing financial means for the little family to survive threatening times.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Nowhere in scripture does it say there were *three* Wise Men. Scripture does speak of *three* gifts. In fact, there may have been as many as twelve men traveling together with their servants and animals. The Magi were part of a group of men who interpreted dreams and considered themselves astrologers. Magi eventually became government officials who searched for successors to kings who were about to lose their thrones through death, abdication or unseated. These New Testament Magi were literally *king makers*. They knew from the prophecies of Daniel that a Messiah king was going to be born in Bethlehem. These men may have been Jews descended from government appointed Magi of Daniel's day in Babylon. These Wise Men were on a fact finding mission before Herod, the king, died.

In Jerusalem the sudden appearance of the Magi, probably traveling in force with all imaginable oriental pomp and accompanied by cavalry escort to ensure their safety in Roman territory, would have alarmed Herod and the people of Jerusalem.

Scholars say that their request of Herod regarding him who "has been born king of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2) was an insult to the king who had contrived and bribed his way into that office. Herod was deeply disturbed by their question. After calling a meeting with the religious leaders, he asked about the prophecies concerning the Messiah. He wanted details. Attempting to trick his guests into revealing the whereabouts of Jesus, he told them he wanted to worship him too.

The Wise Men eventually saw their star. We do not know which star but it was a miraculous phenomenon. It traveled with the Wise Men and then rested over the place where the baby laid. It could have been two planets lining up or a super nova or a comet. They joyfully proceeded to Bethlehem where they found the baby and Mary and Joseph. They were *wise* enough not to return to Herod. They took another way home.



**The Gifts:** Our tradition of giving Christmas gifts probably came from the gifts of the Magi. *Gold* symbolizes virtue and honors Jesus as King. *Frankincense* grows in Arabia and Africa and comes from the thick bark of the Boswellia tree. When the bark is cut, a white resin (frankincense) comes out. In ancient times the resin was burned in homage to gods. The gift honored Jesus as God and symbolized prayer. *Myrrh* came from a shrub and was used in perfumes and for embalming. This gift indicated that he was to die and symbolized suffering.

**PREPARATION:** Dress three men (young or older) in costumes representing wealthy kings. Add large pieces of jewelry (pins, necklaces, bracelets) to the costume. They wear brightly colored turbans pinned with jeweled pins. Make three containers to hold the gifts. The containers may be made of wood, may include a glass carafe and be gold painted and bejeweled. They may be accompanied by well dressed servants.

**PREVIEW:** The story of the Wise Men is found in Matthew 2. Read the story to prepare for any questions visitors may ask about the experience. Become experts on the Wise Men.

**WHAT TO SAY:** Wander through Bethlehem Boulevard with the visitors and participants. Stay in character as much as possible. Stay together. Approach visitors and participants saying:

**“Where is the newborn King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in far off eastern lands and have come to worship him.”**

**“We have reason to believe the baby King is in grave danger. Help us find him. Direct us to the place where his parents are keeping him. We will not harm him. We have gifts for him.”**

**“The prophet Micah wrote: ‘O little town of Bethlehem, you are not just an unimportant Judean village, for a Governor shall rise from you to rule my people Israel.’ We have come to see for ourselves when this prophecy is fulfilled.”**

**VISIT THE NATIVITY SCENE:** Every once in awhile, appear at the Nativity scene in the sanctuary. Walk slowly down the entire length of the center aisle. Approach the manger, bow grandly, kneel and present the gifts. If desired, one or more of the Wise Men may pick up and cuddle baby Jesus. After a few minutes, turn and walk back down the aisle.

*Leave the gifts with the baby. After a few minutes, have a child or teen in Bethlehem costume retrieve the gifts, get them off the stage and give them back privately so the wandering can begin again.*

Use your best judgment about how often to wander through the various areas. Try to do it so that every visitor experiences or is approached by a Wise Man.

Scripture seems to point to a later visit by the wise men since when they see the family, they are living in a “house”. However, to include this part of the story in the event include the Wise Men in the nativity scene.

# ROMAN SOLDIERS

*Rome was strong and ruled the Holy Land during the earthly life of Jesus.*

*Roman government leaders controlled the everyday lifestyle of the Jew.*

*Romans soldiers were in public view and were feared by the populace.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** This was a time of nervous peace in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. Rome governed with an iron hand and people knew that to defy a Roman soldier would bring imprisonment or death.

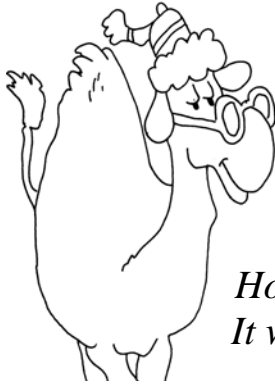
Divided into 300 knights and 3000 infantry, the first Roman *legions* were made of citizen volunteers. This organization served Rome well for many years. Eventually one of the emperors decided to hire professional soldiers called *mercenaries*. These men were taken from all parts of the Roman world and were bound to the particular emperor by an *oath* and were at his every command.

By Jesus' time, legions consisted of 6000 well trained, well paid professionals. They were also trained in cruelty and hardness. These soldiers were everything that Rome, as the world power, needed to control the masses.

The feeding and clothing of such a force was accomplished by quartering the troops on the citizenry in foreign regions or by foraging and robbery of the invaded land. The usual number ready for battle in any invaded territory was 25 legions. Few small nations would resist the power of Roman soldiers poised to strike at any moment.

**PREPARATION:** Dress one or two adult men in a costume that resembles what a Roman soldier would wear. Helmet, shield, spear, shin guards and breast plate over a simple white tunic. Sandals may be worn on bare feet. If an appropriate costume cannot be created, rent a costume from a local costume shop.

**WHAT TO SAY:** Station the soldier at the census taker's area. The soldier must remain in character for the entire program. Be tough and mean. Boss the crowd around as they enter. Make them line up single file at the census table. Bully them and make them get things for you. *In this job, rudeness counts!* Move around the various areas every once in awhile. Ask visitors and townspeople to get free food, carry items and generally serve at will. If anyone resists, arrest them. **CAUTION:** Take it easy on little kids!



## BEGGAR

*How sad that beggars exist in any society.  
It was especially tragic in the days of Jesus.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Begging was beyond asking for help in a casual manner. The beggar was loudly insistent that someone show mercy and give alms to the poor. The presence of a beggar on a busy city street may have sponsored the same emotions as the presence of the homeless in our modern day big cities.

Israel was never without the poor and sick. Poverty that required begging was sometimes caused by natural disasters, marauding enemies who stripped the land of its crop or physical ailments such as blindness or paralysis. Special laws were designed to protect widows, orphans and aliens without land rights. Inadequate public relief, limited medical knowledge and heavy taxation on the land by Rome encouraged poverty. Simple laziness was sometimes involved.

Because *almsgiving* provided opportunity for a great show of charitable giving, Jesus sometimes warned against legalistic works of righteousness designed for others to see. Development of urban centers encouraged begging as a profession. Professional beggars were despised by the Jews and support for them from the general charity fund was prohibited. This does not mean that people were forbidden to show concern and compassion for the poor. Prosperity was God's blessing and mercy should be shared with those in need.

**WHAT ARE ALMS?** Alms are mentioned in both Old and New Testaments. Israelites were encouraged to be generous, to "open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in the land" (Deut. 15:11). The law required gleanings of crops for the poor, the traveler, the orphan and the widow. Giving alms was obedience to God. Jesus assumed that His followers would practice almsgiving. Jesus and His disciples did so. He did not condemn aiding the poor publically but criticized giving for personal praise. The writer of Hebrews describes alms as sacrifices well pleasing to God (Heb. 13:16). James says almsgiving proves that the person has a living faith (James 2:14-17) and John says it is a test of the reality of Christian faith (I John 3:16-18).

**PREPARATION:** One beggar is enough. Dress in ragged costume and beg for money and food. Sit on the floor or wander aimlessly through the street scenes. Pretend to be blind or lame or deaf or very ill.

**WHAT TO SAY:** “Mercy! Have mercy! Alms! Alms for the poor. Alms for this poor blind child of God. Help me! Give me bread. I need water to live. Coins given in the name of Almighty God will keep me alive another day. Serve God and share your blessings with me.”

*If desired, visitors may give real money to the beggar which will then be given to a mission effort chosen before the program by the team.*



## AREA #I: THE CENSUS TAKER



*Create a small entry area where visitors are required to “sign in” and pay their token tax. Give each visitor a coin with which they may participate.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Israelites were familiar with being counted—constantly! Israel was spread widely over a great distance. In David’s day, the king counted people to provide a basis for military muster. However, he was chastised because he counted his people for personal pride and arrogance. By the time Rome entered the picture in New Testament times, they were experts at organization and invented the census used in Europe. The birth of Jesus became entangled with the required taking of the census. One requirement was that each man was directed to enroll in his home town.

*Here is one example of information taken in 48 A.D.: “To Dorion chief magistrate and to Didymus town clerk, from Thermoutharion, the daughter of Thoonis, with her guardian Apollonius the son of Sotades. The inhabitants of the house belonging to me in the South Lane are: Thermoutharion, a freed woman of the aforesaid Sotades, about sixty five years of age, of medium height, with honey colored complexion, having a long face and a scar on the right knee...I have assuredly, honestly and truthfully presented the preceding return of those living with me and that no one else lives with me, neither a stranger...nor freedman, nor Roman, nor Egyptian, except the aforesaid. If I were swearing truly, may it be well with me. If falsely the opposite.”*

**COSTUME:** Dress in white Roman tunic with lots of gold jewelry and sandals. Wear bands of jewelry around the forehead.

**PREPARATION:** Set up a card table covered with fabric. Place colorful pottery on the table along with bowls of coins. Make a large scroll that visitors can sign. Use a feather quill and ink if possible. Plastic “Scripture” coins may be purchased from ORIENTAL TRADING CATALOG.

**WHAT TO SAY:** *Wait for the TOUR GUIDE to introduce the event to each small group. Once they are presented to you act arrogant and rude. Treat each visitor as if he or she is worthless. Treat women like second class citizens. Refuse to speak directly to them. Read the census message to them as a warning to get their men to sign the census.*

**CENSUS TAKER:** All males must sign the enrollment parchment. If your male is not here, he must travel to the City of David or be arrested for refusing to obey our great emperor, Caesar Augustus. Women sign on separate parchment to identify their men. As you sign, you must swear with fist raised to Augustus:

**I, the aforesaid signer, swear by Caesar Augustus Emperor, that I have assuredly, honestly and truthfully presented the preceding return of those living with me and that no one else lives with me, neither a stranger, Alexandrian nor freedman, nor Roman, nor Egyptian, except the aforesaid. If I am swearing truly may it be well with me, if falsely, the opposite.**

*All visitors must sign their names, stand with fist raised, listen to the statement as it is read. They must touch their fist to their chest and raise it again in honor of the Emperor. Do this reading once for each group instead of for each group.*

Now, get away from my table. You have done your duty. Leave us alone to think of Rome and the gardens and the beautiful marble buildings filled with wise citizens. This dirty hillside village is worthless. You know it and we know it too. Get away, get away!

**TOUR GUIDE:** *Place this script on a scroll. Read it aloud to each group of visitors **BEFORE** they experience the rudeness of the census takers. This is the first impression given of the entire program. Do it well and set the mood for the tour.*

Welcome to Bethlehem Boulevard! There are certain rules you must be aware of as you travel through the streets of the City of David. The government of Rome is in control here. Stay away from Roman soldiers if you can. If they ask you to do anything, do it as quickly as possible and do not argue or look them in the eye. Enjoy eating in our famed Market Place and talk to anyone

you meet. Greet everyone with the respectful greeting, “Shalom”.

The city of Bethlehem was called Ephrath in the Book of Genesis. Bethlehem has been inhabited for 33 centuries. The name Beth-lehem is translated as “House of Bread”. It was the home of Joseph’s ancestor David, who established his kingdom in about 1000 B.C.

We are standing before the Roman census takers. The Romans are natural organizers. They developed the idea of taking an enrollment or apographe (long e) of the male population to determine their status in regard to citizenship, rank and taxable property. Such a tally also serves to drive home the point that everyone in Judea belongs to Rome.

This census is a blow to Jewish self esteem and for many it is an unbearable denial of their position as a people belonging to God. What makes this Roman census even worse is that it was ordered by the Roman emperor Augustus, who is also worshiped as a god in temples Caesarea and other towns. For many Jews, the census is seen as enslavement to a mere man claiming to be divine and imposing his right in the place of the rights of the God of Israel. When the census takers tried to start work on this, trouble was sparked by a rebel named Judas of Galilee. I will present each of you with a special coin with which you may pay your tax. Do not try to avoid payment. The penalty is extremely harsh.



## AREA #2: THE VILLAGE WELL

*The village well was a social gathering place. Women and children gathered every day for fresh, cool water and for gossip and play.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Even today rains in Palestine come in the winter months so water is a problem throughout the year. Water comes from springs, streams, rivers and the Sea of Galilee. Artificial sources in the area are wells and cisterns. In ancient times, the ownership of wells was so important that feuds over them were settled by a covenant between owner and user. It was so expensive to dig a well that rivals would often fight over an existing well rather than dig a second one. Cities were known by their wells. Wars were often fought in the summer so armies could live off the crops of the land. Defenders would stop up their wells with stones and cover them with soil so the enemy could not use them. If a special vengeance was desired for an enemy, his wells were destroyed.

**PREPARATION:** This is an important area in the Village of Bethlehem. Women and small children should be lounging around the well in a friendly, gossipy manner. This is a good area to utilize the toddler/preschool Sunday School class. The short rhyme is easy to memorize and the rock tossing game is easy and adaptable. If using small children, consider asking their mothers to join the scene as the women at the well. Short assignment periods are best for young children. Schedule rest periods if possible and if needed.

Make the village well by using a large, clean wash tub or child's plastic swimming pool. Place large rocks and/or bricks around the tub to give the appearance of a rough well. Fill the container with clean water. Place fresh, cold water in large pottery crocks. Offer drinks of water to visitors as they visit the well.

Place green plants, rocks, baskets and pottery in the general area of the well. It should have an outdoor feel to the area. Leave enough space for children to play safely.

**COSTUMES:** Dress as common, village people. Wear earth tone colors. Add a piece of fabric draped over the head and a shawl. Gather a long, rough tunic together at the waist with a rope belt. Bare feet or sandals look authentic. Very little or no jewelry may be worn. If desired, make bracelets and necklaces from jute. One gold piece may be worn at the forehead. Children may wear dad's long shirt with a rope belt and bare feet.

**TOUR GUIDE:** The ownership of water wells is so important that feuds erupt and must be settled by using the covenant of Abraham. The value placed upon wells is due to the expense involved in digging them. Rivals often fight over a well instead of digging a second one. Wells are listed among the costliest of possessions along with olive groves and vineyards.

Bethlehem was the original home of King David's family. They were called Ephrathites. Ruth and Boaz, ancestors of Christ, lived here. Their son Obed was born here. Ruth gleaned in these fields surrounding Bethlehem. She filled her water pots at this well. Joseph of Nazareth is of King David's family and he is required to visit Bethlehem this week to enroll in the census. I believe he and his pregnant bride, Mary, have been spotted on the streets of Bethlehem today.

There is no plumbing in this village. Water comes from public wells and is stored in courtyard cisterns. No sewage system serves the people except for open gutters running along alleys. There is no garbage collection. There are no gardens within the village. If anyone wants a small garden, they must plant it at a short distance from the houses. The odor from the necessary fertilizer is too repulsive to neighbors. Take a few minutes to listen in on the conversation of the women at the well today. You may ask gentle questions and become refreshed with their gift of water.

**WHAT TO SAY:** *Use teen girls and women, as available. Combine or separate the parts as needed. Make the scene come to life. Watch and help the children as they play. Offer sips of water as each group passes.*

**WOMAN #1:** Come and join us at Bethlehem's village well. We are friends and meet here each day in the cool of the morning or when the sun is going down at night. In the heat of the day, we must rest with our children. It is hard to carry water but we are used to it. We have carried water to our homes every day since our childhood.

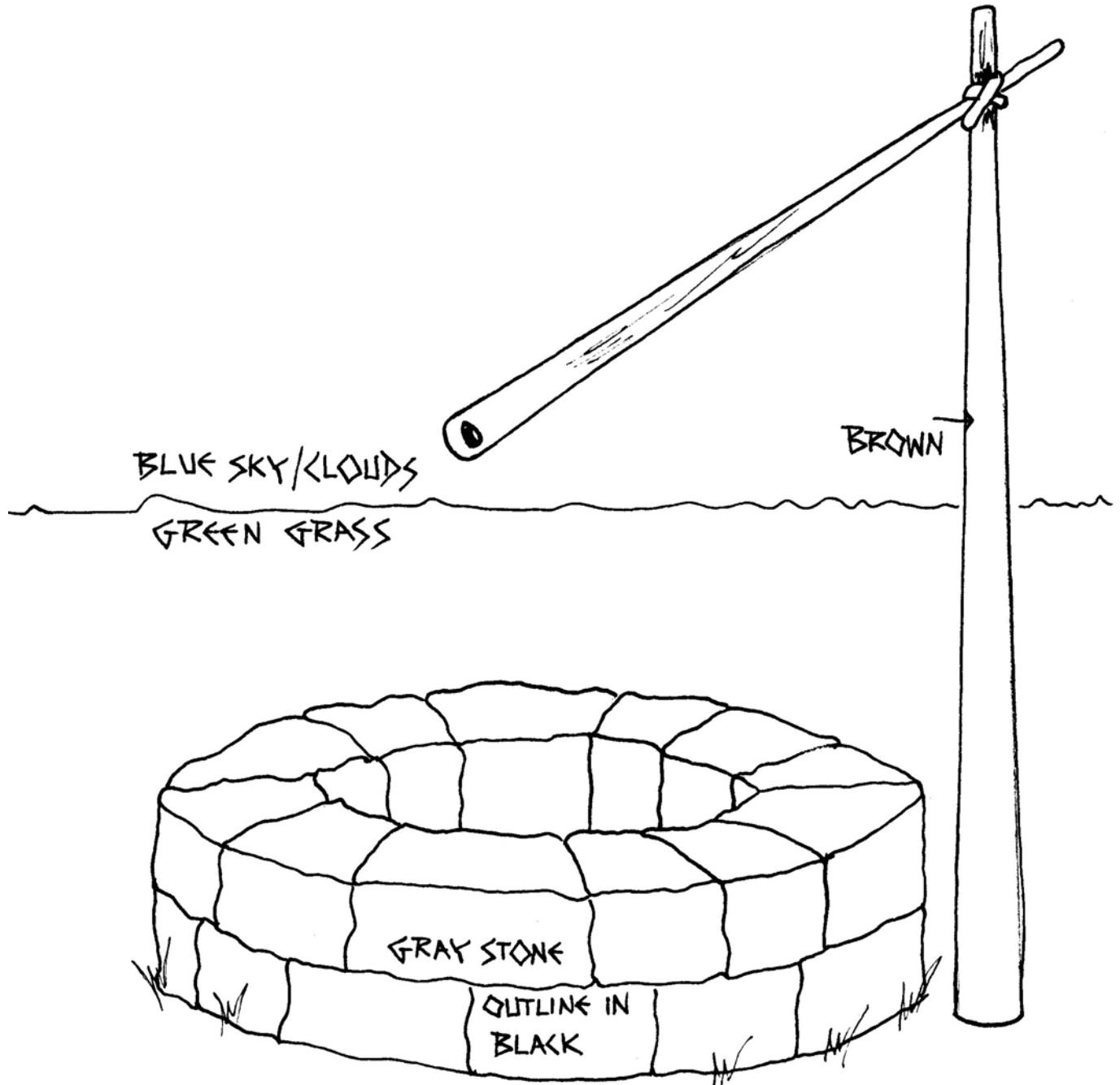
**WOMAN #2:** Did you hear about Rachel? She is going to have another baby. Her husband, Joel, is so happy. He is convinced that this child will be the son he seeks. Aaah, such a shame. Three daughters and no son. Perhaps God will bless them at last. Joel believes God's promised Messiah is going to be born soon. Maybe this son of Joel will fulfill the ancient promise. They live near Ramah. They are concerned about the words of the prophet, Jeremiah, "In Ramah there is bitter weeping, Rachel is weeping for her children and she cannot be comforted, for they are gone." Joel and Rachel's hope comes from the end of the prophecy: "But the Lord says: Don't cry any longer for I have heard your prayers and you will see them again; they will come back to you from the distant land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, says the Lord and your children will come again to their own land." (Jeremiah 31:15-17)

**WOMAN #3:** You look thirsty. Come, have a sip of water from our pots. Ours is the clearest, coolest well this side of the desert. Do not drink quickly. Hot, thirsty people can get much pain in their middles if they drink fast. As you are refreshed, remember the words of the Psalmist, “As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” (Psalm 42:1,2)

**WOMAN #4:** See our children? Are they not fine and strong? They help us carry our water home and keep us company as we work. They play their games while we draw water. I am comforted by the words of the Psalmist, “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them; they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.” (Psalm 127:3-5)

**CHILDREN:** (Stand in a circle, hold hands, swing arms)  
HERE WE ARE IN BETHLEHEM.  
WE ARE SOME OF THE BEST OF THEM.  
HELPING OUR MOTHERS, GREETING ALL OTHERS,  
PLAYING FUN GAMES WITH OUR BROTHERS.

**“GOD IS OUR ROCK” GAME:** Children demonstrate a simple game played like marbles. Toss small rocks or pebbles into a circle drawn on cardboard or traced in sand. Children must roll or toss one rock from their seat in the circle. If their tossing rock hits another rock already in the circle, they may keep both rocks. If they do not hit a rock, their tossing rock stays in the circle. The students with the most rocks at the end of the game wins and may keep all rocks won. Keep a large supply of tossing rocks on hand. Children may toss three times in one turn if they miss. Once they hit a rock, they take their winning rock and the turn passes to the next child. Adapt the rules to fit the needs.



WATER WELL BACKGROUND  
TEMPERA PAINT ON CARDBOARD

DREIDEL (DRAY-dle)

THIS HEBREW TOY IS USED BY CHILDREN AT THE HANUKKAH FESTIVAL.  
THE DREIDEL IS A KIND OF TOP

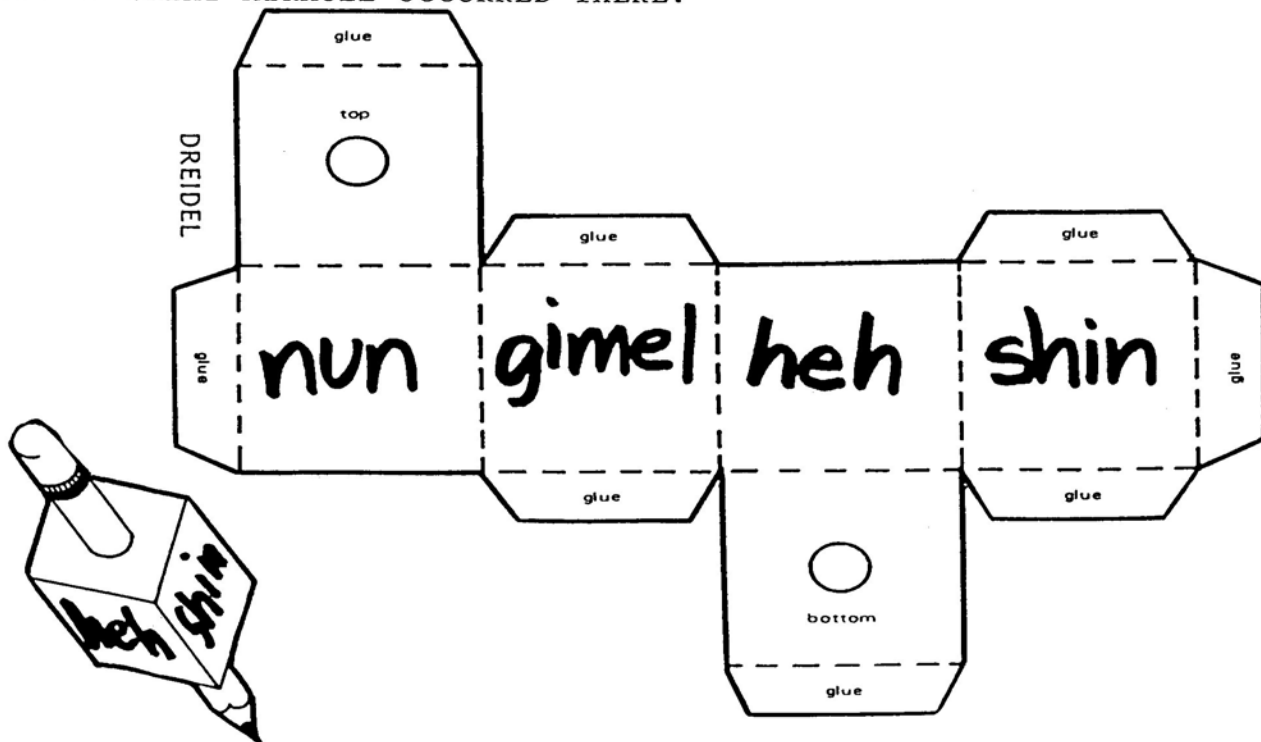
1. Cut and color the six sided box as shown.
2. Fold and glue according to the pattern.
3. Sharpen a dowel or pencil. Push it through top and bottom of box as shown. (Be sure at least one inch of the stick extends on both sides.)

TO PLAY: Draw a circle two inches in diameter on cardboard or the floor with chalk. Give four players ten beans or buttons. Decide together how many each person will put in the pot to begin.

Each player takes turns spinning their dreidel in the circle. If the dreidel stops with one word on top:

NUN: take all counters in the pot  
GIMEL: take half the pot  
HEH: take nothing  
SHIN: put a counter in the pot

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN? Each of these words is one of the four beginning letters for the words, "NES GADOL HAYAK SHAM." They mean "A GREAT MIRACLE OCCURRED THERE."





## AREA #3: POTTER

*The “fashioner” was a person who turned simple clay into beautiful, utilitarian vessels.*

*These pieces are still unearthed today in archeological digs in the Middle East.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** The most common way of fashioning pottery was by hand. Potters formed coils of clay and smoothed off the rough edges to design the form. When the wheel was invented, the early method was abandoned. Most of the pottery used in Bible times was *thrown* on the wheel. Pottery could also be made in a press mold. The clay was carefully pressed into the sides of a mold. After drying it pulled away from the mold. This was used primarily in the forming of figurines.

The final product of the potter is dependent upon the firing process in the kiln. Much skill is needed to create a finished piece. Profit or loss depended upon the skill of the kiln man in controlling the temperatures of the kilns. Pottery that was broken, cracked, misshaped, over fired or under fired had to be discarded.

**PREPARATION:** If possible ask a potter with his/her wheel to demonstrate the craft. If no one can do this, adapt the area by making coiled pots and bowls. Seat potter apprentices on the floor and have them make items from coiled play doh or clay. Assign one adult potter to control the area. *This is a good area for kindergarten or grade 1-3 students.*

Shape simple dishes while speaking. Allow visitors to touch the clay. Visitors may shape a rough pot. Make the area look like a workshop. Place a variety of pottery pots, dishes and clay in the background. Make a *kiln* from two large cardboard boxes. Place pots inside the boxes.

**COSTUMES:** Wear the basic Holy Land costume of a common, working person.

**TOUR GUIDE:** Of all the craftsmen in rural areas, the potter is the most needed and the most creative. He is also called the *Fashioner*. Scripture has many references to potters and pottery. Isaiah 64:8 states, “We are the clay and thou art our potter.”

Our potter supplies Bethlehem with household ovens, oil lamps and earthenware containers of every size and shape. The pots and jars are used for cooking and storing all kinds of necessities from drinking water to oils to grains to wine. Important documents are stored inside jars.

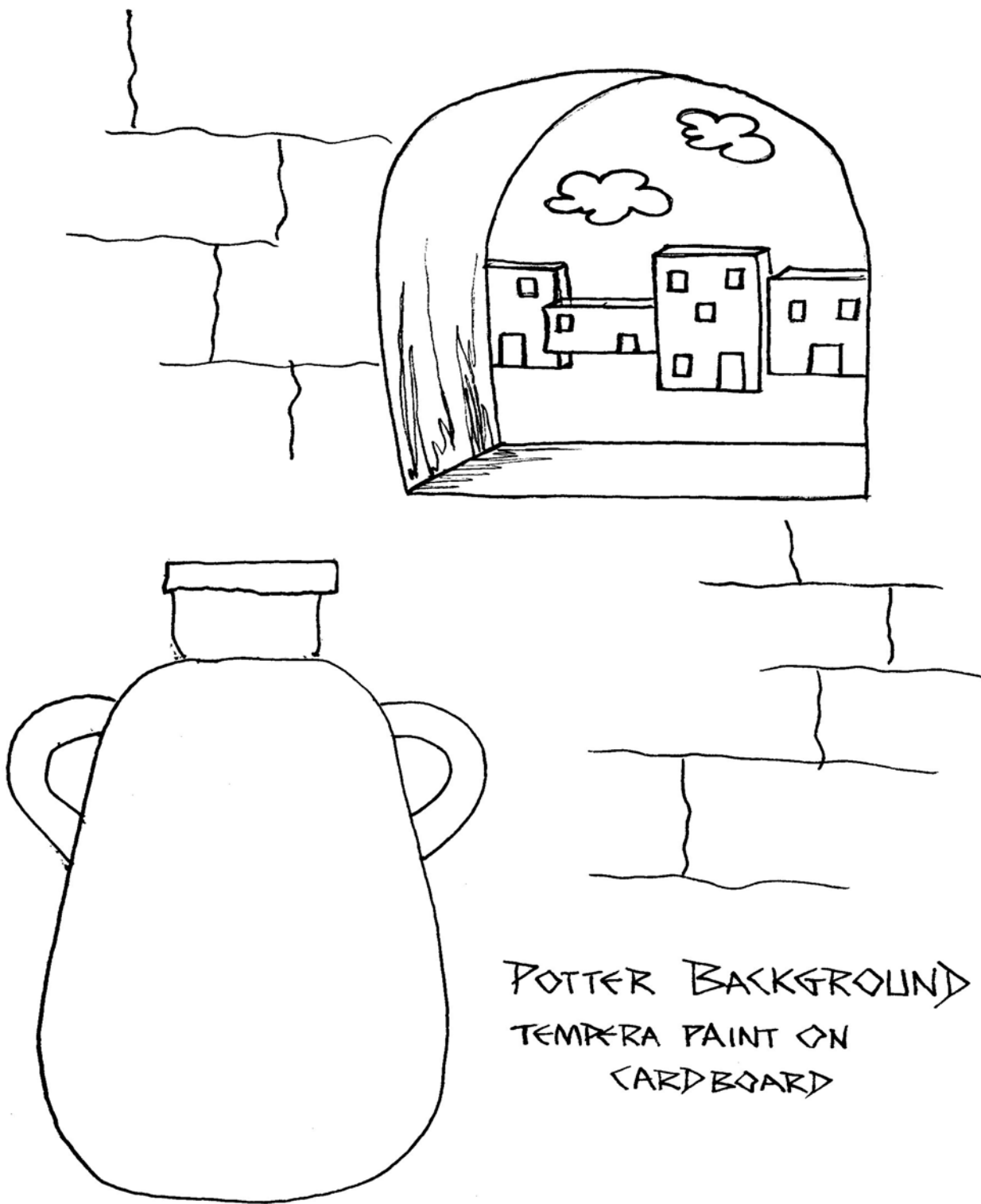
The potter designed a lamp which was literally the light giving vessel, an essential for life. When the potter fashioned it, he made a small bowl and then, while the clay was still soft, he pinched in the rim at some spot so that a wick could be placed in it. It was possible to produce a seven branched lamp. The candlesticks in the Temple were actually small lamps. Enjoy observing our young potter apprentices. They learn their craft from a master craftsman over a period of years.

**WHAT TO SAY:** Welcome to my *fashioning shop*. I have many apprentices learning my trade today. Watch them as they form a simple coiled dish. This is the first step in learning how to shape more complicated and valuable pots. My basic tools are my wheel and my kiln. The basic material is clay. I find clay wherever I walk. It is plentiful near Bethlehem. I dig it out of the earth and lay it in the sun. I pound out lumps with a mallet and pick out pebbles. I mix it thoroughly with water and knead it with my feet. While it sits, water rises to the top and I skim it off. The clay will be smooth and beautiful when I am done. I shape it to form a vessel and spin the shape on my wheel. My feet fly as I work.

The sun dries the vessel and then I place it in a kiln. My kiln is a two story oven which holds a batch of pots. The kiln burns for three days. I watch it closely. When the temperature is right, the pots fire perfectly. Soon, I reduce the fire and cool the clay. All of my pottery is traded for other goods by people who buy my pieces in the market place. If you see potential customers, send them my way. I must return to my students. Shalom!

Tour a street in Bethlehem on the night Jesus was born!

# BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD





## AREA #4: A JEWISH HOME

*Most living was done outdoors. Shelters were used for sleeping, privacy and protection from inclement weather.*

*House styles improved as small villages and eventually larger towns attracted craftsmen who could make practical improvements in homes.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Several generations often lived under the same roof. There was no privacy and very little material wealth. Homes in larger cities were sometimes made of stone, two stories tall and had several rooms. In a village such as Bethlehem, the homes were simply constructed of mud brick and had only one or two rooms. Most mud homes had wooden door frames with wooden locks or iron bars. Animals were protected in the home so it was convenient to give the lower level to them and the upper level to the human family. A small courtyard was used for keeping animals and cooking.

Families had very little furniture. No one slept in a bed. There may have been floor mats with cloaks as covers from the cold. Since families did not own valuable items, they may have needed only one small chest. No closets or cupboards were needed. The kitchen equipment consisted of a few wooden or metal utensils, an oven, pottery and some food. The only light came from oil lamps placed on stands or carved into niches in the mud walls.

No bathrooms! Everything was done in the street (from washing to toilet) where waste water could seep into the ground.

After a rainstorm, the flat roof would have to be rolled with a heavy tool to keep it from collapsing. The roof was often the social area of the home. Families slept on the roof in hot weather, ate there, enjoyed some privacy, called to neighbors and partied. Once a family got too big for the house, a room could have been added to the roof.

**PREPARATION:** Decorate a small room with baskets, plants, pillow, blankets, wooden benches, brooms, pottery and wooden kitchen utensils. Light dimly from the floor or not at all. Place a younger and older couple along with a few children into the home. This Bethlehem family will greet the visitors and talk about their home. Read the A LITTLE HISTORY information to use as casual information with each group.

**COSTUMES:** Dress in common Holy Land costumes. Plain, drab colors and no jewelry work best. Men and women may wear sandals or bare feet.

**TOUR GUIDE:** Gather around to meet this fine family from Bethlehem. This is Reuben, his wife, Sarah and their children Timothy, John and Hannah. Also living here are Reuben's parents, Jethro and Miriam. Actually the house was built by Jethro many years ago. Homes in Bethlehem are simple places where families meet to rest, eat and establish family life. The family is the center of all life in Bethlehem. Whatever a man does for a living, he does to support his family. There is no privacy here and very few material comforts to ease their lives. Everyone is happy here. It would be hard to find complainers in this household.

**WHAT TO SAY:** Sit or stand in various areas of the room. If possible, create tasks that can be worked on while talking. Whittle wood, peel potatoes, sew, play games, pet a small animal.

**REUBEN:** Shalom! Welcome to our humble home. We love each other within these walls and we love God. We make each day count as we work and play and worship. Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

**SARAH:** Most houses in Bethlehem are made of mud brick. We have one room for all of us. Just below our feet is a ground level area to protect our small goats and our new lamb. We have the latest in doors. It is a wooden door hung with leather hinges. Some homes have iron locks but we trust our neighbors. We don't need one.

**JETHRO:** I am growing older now but I take care of the animals in the courtyard. They provide milk and meat and wool for clothing. Our animals are valuable. I am still strong and proud that I can contribute to our family. I built this house with the help of my father and many friends. Reuben makes wine skins. I taught him the best methods. He is the finest craftsman in Bethlehem.

**MIRIAM:** My son Reuben and his wife, Sarah live with us. I don't know what I would do without Sarah's help each day. We rise before dawn to begin our daily work. The family eats a simple meal of curds and bread.

**SARAH:** Then the children accompany me to the village well for fresh water. One day a week we visit the marketplace with our few coins to purchase fresh vegetables, spices and other items we cannot grow on our small plot of ground. I am almost ready to purchase a new water jug. The old has sprung a small leak.

**REUBEN:** I am proud of the way Sarah and my mother take care of us. They grind barley everyday and bake the most delicious bread in Bethlehem. Let me tell you, when I put honey on their warm bread my tongue sings.

**JETHRO:** I married your mother for her bread! Ha! She has only gotten better with age. However, Miriam's best skill is spinning and weaving. Just look at this robe. Go ahead, touch it! It looks and feels like it came from the finest shop in Jerusalem. It was made right here by my Miriam. She takes good care of me.

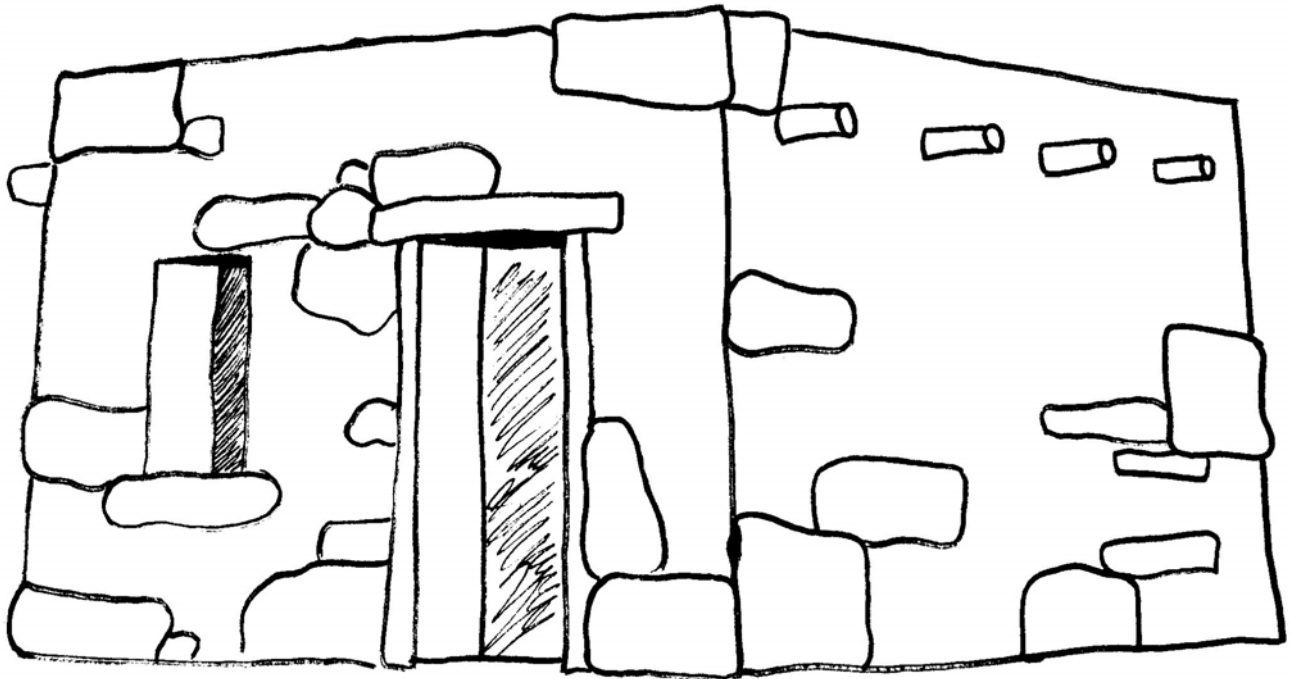
**MIRIAM:** Oh Jethro, stop. The best part of my day is preparing the evening meal. I try to provide a variety of foods including salted fish from the Sea of Galilee, beans, lentils, cucumbers, leeks and onions.

**CHILD:** Grandmother, don't forget dessert! I love the nuts, melons, figs, grapes and pomegranates. On special days your fried cakes with wild honey and thick grape or fig syrup are the best! My friends all beg to come here on those nights to share evening meal.

**REUBEN:** We rest at the end of the day. I recite stories from our Hebrew ancestors and I teach my sons the duties required of every faithful Israelite. There are over 600 observances regulating every aspect of our daily life. We must remain faithful.

**JETHRO:** Toward the end of the day, we men and boys go to the synagogue for the evening meeting. Our women remain at home to put the younger children to bed, feed the animals and prepare our sleeping mats.

**SARAH:** Tomorrow we begin it all again. God has been so good to us. May He also be good to your households forever. Shalom!



SIMPLE JEWISH HOME

## AREA #5: THE SYNAGOGUE

*Any gathering of Jews for religious purposes is called “synagogue”.*

*It isn't just the building, it is the people.*

*The synagogue was not only a place of worship but also of instruction.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Any town or village with at least ten Jewish men could form a synagogue. This was a sacred place of worship and instruction for people of all ages. The synagogue served as a place for people to gather on the Sabbath and also became the school for Jewish boys during the week. On the Sabbath, men, women, boys and girls sat on benches along three stone walls or sat or stood on the stone floor. In front of the fourth wall (the wall facing Jerusalem) sat a raised platform with a table near a seven branched candle stand. The prayer leader (any adult male member) led worship with opening blessings and praise to God. The congregation would respond with “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.”

Then the Torah scroll (first five books of the Bible) was opened and three portions were read by several men. It was read in Hebrew and translated into the language of the day, Aramaic. Then a speaker gave a sermon on the readings. After the sermon, someone would read from one of the books of prophecy from the Bible.

**PREPARATION:** Place the synagogue in a quiet room with a window. Line three walls of the room with benches or rows of chairs. Place one table in front of the plain wall with a candle stand nearby. Make a large scroll to represent the Torah. Place it on the table. Behind the table place a wooden chest (called the ark) where the Torah is kept. Light the room only in candle light. Choose as many men and boys as possible to attend synagogue. Seat the group along the walls. Choose a few speakers. Read all information and be prepared to share casually with visitors.

**COSTUMES:** Men and boys may wear common, everyday Holy Land tunics and loose fabric over the head. They may wear sandals or come in bare feet. If desired, ask someone to portray a rabbi (teacher for the students) dressed in a long white belted tunic with a tasseled prayer shawl draped over his head.

**TOUR GUIDE:** The purpose of the synagogue building was to provide a sacred place for Jews to assemble in small groups. It was here that they experienced life long teaching through scripture readings, sermons and discussion groups that met for study of the law. Each village synagogue gave donations of money (temple tax) to support the existence of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The synagogue was also a community center where announcements were made, donations collected and trials held. In small villages, the synagogue served as a public dining hall and lodging for travelers. The most important use is for education.

Jewish boys began their education soon after their sixth birthday. Classes were held six days a week and every boy was required to attend. The boys carried a lunch of bread and wine. They walked to synagogue school and listened to their teacher, the rabbi. The school room was the same room used for Sabbath services. They sat along three sides facing the candle stand where lamps burned continuously. The stern rabbi read from the Torah and taught the young men scriptures for memorization. Soon they learned to write using the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Allow me to turn over the tour of the synagogue to the men and boys already gathered for the evening meeting.

**WHAT TO SAY:** *Speak directly to the visitors. Be friendly and informative. Divide the speaking parts among available men and boys.*

**SPEAKER #1:** Shalom! Come into our synagogue. This place is not meant to replace the Temple in Jerusalem. We do not copy any ceremonies that take place there. There are no priests here and we do not sacrifice on an altar. That is done in Jerusalem. We are the men and boys of Bethlehem who gather to insure that our Jewish faith will be passed along to future generations.

**SPEAKER #2:** We read the Torah here. It must be read in full light so we read it near the window. The Torah scroll is placed on the reading desk. The lesson is divided into three or more portions. The prayer leader utters a blessing of gratitude for the gift of the Torah, then calls on a different man of the congregation to read. In Bethlehem we translate the ancient Hebrew into our every day Aramaic language.

**SPEAKER #3:** The seats are placed so the congregation is facing in the direction of the chest (ark) where the scrolls of the Torah are kept and facing the Temple in Jerusalem. We must always remember Jerusalem, the chosen city of God. He is our refuge and strength.

**SPEAKER #4:** The seats closest to the table are reserved for community elders. The floor is made of flagstone but wealthy communities install decorative mosaics. We take good care of our synagogue. People meet here for many social reasons. We even allow tired travelers to sleep here as they travel through Bethlehem.

**SPEAKER #5:** Any man over the age of thirteen can be asked to lead in prayer or can be invited or may personally request permission to speak. If there are members present who are of the priestly tribe of Levi, they have no special role except that they might recite the benediction from Numbers 6:24-27–

**THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU. THE LORD MAKE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU. THE LORD LIFT UP HIS COUNTENANCE UPON YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE.**

**SPEAKER #6:** Even non Jewish men seek counsel in our synagogues. They follow our laws and keep God's commandments. God is worthy to be praised. This synagogue gives us opportunity to learn His Word. We take this wisdom to our families.

**SPEAKER #7:** We use the ritual object of the Temple in Jerusalem in worship. The menorah, ram horns and incense shovels...these objects are a continual reminder of the worthiness of God. God has promised us a Messiah. We continually search for our Savior. He is to be born King of the Jews. Our hope is in God. As you leave our synagogue, go in peace with God. Follow Him and worship Him as He commands.

## AREA #6: THE MARKETPLACE

*The center of any small village was the marketplace,  
a street of shops where craftsmen made and sold their wares.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Many types of craftsmen displayed their products in the marketplace. Side by side stood carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, dyers, basket weavers and mat makers, tanners and leather workers. These craftsmen often bartered their services for grain, oil, vegetables and other foods. The marketplace was loud. Customers and vendors haggled over prices, shouted, teased and competed for customers. Laid out on tables or held in the air was a display of souvenir trinkets and fine goods, but only when traveling salesmen arrived. Farmers offered fresh fruits and vegetables in season. In small villages, the marketplace was open only two days a week. Activity depended upon how many vendors were selling on any given day. Jerusalem's large marketplace was frantically busy, confusing and loud all the time.

**PREPARATION:** Set up the marketplace in a central location, preferably near the kitchen. Visitors tour the area on their own after the formal guided tour and before they leave the area to visit the Nativity scene in the sanctuary. There is no verbal presentation. Workers at the marketplace dress in costume and greet visitors with a cheerful "Shalom"!

Cover display tables with blankets. Place a variety of yarns, fabrics, baskets, pots, pottery, scarves and other colorful items on the tables. If desired, offer small trinkets for sale. Visitors eat the foods displayed. Choose foods from this list or create your own menu. Do not charge money for the food. Treat the visitors to sample sized treats served in wooden bowls or wicker baskets. Provide a small paper plate, napkin and paper cup for each visitor.

**FRUITS:** Apple slices, banana slices, coconut, grapes, melons, peaches, black and green olives. Look for a few exotic examples of fruit including kiwi and pomegranate.

**VEGETABLES:** Serve slices of cucumber, carrots, celery, lettuce, tomato, peas. Add a modern invention—snack dip—to encourage people to sample the foods.

**SOUPS:** Serve lentil, vegetable or bean soup in a small cup with a plastic spoon. The smell



is tantalizing and the taste rounds out the snack like foods.

**CRACKERS:** Fill a basket with a variety of crackers. Children enjoy Goldfish and adults eat any variety of cracker available in the grocery store.

**NUTS:** Unsalted nuts are best but use salted if necessary. Purchase a large quantity of mixed nuts and serve in a wooden bowl with a wooden spoon.

**CHEESE:** Cube a variety of cheeses and place on a large pottery platter. Mix slices of celery with the cheeses.

**BREAD:** Make homemade bread and serve thick, warm slices with honey and butter and grape jelly. Fill the area with the smell of fresh bread by baking it in the church kitchen. A quick, inexpensive way to make bread is to purchase frozen bread dough, thaw and bake.

**BEVERAGE:** Serve icy cold water, samples of cold goat's milk, fruit juice, milk.

There are many more foods which are appropriate. Create a wide variety of samples and watch the smiles of the visitors!

## AREA #7: SHEPHERDS AND ANGELS

*Lowly shepherds and magnificent heavenly hosts of angels celebrated the birth of Jesus together in an unexpected way.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Watching shepherds in the fields in Israel today is a lot like seeing them centuries ago. Joseph's ancestor, David, began life as a shepherd boy in the hills surrounding Bethlehem. Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd because He knew people of his day could relate to the attitude between shepherd and sheep. He said, "*I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.*" (John 10:14-15)

Shepherds had such a close relationship with their sheep that a sheep could recognize its master's voice and the shepherd could identify each sheep by its bleat and cry. It was not an easy life. Living outdoors year round, dressing in a camel hair cloak and head veil to protect him from the weather. He ate bread, cheese, olives, figs, dates and raisins—foods easily carried in a back pack.

Shepherds led their sheep to sweet grasses and cool, still water. If a sheep fell into a crevice, the shepherd was its rescuer. He protected his sheep from thieves and wild animals. A wide array of dangerous animals lived in the area—bears, leopards, jackals and sometimes hyenas. The shepherd carried a slingshot and a wooden rod as his only protection. Sometimes the shepherd lost his life while protecting his flock.

Sheep folds were built to enclose the animals in a safe place. It had high stone walls covered with thorn branches. There was no gate so the shepherd placed his body across the entry as a human shield. When several shepherds shared a sheep fold, they could take turns sleeping.

*An interesting note: When winter came, food was scarce and weather was bad. Sheep were placed in the sheep fold to be kept under cover. Because Luke mentions that the shepherds were "out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night," it is probable that our traditional December 25 date for Christmas is incorrect.*

**PREPARATION:** Portraying shepherds on a hillside can be accomplished a couple of different ways. Draw a cardboard background scene of hills and trees. The shepherds lounge on the floor and the angels appear as a choir in front of the scene. Light the angel choir from the floor. Or, seat the shepherds on a stairwell. Cover steps with green brown blankets or fabric, hay, rocks or other natural materials. Angels appear in spotlights at the top of the stairs.

Make sheep from cardboard, covered in faux fur. If stuffed lambs are available, tuck them under the arms of the shepherds. Shepherds may also carry long wooden staffs and dress in Holy Land costume.

**TOUR GUIDE:** Shepherds play an important part in the story of Jesus' birth. They remind us that Jesus was from the family of another Bethlehem shepherd boy, David. Jesus said He was the "Good Shepherd". The psalmist reminds us "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." (Psalm 23)

Shepherds lead their flocks by walking in front of them. The sheep trust their master and follow him wherever he goes. Even today, shepherds in the hills around Bethlehem can be heard calling in a strange language to their sheep. The relationship between a shepherd and his sheep is so close that the shepherd can recognize the bleating of each lamb and any sheep recognizes his master's voice.

These shepherds are about to have the experience of a lifetime. Somewhere in Bethlehem a baby is being born. They do not know the baby's parents and wouldn't care much even if they did. The hills are cool and quiet, the fire burns low and the sleepy men are startled by a flash of light.

Let's listen and watch as the scene unfolds....

**WHAT TO SAY:** Chat casually with other shepherds. Use the script as a guide. Divide the parts between the number of shepherds available. Do not be afraid to interact with the visitors when appropriate.

**SHEPHERD #1:** It is cold tonight. Look how the sheep huddle together. I see Curly nosing his way into the middle of the ewes. He will be taught a lesson in a moment! Let's build a fire, friends. Our cloaks will not keep us warm enough. It may soon be time to head for the sheep fold.

**SHEPHERD #2:** I was in Bethlehem this afternoon to get our supplies. You can't believe how many people are on the streets. I saw relatives that I have seen since the last census. My cousin introduced me to his wife and *four* sons. I was so happy to see his prosperity. He was not happy to have had to leave his job in Jerusalem to register here. I told him it was the only time our grandmother sees him so we should thank the Romans.

**SHEPHERD #3:** (Laughing....) Yes, that's what I want to do, visit the census taker and say thank you to that big Roman guard. We'll let your grandmother do the thanking. We'll just keep our mouths shut and watch the sheep.

**SHEPHERD #4:** Yes, you get in a lot less trouble that way. I've been feeling bad lately about how folks have been treating us. They make me feel so poor and ignorant and...what can I say, dirty! You'd think they would thank us for providing wool for their clothing and food for their table. Instead they pull their robes from me as I walk through the marketplace.

**SHEPHERD #5:** Don't worry about it. People often think of us as lower class folks. I know in my heart God loves me.

**SHEPHERD #6:** Hey, what is that? (Stand ready to protect with staff and slingshot) Over there! Above the hill! There's a bright light! Is someone camping there? Yes, I see someone coming to us. The light! The light! It's blinding me! He is going to kill us! Run for your lives!

**ANGEL OF THE LORD:** Don't be afraid. I'm bringing you the most joyful news ever announced and it is for everyone! The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem! How will you recognize hm? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger!

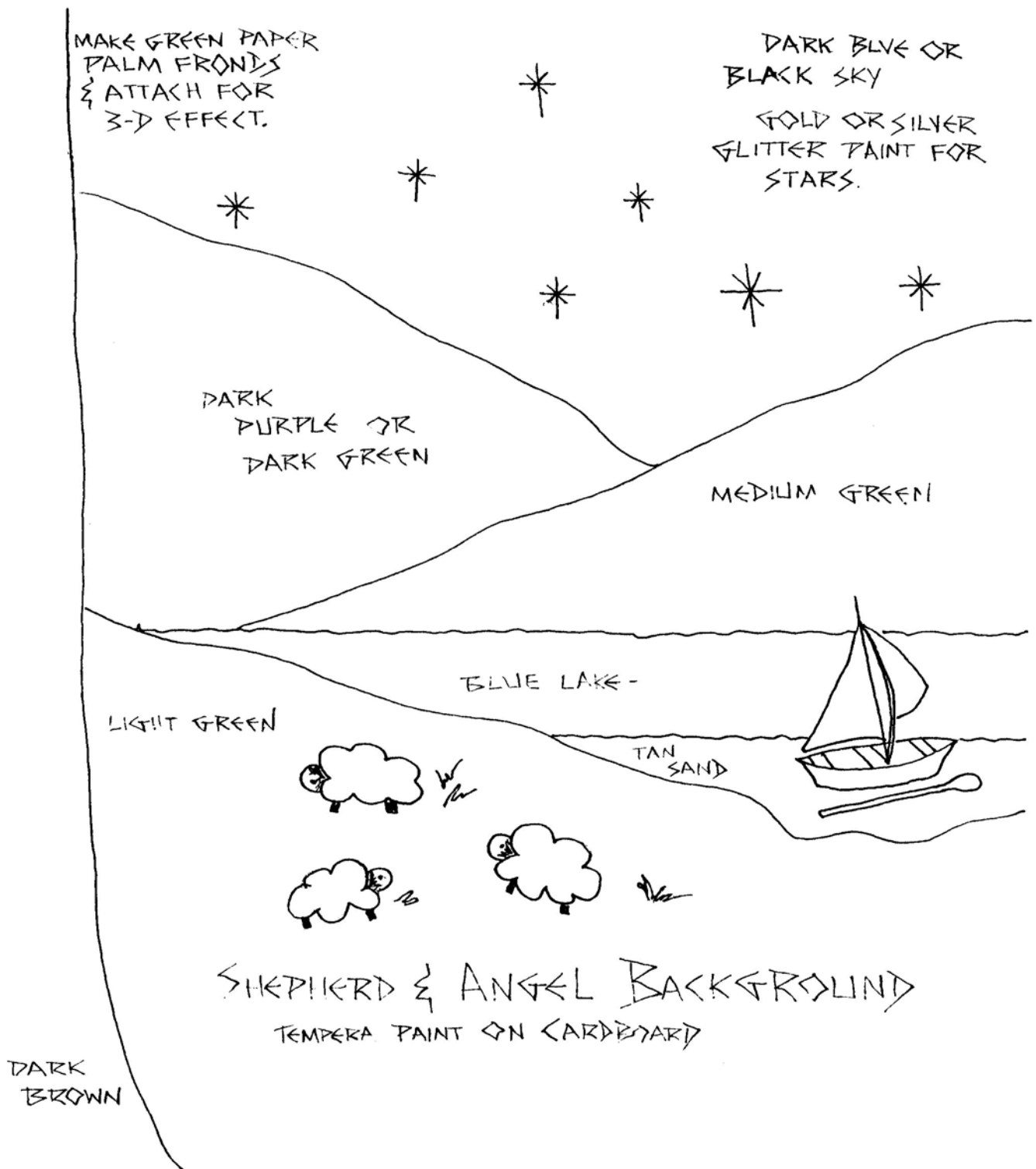
**ALL SHEPHERDS:** (In a state of panic and confusion....) What? What did he say? Did you understand him? He said something about a baby! He said there's a baby in a manger!

**HOST OF ANGELS:** (In unison...) Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth for all those pleasing him!

**SHEPHERD #7:** I've never seen anything like this. Surely the Lord has favored us with His presence. We must search for this baby in the village. Let's see, they said he would be born tonight, wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. Hmmm, the only place with animal caves and mangers is the Village In run by Dothan.

**SHEPHERD #8:** Well, it's a good place to start. The town is so crowded tonight. It will take some time but let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this wonderful thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.

**TOUR GUIDE:** The great army of angels returned to heaven. In amazement the shepherds ran to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. The shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. All who heard the shepherds' story expressed astonishment. I happen to know that Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and often thought about them. Soon, the shepherds went back to their fields and flocks, praising God for the visit of the angels and because they had seen the child, just as the angel had told them.



## AREA #8: THE VILLAGE INN

*Aah, sleep after a long day of travel came a welcome close to a busy day.  
Seeing an inn in the distance must have been a welcome sight  
to weary travelers.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** Major trade routes often boasted travel inns called caravansaries. These stone and brick forts provided protection from intruders and weather. They were built near a water source so animals and people could be refreshed. A courtyard provided a place to keep animals. Poor guests probably slept there too. Private rooms were available only to wealthier travelers. Travelers would have included pilgrims, merchants and people of every class. It could be that Joseph wanted to keep Mary from giving birth in a very public place. Room at the inn? Possibly available but certainly undesirable.

Scripture doesn't tell anything about the place Jesus was born except that there was a manger. Centuries later, caves in nearby hills were found that certainly could have been used to protect people and animals. Living with animals was common so Mary and Joseph sleeping with the animals would not have been shocking. It may have been warm and comfortable and best of all, private.

**PREPARATION:** The only space needed is a closed door. A closet door works well. The Innkeeper, Dothan, hides inside and comes out when the TOUR GUIDE knocks on the door. Hang a sign on the door stating: NO MORE ROOMS TONIGHT!

**TOUR GUIDE:** Long ago, when people could not find lodging with friends or relatives, they stayed in the open fields and under trees. There were no hotels. It was dangerous and soon weary travelers on major trade routes could stay at places that more resembled a small fort. The Inn at Bethlehem was dirty, crowded and loud. It would not have been comfortable to give birth to a baby in such a place. The Innkeeper may have actually been the hero of the day by suggesting a more private place with the animals.

We are approaching the *Inn of Dothan* on Bethlehem Boulevard. He is a proud man who's father and grandfather also welcomed visitors into their home. People come and offer money or food or clothing or other goods in return for a hot meal, water to wash and a safe place to sleep. I think Mary and Joseph were here just a little while ago. Let's see what we can discover.

*TOUR GUIDE KNOCKS LOUDLY ON THE DOOR. KEEP KNOCKING UNTIL THE INNKEEPER ANSWERS THE DOOR.*

**DOTHAN:** (Comes outside the door...) What do you want? How many of you are there? Can't you read the sign? I have no rooms. I have no more food. I have no more floor space in the courtyard or hallways. My serving girls are exhausted. I have even rented the cave where the animals stay. What do you expect of me? Look elsewhere. Leave me alone!

**TOUR GUIDE:** We are looking for a young couple. They would have arrived several hours ago looking for a place to stay. The wife is going to have a baby soon, very soon.

**DOTHAN:** I have seen hundreds of people today and you expect me to remember two strangers? Wait! Did you say the wife was going to have a baby? Oh, them! Now that you mention it, I let them stay in the cave. They paid me a full night's lodging so I told my girls to take pitchers of water and some hot food to them. The girls keep disappearing one at a time. I suspect that baby has been born. Those girls took the best batch of cloth I had and ripped it into strips. They love babies and I must admit I have a soft spot in my heart for the little buggers. I pretend I don't see. As soon as things slow down, I plan to take a peek myself and talk to the father. I feel badly that I didn't have a spare room. The rooms are reserved for wealthy travelers. I even rented my own room. My wife is having a fit but the census comes only once each ten years and we need the money. Maybe I should have tried harder to find a room. I could have asked the men in the pantry to move to the stable. Oh, I'm so tired. I cannot think straight.

**TOUR GUIDE:** We are anxious to see the couple and the new baby. Will you point us in the direction of the cave? We will not stay long. We won't eat any of your food and we will not steal anything from you. We must find this baby.

**DOTHAN:** For some strange reason, I believe you. Walk this direction and you will find the stable, the manger and maybe even the new baby by now. Shalom! (Go back inside.)

**TOUR GUIDE'S FAREWELL:** This is where I leave you. Visit the marketplace and sustain yourself with food and drink. You may find small gifts there to remind you of your journey through Bethlehem. It has been a privilege to serve you. May God go before you. You will find Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. Just as the shepherds searched, so must you. The Savior is waiting!



*If you have led your group beginning at any other area than Area #1, do not leave them until they have visited each spot. The TOUR GUIDE'S FAREWELL should take place at the last area you guide for them.*

## AREA #9: THE NATIVITY



*Finally, we come to place where Jesus lay.  
Come and experience the birth of the Savior.*

**A LITTLE HISTORY:** We do not have any details of the birth of heaven and earth's special baby. A midwife may have helped Mary. If so, this unknown woman was privileged to usher into the world, God's only Son, Jesus. She would have cut the umbilical cord, asked Joseph to get water and would have bathed the baby. Babies were rubbed in salt to prevent infection. The manger would have been filled with fresh straw. He would have been bound in swaddling clothes. Swaddling clothes are unknown in the western world. It was a method of restraining a baby to keep its arms and legs straight. Historians say babies were bound in this manner for six months. Long linen strips were tightly wound around a baby's body. Once a day, the baby was untied and bathed, gently rubbed with olive oil or dusted with powdered myrtle.

We do not know what kind of building contained the manger. It could have been a simple room near a rustic inn. It could have been a nearby cave. Most probably it contained a variety of animals (donkey, ox, sheep, goats) belonging to other travelers in Bethlehem for the required census. The manger may have been hewn from rock with an indentation chiseled to hold water and/or hay for animals.

**PREPARATION:** This is the *grand finale* of the program. Choose one of two ways to present this to the visitors:

**1. A SILENT, WORSHIPFUL EXPERIENCE.** Usher guests into the sanctuary where they find a seat for quiet meditation. Christmas music is played quietly in the background (live or recorded). Nativity people stand in place quietly or move around slowly as necessary. The wise men and shepherds may enter and exit as needed. Angels may appear and disappear. OR—the entire nativity scene may resemble a stop action photograph with all players frozen in place. Since this is the last stop, visitors may remain as long as they desire and exit to the parking lot.

**2. A LIVELY, INTERACTIVE EXPERIENCE.** Hosts Mary and Joseph greet everyone, urge quietness for the baby, show the baby with great pride and talk quietly with other people in the story. This is done conversationally. The script ideas are suggestions for topics.

*Once the decision is made concerning the style of presentation*

*in the sanctuary, proceed with the preparations.*

Set up the nativity scene in the sanctuary where it is dark, quiet and conducive to worship. Ask the church organist and pianist to play Christmas carols softly as the visitors enter. If musicians are not available, play recorded Christmas music.

**PROPS:** Manger, hay, animal figures, spot lighting from the floor, pillows, blankets, lanterns, plants, large star, pottery, large rocks, wood tossed to one side. Choose items available and aim for an eastern flair in decoration. The people are central to this scene but some large cardboard backdrops may be painted to resemble stone walls, wooden door or other interesting background.

## CHARACTERS IN HOLY LAND COSTUME

Mary, Joseph, Baby Jesus, 2-3 Shepherds, 1 Angel, serving girls, animals (Draw a cow, sheep, donkey on cardboard for background.). *Wandering Wise Men enter and exit as they play their parts throughout the building.* Choose people who are outgoing and friendly to interact with the visitors. If BETHLEHEM BOULEVARD is an all day, all evening or all weekend event, consider asking 2-3 different people to portray each character. Schedule the characters to give appropriate rest times. This is especially true if using a baby. Ask several parents to “lend” their babe for short periods of time. Be sure the baby is healthy. Provide for all infant needs including bottles for feeding and change of diapers and clothing. It is preferable to have one or both parents present at all times. Put the parent in Holy Land costume so they can enter and leave without disrupting the scene. If the real mother is not cast as Mary, consider dressing her as a servant girl who can occasionally pick up the child and care for it to “give Mary a rest”.

**WHAT TO SAY:** Encourage each person on this team to read the entire story from Luke 2 to get the facts correct. Conversation should softly swirl around the visitors. Include the visitors in the comments. Allow them to ask questions. Welcome them warmly and speak in quiet voices. With each new group of visitors, the characters may repeat some of their conversation. Silence is fine for some of the time. Create casual conversation, even if it is not printed in the script. As people leave, give an eastern farewell by bowing the head and touching the forehead.

**JOSEPH:** Shalom! Welcome to our little home away from home. Mary, here is another visitor to see the baby. Ssh, He needs quiet right now but come and look. He is such a special baby. If only you knew the events leading up to this night. It is amazing. So much has happened in the past year. Mary and I have been promised in marriage to one another for over a year. Since then, I have been happy, grieved, talked with an angel and trusted God to give me strength.

I am his earthly father but not his natural father. His father is God. I know it is hard to believe. I didn't believe it myself until I had a dream. I am honored to be included in the birth of the promised Messiah. We are not sure how our baby, Jesus, will become the Savior of mankind but we leave the details to God Almighty. He will devise the plan. I will obey.

The journey to Bethlehem from Nazareth was hard. We walked the whole way. We rested often but even then Mary was tired. I am proud of the way she handled herself through this entire ordeal. She has a peacefulness that is inspiring. She seems to know that everything will be fine.

I do wish we had been able to stay in Nazareth. The Romans have been terrible to us. This ridiculous census is meant to keep us in line....to show us who's boss. We are God's Chosen...the Jewish Nation. We do not deserve this dishonor.

**MARY:** Joseph, do be calm. When you look into the eyes of this child you know all will be well. Even the Romans cannot rob me of joy this night. Isn't he the most beautiful baby you have ever seen? He is strong and healthy. He looks into my eyes and knows me already. I must wrap him in his baby swaddling cloths so he feels calm and secure.

An angel of the Lord came to tell me God had a special plan for me. I was afraid at first but this is too wonderful for words. It is worth all the bad talk about me in Nazareth. This is truly God's Son. Joseph and I have been given an important responsibility in the raising of this child. We must teach him to love God with all his heart, all his soul and all his might. We must train him to be loving to all people. God will do the rest. This child is "Immanuel—God With Us".

**SHEPHERDS:** We just got here. You won't believe this but we just talked to an angel. We saw the heavens open up and many, many angels sang to us. They were so bright, we could hardly look upon them. They sang, "Glory to God in the highest on earth, peace and good will to all men". They told us to come to Bethlehem. One of the angels actually told us where to find the baby. We left our sheep in the field and came right away. This is an amazing night for us. God send us to greet His Holy Son. We will tell everyone we meet what we have seen and heard.

**ANGEL:** God has sent His Son, the Messiah, Savior, Living Word, Good Shepherd, Immanuel, Jesus, into this world to save the world from sin. Heaven's message is to accept this baby as Savior and Lord. Become a Follower of the Way. This baby is to live and die for each

person who is dead, living and yet to be born. Accept Him today!

**WISE MEN:** We have found you at last! We saw His star in the east and followed it. It is above us right now. Herod wants to kill this child, Joseph. You must protect him. Flee with him to another place. We have brought gifts to help pay your expenses. Gold, to honor Him as King. Frankincense, to honor him as God. Myrrh, to honor His saving death.

**TOWNSPEOPLE:** What is going on? This is such a busy night in Bethlehem.. Oh, look at the cute baby. Why is this family in a cave? Isn't it too bad there is no house available. I am going to bring a blanket in the morning for them. Wait until my children hear what I have seen and heard from the shepherds tonight.

**SERVING GIRLS:** We want to help you take care of the baby tonight. Dothan, the Innkeeper, won't miss us if we sneak out here one at a time to check on you. How are you feeling, Mary? Would you like a drink of water? We have one soft pillow in the courtyard. May we bring it to you?

**ALL CHARACTERS:** *Stay in character throughout the presentation. When you leave the scene, change into street clothing immediately. Until changed, you are the character you have portrayed—especially to young children. Take the time to stop and speak to children and adults. A simple, cheerful greeting usually does the trick. Enjoy the entire experience and make a memory for your church and community!*

# OPTIONS FOR STREET SCENES

*Use the following ideas if space is available and teams of people are willing to prepare the areas.*

*These scenes are not crucial to the program and may be stations to add if this program becomes an annual tradition in your church and community.*

*The following outline of ideas may be developed  
if space and teams of people are available to set up the areas.  
Because these areas are not crucial to the story,  
they may be eliminated or adapted to fit the needs of the program.*

## THE METAL SHOP

Along with other craftsmen in Bethlehem, the metal worker was a necessary part of the community. Steel tools were made for farm work, copper and brass were shaped into bowls, trays, pitchers and lamps in the house. Silver and gold were fashioned into jewelry for the rich. Armor and weapons were made for soldiers. The metal worker's tools were simple. Hammers were made from both wood and metal.

Gold, silver, copper, tin, iron and lead were the major metals. Mining centers were based in Britain, Gaul, Spain, Italy, Asia Minor and Africa. God was used mostly for jewelry and ornaments. Silver was used mostly for money. When Judas betrayed Jesus, he was paid 30 pieces of silver. The money was probably given in Jewish shekels, the equivalent of 120 days' wages. Copper was mined in Cyprus. When mixed with tin to make bronze, it was used to make tools, jewelry and ornaments. It was also used for coins of small value. Iron was used for heavy tools and weapons. Lead was used to reinforce the bottoms of ships.

## THE TENTMAKER

The first tents were made of animal skins sewn together and draped over simple poles. Later, goat hair was woven into cloth similar to canvas. Bone and metal needles were used along with awls, knives and combs. Tents are a protection from heat and cold but not necessarily rainproof. Tents were designed so that one pack animal could carry all the belongings of a family. Poor people would have had no rug on their dirt floor. A wealthy chief would have several tents, one for himself and guests others for his wives and female servants and others for animals. Eventually the tent became a symbol for home. Only three tent makers are named in scripture, Paul, Aquila and his wife Priscilla.

## MUSICIANS

People then as now have found music to be worshipful and full of expression for a variety of feelings. Bethlehem would have had several people who could play flutes, harps, drums, shakers and other instruments. Strolling musicians add a nice touch to the street scene.

## PHYSICIAN

In early times, people were sent to the priests to recognize symptoms of such terrible diseases as leprosy. They also learned to take care of other health problems by offering a variety of baths, ointments and poultices made from herbs and oils. Eventually the information was passed to other groups who became healers. Surgery was used but since a Jewish person could not touch a dead body, information was limited. There were many physicians in Israel. A physician was assigned to the Temple for the benefit of the priests. Every city had its own physician who was required to obtain a license to practice from city authorities. Midwives were well thought of in scripture and must have been good. The most well known physician in scripture is Dr. Luke who was Paul's personal physician and the writer of the Gospel of Luke.

## SCRIBE

The brightest young men in the synagogue were pressed into service as keepers of the records. They were talented in writing and were identified by writing tablets and pen cases hanging from the belts of their robes. They drew up contracts of marriage and divorce, bills of sale and other legal documents. They recorded royal decrees and decisions. They kept accounts of taxes collected and money spent. The scribes of Jesus' day would have been more religious. They made copies of the Torah for the scattered Jews. They also were recognized as the religious authority as interpreters of the Torah.

## SPINNING WOOL

Cleaned and combed raw wool was placed over the should and fastened to a spindle. Turning the spindle twisted the wool into yarn. The yarn was sound onto a distaff made from small tree limbs. Women started with this procedure in the making of all fabric. Clothing was very rough to the touch.

## WEAVERS

Once spinning, dying and other preparations were complete, yarn was woven into cloth on handmade looms which sat in the middle of the floor or outdoor courtyard. Weaving is an ancient art. Various materials were used depending upon availability. Flax was used to make linen. Wool, silk and goat hair were also commonly used. Families wove all their own textiles from tents to warm woolen garments for the family. Carpet looming was also common. The first looms were simple and made of a pair of sturdy upright beams secured to the floor and joined at the top with a crossbeam. Long thread was loosely guided from top to bottom over the crossbeam. To hold the yarn tight small punches were weighted with stones or other heavy objects.



## BETHLEHEM JAIL

Prisons were found in the homes of public officials and used only for holding (not punishing) offenders. Other types of prisons were pits, cisterns, military buildings, cells and dungeons. Often prisoners were placed in stocks. Floggings were administered. Imprisonment was not necessarily legal. It was a detention prior to trial, the isolation of a dangerous person or restraint without legal reasons. Political prisoners were almost always exiled. There were some private prisons.

## BASKET MAKER

Baskets were made for all purposes. They were sold new or used. The baskets were made of top quality rush reeds, wood strips, sea grass and raffia. This was a common household craft but the demand for containers was important and eventually became a widespread industry. Many baskets were designed to be carried on the head.

## TANNERY

The tanner was responsible for turning raw skins into a medium usable for clothing, shelter, sandals, decorations, etc. Leather making includes skinning, fleshing (removing fat and tissue), tanning and softening. Two common types of tanning were vegetable (using barks of plants with a high tannic acid content to produce a durable, stiff leather that was good for sandals) and brain/animal fat (producing a leather suitable for garments.)

# JUST FOR FUN!

*Prepare copies of THE CHRISTMAS IQ TEST for each visitor.  
Choose a time during the production when it is appropriate  
to give them the test.*

*It is fun to set up a “formal” Testing Laboratory where visitors enter  
and leave during their individual walk about time.*

*They may want to take it home to quiz themselves after their experience.*

This may be used as a motivational tool for the congregation. Consider giving the test to people coming to the worship service on the Sunday before the first performance.

This may be a fun test for the participants just before they “take to the stage”. If not, take the test yourself to see how much you remember!

If setting up a separate space called TESTING LABORATORY, provide one person to proctor the test. Seat test takers at a table and provide freshly sharpened pencils. When they are done, give them the answer key. Allow lots of laughing and “cheating” in the T.L. The proctor is allowed to slip in a correct answer once in awhile.

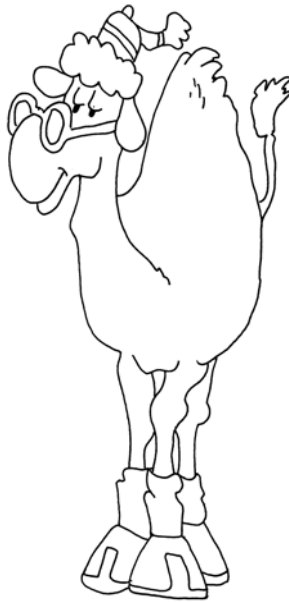
The *Answer Key* must be provided along with the test or placed in a convenient separate place. Choose the best use of this fun activity or eliminate it if it does not fit your needs.

# THE CHRISTMAS IQ TEST

1. ----(T OR F) AS LONG AS CHRISTMAS HAS BEEN CELEBRATED, IT HAS BEEN DECEMBER 25.
- 2.----JOSEPH WAS FROM: A. BETHLEHEM B. JERUSALEM C. NAZARETH  
D. EGYPT E. MINNESOTA F. NONE OF ABOVE
- 3.----HOW DID MARY AND JOSEPH TRAVEL TO BETHLEHEM?  
A. CAMEL B. DONKEY C. WALKED D. VOLKSWAGEN  
E. JOSEPH WALKED, MARY RODE DONKEY F. WHO KNOWS?
- 4.----(T OR F) MARY AND JOSEPH WERE MARRIED WHEN MARY BECAME PREGNANT.
- 5.----(T OR F) MARY AND JOSEPH WERE MARRIED WHEN JESUS WAS BORN.
- 6.----(T OR F) MARY WAS A VIRGIN WHEN SHE DELIVERED JESUS.
- 7.----WHAT DID THE INNKEEPER TELL MARY AND JOSEPH?  
A. THERE IS NO ROOM IN THE INN.  
B. I HAVE A STABLE YOU CAN USE.  
C. RETURN AFTER THE CHRISTMAS RUSH AND I SHOULD HAVE ROOM  
D. BOTH A AND B  
E. NONE OF THE ABOVE
- 8.----JESUS WAS DELIVERED IN A: A. STABLE B. MANGER C. CAVE  
D. BARN E. UNKNOWN
- 9.----A MANGER IS: A. STABLE FOR DOMESTIC ANIMALS B. WOODEN HAY  
STORAGE BIN C. FEEDING TROUGH D. BARN
- 10.----WHICH ANIMALS WERE PRESENT AT JESUS' BIRTH?  
A. COWS, SHEEP, GOATS B. COWS, DONKEY, SHEEP  
C. SHEEP AND GOATS ONLY D. VARIOUS BARNYARD ANIMALS  
E. LIONS, TIGER, ELEPHANTS F. NONE OF ABOVE

- 11.-----WHO SAYS "STAR IN THE EAST"? A. SHEPHERDS B. MARY AND JOSEPH  
C. THREE KINGS D. BOTH A AND C E. NONE OF THE ABOVE
- 12.-----HOW MANY ANGELS SPOKE TO THE SHEPHERDS? A. ONE B. THREE  
C. MULTITUDE D. NONE OF THE ABOVE
- 13.-----WHAT SIGN DID THE ANGELS TELL THE SHEPHERDS TO LOOK FOR?  
A. THIS WAY TO BABY JESUS B. STAR OVER BETHLEHEM  
C. BABY THAT DOESN'T CRY D. HOUSE WITH A CHRISTMAS TREE
- 14.-----WHAT DID THE ANGELS SING? A. JOY TO THE WORLD B. ALLELUIA  
C. UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN D. GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST  
E. GLORY TO THE NEWBORN KING F. MY SWEET LORD
- 15.-----WHAT IS A HEAVENLY HOST? A. ANGEL AT GATE OF HEAVEN  
B. ANGEL WHO INVITES PEOPLE TO HEAVEN C. ANGEL WHO SERVES  
DRINKS IN HEAVEN D. ANGEL CHOIR E. ANGEL ARMY F. NONE OF ABOVE
- 16.-----THERE WAS SNOW THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS A. ONLY IN BETHLEHEM  
B. ALL OVER ISRAEL C. NOWHERE IN ISRAEL D. SOMEWHERE IN ISRAEL  
E. MARY AND JOSEPH ONLY DREAMED OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS
- 17.-----THE BABY JESUS CRIED A. WHEN THE DOCTOR SLAPPED HIS BEHIND  
B. WHEN THE LITTLE DRUMMER BOY BANGED HIS DRUM C. JUST LIKE  
OTHER BABIES CRY D. HE NEVER CRIED
- 18.-----WHAT IS FRANKINCENSE? A. PRECIOUS METAL B. PRECIOUS FABRIC  
C. PRECIOUS PERFUME D. EASTERN MONSTER STORY E. NONE OF ABOVE
- 19.-----WHAT IS MYRRH? A. EASILY SHAPED METAL B. SPICE USED FOR BURYING  
PEOPLE C. A DRINK D. AFTER SHAVE LOTION E. NONE OF ABOVE
- 20.-----WHO WERE THE WISE MEN? A. MEN OF EDUCATED CLASS  
B. EASTERN KINGS C. ASTROLOGERS D. SMART ENOUGH TO FOLLOW  
STAR E. SAGES
- 21.----- (FILL IN THE BLANK) HOW MANY WISE MEN CAME TO SEE JESUS?

- 22.-----THE WISE MEN FOUND JESUS IN A: A. MANGER B. STABLE C. HOUSE  
D. HOLIDAY INN E. GOOD MOOD
- 23.-----THE WISE MEN STOPPED IN JERUSALEM: A. TO INFORM HEROD ABOUT  
JESUS B. TO FIND OUT WHERE JESUS WAS C. TO FIND OUT ABOUT THE  
STAR D. FOR GAS E. TO BUY PRESENTS FOR JESUS
- 24.----- WHERE DO WE FIND THE CHRISTMAS STORY? A. MATTHEW B. MARK  
C. LUKE D. JOHN E. ALL OF ABOVE F. ONLY A AND B G. ONLY A AND  
C H. ONLY A, B AND C I. ONLY X, Y AND Z J. AESOP'S FABLES
- 25.-----WHEN JOSEPH AND MARY FOUND OUT MARY WAS PREGNANT WITH  
JESUS, WHAT HAPPENED? A. THEY GOT MARRIED B. JOSEPH WANTED  
TO BREAK THE ENGAGEMENT C. MARY LEFT TOWN FOR THREE MONTHS  
D. AN ANGEL TOLD THEM TO GO TO BETHLEHEM E. BOTH A AND D  
F. BOTH B AND C
- 26.-----WHO TOLD MARY AND JOSEPH TO GO TO BETHLEHEM? A. THE ANGEL  
B. MARY'S MOTHER C. HEROD D. CAESAR AUGUSTUS  
E. ALEXANDER THE GREAT F. NO ONE TOLD THEM
- 27.-----JOSEPH TOOK BABY JESUS TO EGYPT: A. TO SHOW HIM THE PYRAMIDS  
B. TO TEACH HIM THE WISDOM OF THE PHARAOHS C. TO PUT HIM IN A  
BASKET BY THE RIVER D. BECAUSE HE DREAMED ABOUT IT



# CHRISTMAS IQ TEST ANSWER KEY! YOU'RE GOING TO NEED IT!

1. FALSE. Not until the fourth century did it settle on December 25. Other dates were accepted before then.
2. A. See Luke 2:3, 4
3. F. The Bible doesn't say.
4. FALSE. See Matthew 1:18
5. FALSE. See Luke 2:5
  
6. TRUE. See Matthew 1:25
7. E. No word about the innkeeper. See Luke 2:7
8. E. No word about it. See Luke 2:7
9. C.
10. F. The Bible doesn't specify.
  
11. E. The wise men did (They were not Kings). See Matthew 2:2
12. A. See Luke 2:9
13. F. See Luke 2:12
14. D. See Luke 2:14
15. E. Definition is an "army". See Living Bible also.
  
16. D. Mt. Hermon is snow covered.
17. C. We have no reason to believe He wouldn't.
18. C. By definition
19. B. See John 19:39 or a dictionary.
20. C. See most any commentary. They were astrologers or star gazers.
  
21. No one knows. See Matthew 2:1
22. C. See Matthew 2:11
23. B. See Matthew 2:1, 2
24. G. Mark begins with John the Baptist, John with "The Word".
25. F. See Matthew 1:19, Luke 1:39, 56
  
26. D. See Luke 2:1, 4
27. D. See Matthew 2:13