

“The Christmas Story with Footnotes”

by Rev. Mark Willig



NARRATOR A:

“In those days a decree went out.” (Luke 2:1)

A decree is a statement from a ruler who has the power to enforce it regardless of anybody else’s opinion. The decree in Luke was that people have to go back to their ancestral hometown to be counted (and taxed). If they did that now our family would have to fly to Europe and find our way to Lippe-Detmold from where Tanta Paula came to visit our family when I was in high school. It would be ridiculously expensive, and then we would have to be taxed as well.

Caesar did not know it, but this decree had been planned by God. “When the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son.” (Gal 4:4) It had been a long time waiting, but here it was, and Joseph had to take Mary up to Bethlehem “because he was of the house and lineage of David.”

The time had been planned as well. Daniel 9 talks about seventy sets of seven years (490), measured from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the coming of the Prince. That’s why the people of Israel were expecting the Christ, and everybody went out to hear John the Baptist. Actually, God’s planning is much longer as God said through Micah, “His going forth is from ancient times, from days of eternity.” (Micah 5:2)

“And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she brought forth her first-born son and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:6-7) This is important and the same reason why the angels went to the shepherds. Bethlehem sheep were “Temple Sheep.” They were destined for sacrifice or Passover. They fetched a much higher price; and were not to be kept in man-made structures. “The shepherds were out in the field watching over their flock.”

NARRATOR B:

Out in the countryside around Bethlehem there was Rama, where the people of Judah were gathered together, chained together and lead into captivity. It was at Rama that the rabbis expected the first announcement of the Christ because Rama was also where they also came back from captivity. (Jeremiah 31:13-14) records Rachel weeping for her children and responds saying, “Restrain your eyes from tears and weeping. They will return from the land of the enemy.”

There is also Eder, whose name means flock. At Eder there was the Migdol Eder. Genesis records that Jacob after laying Rachel to rest at the cave of Machpelah went on from there and camped by the Migdol Eder. The Migdol Eder means "Tower of the Flock." (Migdol comes from Gadol, meaning big, with an M at the beginning, meaning object or thing, so "tower.") There shepherds had built a tower where they could stay at night and watch their sheep, not have to bring them in; "temple sheep", remember, better price. The rabbinic quote is that it is at the Migdol Eder that the first announcement of the Christ will come (proclaiming the coming back of Rachel's children). So, when it says out in the field there were shepherds watching over their flocks by night, these are shepherds raising temple sheep. An angel appeared to them. The choirs of angels. And when it was done, they said, "Let us go to Bethlehem to see this thing which has been made known to us." (Luke 2:15) So as shepherds of temple sheep, they were looking for a baby with indicators of some sort of royalty about him, to be found not in a man-made structure or building. And they find him, likely in one of the caves used for stables in the sandstone bluffs by Bethlehem. "What does this mean?"

NARRATOR A

In the last book of the Harry Potter series, one character explains to the other "You've kept him alive so that he can die at the proper moment. You've been raising him like a pig for slaughter!" (Snape to Dumbledore) It is a shocking plot twist, but here it is. The plan all along. (Isaiah 53) "All we like sheep have gone astray, . . . but you have laid on Him . . . Like a sheep before its shearers is silent, He opened not His mouth." Soon will come the wisemen to bring the baby gifts: Gold, Frankincense and burial spice, Myrrh. (I learned in doing this research what every woman knows, that you do not bring something black to a baby shower. What then of bringing burial spice for the new baby?) So, the temple-sheep shepherds return praising God, and you can understand Joseph looking around and saying, "And what the heck was that?!" The same as when the wisemen leave behind their gift of Myrrh, and the women around tilt the head to the side and raise the eyebrow, "Whhaaat?!" (Actually gasps of horror)

Meanwhile, backing up a few months. A young lady has an angel appear to her. (Many paintings and many sculptures have been made. In at least one of them she is quite heavy-set, and quite German. Ah, the Germans have their purity laws. Is it about medicines? No. Is it about organic foods? No. Is it about young people and their behavior? Again no. More importantly it is about . . . beer.) Anyway, the young lady is troubled, and asks, and questions, but she does not do like Zachariah. (Who are you and why should I believe you?) Instead, she asks, "How? I am a virgin." (Luke 1:34) And when told, she believes. "Name Him Jesus (Salvation) because He will save His people from their sins." (Luke 1:31)

Would you believe it if she came telling that story? Joseph did not. So, he begins to make plans how to break the engagement. One problem; they weren't just engaged. They were betrothed, by virtue of the vows they made. They were vows of faithfulness. So, if she got pregnant the normal way, that's adultery, and she could be stoned. And who would believe her. But Joseph goes to bed at night, and the same angel that appeared to her comes to him in a dream. "This is what Isaiah said, 'the virgin will conceive. . . She will call his name Emmanuel.'" (Matthew 1:23)

NARRATOR B:

There's a lot in a name. The rabbis had been trying to figure out this name for generations; for centuries: Root, Branch, Baruch. Finally, they said the name will be kept secret until the end times.

What's His name? She will call his name Emmanuel, but what is the Name? The angel says, "Name Him Jesus (Yeshua, Salvation) He will save His people." (Matthew 1:21)

"Take her home as your wife." So, Joseph wakes up ready to do. But Mary is headed off to Judea, visiting her cousin. As she comes to the door Elizabeth is inside and the baby in her womb is jumping around (doing cartwheels?). This is not like my brother who used to turn himself over to get his foot on one of my mom's ribs and start pushing. So, my dad had to come in and push back against the little stinker. Not so little anymore, so I ought to be nice to him after he reads this.

So, the door opens and Elizabeth prophesies, "Blessed are you . . ." (Luke 1:42) So, the first evangelism in the New Testament is one unborn baby to another unborn baby; which explains a lot about how Christians think about unborn babies. Mary stays until John is born (three months?). They come around for the naming day, and Zachariah still can't speak. What's his name, Zachariah? So, they make signs to him. (A lot of people say this is proof that Zachariah was struck blind, but that makes no sense. They are signing, not using braille. It's also not the SNL skit, "And now today's story interpreted for the deaf." And Garrett Morris comes out and shouts "AND NOW TODAY'S TOP STORY . . ." "Naaaa, That was Simeon. You said Simeon right?" Shakes head. "What Levi, that's a good Jewish name?" Shakes head. "What about your cousin Zebulun over at, where is that?" Shakes head. "I think he wants something to write with, so here's a tablet from bar-mitzvah school." HE writes, "His name is John." (Luke 1:63) "What?! There is nobody in your family with that name. No, no Naphtali. Naphtali would be good. Or Rubin." Circles John. "Okaaaay then." An then he could talk, and he said, "His name is John."

NARRATOR A:

Joseph says to Mary, "Okay Mary, you've got this story you've been telling everybody about an angel, and you're a virgin but gonna have a baby." "Yes" "Then just one question. I had a dream and an angel told me His name. So just one question. What's his name?" "Jesus." And Joseph says, "That's the hidden name." Then time went on and they were headed to Bethlehem.

Balam: Dominic you shut up. You're a donkey.

Donkey: Neigh, Neigh. I mean, No. I never talked before. Maybe you should listen.

Balam: What?!

Donkey: There was an angel ahead ready to kill you if I went straight ahead.

Balam: Okay what?

Angel: You go ahead, but you say only the words that God gives you.

Sometime later, Balam says, "I see him but not near. I behold him but not now. A star shall rise out of Jacob. A scepter out of Israel. He will crush the heads of Edom." (Numbers 24:17) (Herod was an Idumean, half Edomite, which is why he would be worried about a king born in Israel.)

Now for some historical fiction:

Narrator: Early the year before Jesus' birth in a land far, far away, three figures meet in the morning (Balthazar, Caspar, Melchior).

Balthazar: Have you heard about the star?

Caspar and Melchior: No, what?

Balthazar: There's a new one. It just appeared.

Caspar and Melchior: (silence) Apparently, it's an omen. Some great something is happening. You checked it out?

Balthazar: Actually, I ran into an old friend, Zeke. He knows a lot of the old books.

Balthazar: There's something in the books of the Hebrews, what they call Numbers. Chapter 24 "I see him, but not near. I behold him but not now. A star shall rise from Jacob. A scepter from Israel. He will crush the heads of . . . Edom will be dispossessed."

Caspar and Melchior: Edom?

Balthazar: Yes, that's important because you know that king out west there.

Caspar and Melchior: Herod?

Balthazar: Yeah, that nasty so and so. He will be so wound up there will be h--- to pay. He is one nasty piece of work. There is a saying out there "better to be his dog than his son." He had a couple of them killed because they looked at him funny at breakfast. Sure hate to be around there right now.

Caspar and Melchior: So, what do you want to do?

Balthazar: Well, if this is what it might be, we do need to go pay our respects, bring gifts. I think I can get funding.

Narrator: A couple of days later they meet again.

Balthazar: You guys ready to go.

Caspar: Yeah, got stuff together. Camels for transport.

Melchior: Got some soldiers recruited. That area is just not safe.

Narrator: Weeks later along the road . . .

Caspar: Boy that Damascus! What a place!

Melchior: Wild. Sellers of everything.

Balthazar: There's a town up ahead. Wide place in the road but it's a town.

Caspar: With a big store. BelKahn's Imports. They say they've got all kinds of things. Good place to stop.

(Outside BelKahn's)

Balthazar: Let's get some food. (To the proprietor) What have you got here? I'll take one of those spiced pork sandwiches.

Proprietor: What do you mean? You come in here and want me to serve unclean meat?

Balthazar: Sorry, sorry.

Caspar: What are you doing going around riling everybody up? You're going to get us in trouble.

Balthazar: What, I just wanted a sausage on a bun.

Caspar: You didn't have to say pork. You know how they are.

Balthazar: Meanwhile I'm going shopping. (Comes back a few minutes later) Found the thing. It's expensive but, whatever. And our travel is being paid for. This little treasure chest you open up and there are twelve talents of gold. See, that will feed them for a long time. You know how much food that will buy? Well, they need it. They are dirt poor. Went to have the child dedicated and all they could do is a couple of scrawny birds.

Caspar: How do you know that?

Balthazar: Word gets around. Living in a cave behind some inn. It's miserable.

(Caspar goes in. Comes back a few minutes later.)

Caspar: There's an old guy in there. Kind of weird, but he knows a lot of stuff and you listen to him. He showed me a thing from their scroll from Isaiah. It might have something to do with us.

Balthazar: What did it say? Do you remember?

Caspar: Yes, I do. It was interesting. It said, "Kings will come to your light, nations to your dawning. Camels will cover your land." And here we are with camels. And then ". . . bringing gold and incense." (Isaiah 60)

Balthazar: So, you got incense?

Caspar: Not just incense. Frankincense. Really good stuff. Smell this.

Balthazar: Incense is for a God. What are you doing?

Caspar: Or to burn, together with your prayers. Actually, not a bad idea. They are going to need some help from above. You should smell where they are. Galal all over. Animals. Whew!

Melchior: Sounds like they really could use a good turn of fortune.

Caspar: Okay then. We got two out of the three. Your turn Melchior.

Melchior: Okay (heads in. Comes back a few minutes later)

Balthazar and Caspar: What did you get? Can we see?

Melchior: No, smell it.

Caspar: Wow! That's sweet. Interesting odor. (cough) What is it.

Melchior: Myrrh.

Balthazar: Whaaat?!

Caspar: Are you out of your mind?

Melchior: What?

Caspar: Don't you have a wife or a daughter or any female in your house? Ask them.

Melchior: What?

Caspar: (to a woman standing nearby) Come on over here please. Tell me, what if I brought this to a baby shower?

Woman: Yaaah! Get my brothers! Kill him!

Melchior: What?

Woman: That's like . . . you bring a new mother a beautiful widow's veil. What you saying, here is something beautiful to wear for your baby's funeral. You crazy man. You go away. Go back home now. You just crazy.

Melchior: You remember that old man?

Caspar: Yeah, what was his name?

Balthazar: Marduc?

Caspar: Mordac.

Melchior: Mordechai. He told me this. He said, "Very precious. Good for perfume. Also for pain. Baby get sick crying, little tiny, tiny pinch on the tongue help him sleep. But also, burial."

Caspar: You really are stupid. The more you learn, the worse you get.

Melchior: Well it's what I got. I may have some explaining to do.

Balthazar: You bet you will. Are you done with that sausage?

Caspar: Yup.

Balthazar: Let's mount up.

Narrator: They arrive at the Jerusalem palace.

Herod: Welcome, welcome.

Caspar: Thank you, thank you. We came to pay respects. Can you tell us. . .

Herod: What?

Caspar: . . . about the new baby?

Herod: Yes, yes. A great one born in my kingdom.

Caspar: Yes? Where?

Herod: Let me ask my scholars. (Goes away. Comes back a couple of minutes later) Well, they said Bethlehem. David's town. "Bethlehem. Out of you will come one to be ruler. His beginning is from eternity." (Micah 5:2)

Caspar: Thank you.

Herod: No, no, not so fast. You do this for me. You go and find out. You brought gifts. I must give a gift too. Mine will be special. It will help him walk with gods.
(Herod leaves)

Balthazar: Well, that was creepy.

Caspar: Didn't I tell you. This guy is a piece of work. Don't trust him.

Melchior: Well, I caught that the minute he opened his mouth. He is one shifty, eyed, sleezy, bad tempered SOB. Well, we need to go looking.

Narrator: And as they went toward Bethlehem the star reappeared before them. Turning the last turn to go into the city, there it was above one particular house. Meanwhile . . .

Balthazar: (turning around pointing behind them) Hey wait a minute. What was that back there near that tower.

Caspar: Oh them, just shepherds. Rowdy bunch.

Melchior: And what were they going on about?

Caspar: One of them was saying, "The temple lamb. The temple prophecies are happening."

Melchior: Is that why he was staring at our camels?

Caspar: It just might be. They are camels. We are foreigners and we have gifts.

Balthazar: Let's go.

Caspar and Melchior: Okay.

Narrator B:

¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. ¹³ Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." ¹⁴ And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." (Matthew 2)

Then we look to Chinese astronomers. They kept a record of eclipses. In 4 B.C. there was an eclipse before the Passover, and Herod died between them (according to Jewish records). It was only partial, 23%, but it does place some events.

Off in Egypt. Joseph went to bed and Gabriel appeared again in a dream, "Those who sought the child's death are gone. Take him and his mother and return." As they got near Jerusalem, they heard the news about Herod (Herod the son, reigning in place of his father). It was time to go home. So, they turned north and went to Nazareth. Now, we move ahead in time and listen in on a conversation at the tower.

Migdol Eder

Billy (Billy by default. All boys in stories are called Billy): Why are we here grampa?

Grandpa: Well Billy, I wanted you to come to the tower.

Billy: Grampa, there are lots of towers.

Grandpa: But Billy, this is the tower.

Billy: What do you mean?

Grandpa: Billy, you see those lights over there. That big bunch. You know what that is?

Billy: Would that be Bethlehem?

Grandpa: Yes Billy, that's Bethlehem. And that little group over there? That's Migdol. That's what this is named for, Migdol. Migdol means tower. But this is nearest to Eder.

Billy: Eder Grampa?

Grandpa: Yes Billy. Eder means sheep. But how many sheep?

Billy: It doesn't say.

Grandpa: That's right. It could be one sheep or a hundred. That's why they say "flock." That's the name of this tower. So, Migdol Eder would be Tower . . . of the . . . flock. And this is very, very old.

Billy: How old Grampa?

Grandpa: Well, it goes all the way back to Genesis.

Billy: With Abraham?

Grandpa: Yes. Abraham . . . and Isaac . . .

Billy: And Jacob. Jacob was?

Grandpa: Abraham's grandson.

Billy: Like you and me.

Grandpa: Yes Billy. And when he got old and his wife Rachel got old and she died and they buried her, Jacob came here. Right here to camp by the Migdol Eder.

Billy: It's that old?

Grandpa: Maybe two-thousand years.

Billy: And all that time?

Grandpa: It's been shepherds who come here.

Billy: Grampa?

Grandpa: Yes Billy?

Billy: Weren't you a shepherd.

Grandpa: When I was young, and I was here with the big shepherds. And we went up the tower.

Billy: How's it work?

Grandpa: Well, it's very clever. You see the platform in the middle.

Billy: Yes, Grampa.

Grandpa: And the metal?

Billy: Yes.

Grandpa: Well, that's where you build the fire. You put the wood up in the holder, and you build the fire. And then the light from the fire, it lights up the whole field.

Billy: OOH

Grandpa: And if you sit by the wall or stand and look out . . .

Billy: You can see everything. Like that rabbit over there?

Grandpa: Everything. So, it's good for the shepherds.

Billy: Why is that?

Grandpa: Because, well if we bring our sheep in.

Billy: Then . . . ?

Grandpa: They're not temple sheep anymore.

Billy: Why not? It's just to protect them.

Grandpa: That's the rules for temple sheep. They can't be kept in something you built.

Billy: Like sheep out in the wild?

Grandpa: There is a lot of that in the law. The natural world. But you know what happens when you sell your sheep?

Billy: Temple sheep are more.

Grandpa: Yes, a lot more. Could be six times more.

Billy: And were you here?

Grandpa: When?

Billy: That night?

Grandpa: What night?

Billy: The night of the . . . uhm . . .

Grandpa: The night of the sheep.

Billy: The sheep?

Grandpa: And you see, before when you said sheep, you were talking about a hundred sheep. A flock.

Billy: Yes.

Grandpa: Now it's one sheep. (pause) And Billy, you see the stars?

Billy: Yes Grampa.

Grandpa: Imagine all the stars are angels. And imagine all of them coming down.

Billy: Wow!

Grandpa: That's right. And we shepherds, were just shepherds.

Billy: So that had to be . . . scary?

Grandpa: Yes, it was. Do you want to go up the tower?

Billy: Can we?

Grandpa: Yes, we can. Come on. Here's the stairs.

Billy: Grampa, over there, I can see houses in Eder.

Grandpa: Yes Billy. This is a very good tower.

Billy: Do you think they can see the fire?

Grandpa: Yes, they can. It's like a beacon.

Billy: A beacon?

Grandpa: It lights up all around. You can see it from far, far away. Maybe even Jerusalem.

Billy: And this was for?

Grandpa: Yes Billy, the night of the sheep.

Billy: The sheep Grampa?

Grandpa: Yes Billy. The night of the sheep. And people still talk about it. And Billy you remember I went up to Jerusalem last month?

Billy: Yes Grampa?

Grandpa: There was one of the shops and I'm sure I heard someone there say, "The night of the sheep."

Billy: Wow! That's famous all the way . . .

Grandpa: To Jerusalem. But I was young then.

Billy: And?

Grandpa: And after the angels, the big shepherds said, "Let's go to Bethlehem." And they told me, "You stay here kiddo."

Billy: Not Grampa?

Grandpa: No. I was young. They gave me a metal bar and said, "If anything happens, bang on the grate."

Billy: Did anything happen.

Grandpa: Well, I wasn't as little as you Billy, but it was still scary to be all alone, and I was looking real hard. There were no wolves, and not many sheep to see. I took the bar and tapped on the grate. I did hit the grate. Ashes and burning pieces of wood fell. Good thing this is all stone. So, I waited.

Billy: And?

Grandpa: One of the big shepherds came back after a while, and said, "Hey Will, come here."

Billy: And?

Grandpa: He said they had to look for a baby dressed like a king. Legs wrapped so they would be straight, and he would be tall. Lying in a feed trough.

Billy: Weird.

Grandpa: Exactly. And the big shepherd said, "He's like a temple sheep. And his mother said, 'The signs. That's one of the signs. The signs keep happening.'"

Billy: And that was?

Grandpa: The first night of Hannukah. And the sacrifice was the one sheep. I see why his mother said, "The signs . . ." Why he could be Shepherd and Sheep.

Billy: And you remember this?

Grandpa: Yes, after all these years. . . . You remember last month was Hannukah?

Billy: Yes.

Grandpa: I saw him again! The first night of Hannukah. There he was walking in the temple area. In Solomon's Portico and talking about sheep.

Billy: Wow Grampa. Do you think?

Grandpa: I tell you the truth. I think he might be . . .

Billy: And you were there?

Grandpa: At the beginning. Yes, Billy and you remember this when you have grandchildren, bring them here. And when you have children and grandchildren bring them here. Tell them.

Billy: What then Grampa.

Grandpa: Well, Billy, I got curious. I asked the big shepherd if it was okay, and he said, "Go on kid. I'll watch the sheep." Then I went into town. There was a bright star right over the cave, so I walked there. The big shepherds were getting ready to leave and saying goodbye.

Billy: And?

Grandpa: As they left, she was singing. A lullaby.

Billy: Mommy sings them sometimes.

Grandpa: She was rocking slowly back and forth and singing.

Billy: Really?

Grandpa: But it was odd. She was singing "Sleep, sleep, my temple sheep. Grow strong and tall to save us all. Sleep, sleep my temple sheep." I listened for a while. "Sleep, sleep my temple sheep. Grow strong and tall to save us all. Sleep, sleep my temple sheep. Your hands, your hands, your sweet little hands. Engrave my name in your sweet little hands. Sleep, sleep my temple sheep. Your feet, your feet, your sweet little feet. Standing in the presence of God on your sweet little feet. Sleep, sleep my temple sheep. Call me to live for you." So, she sang for a while. Then she held her baby and cried. Then she started rocking and singing again. That's when I left, tiptoed away from the house, looked up and saw the beacon here and followed the path. I still come here every so often at night, sit with the shepherds and watch sheep. Come on Billy.

Billy: Yes Grampa.

Grandpa: Let's go. Tell me if you want to meet some of the other shepherds who can tell you their part of the story.

Billy: Okay Grampa.
(They leave)

Back to the Magi

Narrator: As we resume our story, the Magi are finally getting near Bethlehem.

Balthazar: What was that back there?

Caspar: That was the tower. The tower of the sheep.

Balthazar: Sheep?

Caspar: Yeah, we told you about them. Those are the shepherds. You know you didn't have to play checkers with them.

Balthazar: I was being friendly.

Caspar: Was it friendly when they started taking your money.

Balthazar: I didn't know the rule.

Caspar: You mean the shearing the sheep rule.

Balthazar: Yeah. That you have to pay to cross the middle of the board.

Melchior: How many lines did they have on that board.

Caspar: Eight. Every time he moved they charged him. You really didn't have to.

Balthazar: I was being friendly.

Caspar: This is not "When in Rome" because we are not in Rome. And this is not "when among the Hebrews" because that is not how Hebrews do. Just that scruffy bunch of shepherds.

Balthazar: Well, you weren't helping.

Caspar: You wouldn't listen to me.

Balthazar: After you took their money.

Caspar: I didn't take their money.

Melchior: How much do you have left.

Balthazar: Let me look. That's six talents of gold.

Caspar: They took half your money, and it was just "they're being friendly?" Good grief!

Melchior: Well, it still is quite a bit compared to what that family has. That will buy a lot of food. Let's go.

Balthazar and Caspar: Okay.

Shepherd: Those three are babes in the woods. Kinda felt guilty doing that to them.

Shepherd 2: They needed to learn.

Narrator: The Magi arrive at the house and knock on the door. Joseph opens door. They go in. Billy's grandpa as a young man follows them in but stands right by the door.

Melchior: Are you guys doing okay.

Joseph: Yes we are. We're okay.

Melchior: We brought gifts.

Balthazar: I bring you gold. Sorry, it would be more, but we ran into some shepherds.

Joseph: Those guys, yeah. We know about them.

Caspar: I brought incense. I figure you can use it. Burn it with your prayers. You guys have had a rough time.

Joseph: Thank you. We're not done either. I had a dream. We're supposed to go into Egypt.

Melchior: I brought this.

Mary: What is it.

Melchior: Myrrh.

Mary: What?! You brought Myrrh?

Melchior: I have a friend who studies your ancient books, and he showed me.

Mary: What?

Melchior: Zeke, he said there's a prophecy. Then he showed me a book called Song, and he said there, and there and there and there, and pointed to Myrrh. He said it's about the love of God coming into the world.

Mary: Yes.

Young Grandpa: I was here when the shepherds came, and I heard you singing.

Joseph: You were here when the shepherds came?

Young Grandpa: They talked about temple sheep. Then I heard your wife singing, "Sleep, sleep my temple sheep."

Joseph: Do you always lurk outside of houses?

Young Grandpa: No, I was just following the shepherds.

Mary: Yes. Temple sheep.

Joseph: You remember that man Simeon? "A sword will pierce your own soul." There's going to be some hard times. Yes, but we are in the hands of the Lord. Adonai.

(Mary nods.)

Joseph: Well we need to pack.

Melchior: For?

Joseph: We have to head to Egypt.

Melchior: We have to go home, but now I've had a dream.

Caspar: And?

Melchior: Don't go back to Herod. As if I wanted to see that creep again.

Caspar: So?

Melchior: We take the east road, and then as we go north, we go east of the Jordan and get back home.

Joseph: It's a journey.

Balthazar: Hey, can I give you my donkey?

Joseph: You have a donkey?

Balthazar: I got him from a Roman out east. His name is Dominic. Kind of a weird donkey. I swear he thinks he's a dog. Back when our Billy dug his well in the sandbox and got stuck in it, Dominic here came pounding on the back door until he got our attention and we came and pulled Billy out. Grandma said, "Why Dominic, you good donkey dog." Anyway, he's good. You load him up and he will follow you. You don't even have to tie him with a rope. He'll just follow. Very loyal.

Dominic: Hee Haw. Huf, huf, huf.

Balthazar: That's his, so called, bark. You'll enjoy him. He really is confused. But loyal, very loyal.

Joseph: Thank you.

(Balthazar, Caspar and Melchior leave, followed by Grandpa)

NARRATOR A:

After they're gone, Joseph and Mary head off. Young Grandpa, who has been lingering outside heads off. They go into Egypt, crossing the border come to a town where Joseph has relatives. Spending several weeks. There is a solar eclipse. Then there is a dream, and they head back. When they are near Jerusalem, they heard the news about Herod. Instead of Herod there is . . . Herod. So, they turn and head north back to Nazareth.

The wisemen get almost all the way home. Just a few miles from home, Belshazzar and Caspar decide to ditch Melchior. They take a quick turn off on a side road and let the camels gallop. Melchior does a couple of miles on his own in the dark. Everybody arrives back home.



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