

Beaver Creek School

Joseph Waldner  
"SETH"

## THE SILVER STAR OF CHRISTMAS

For three men and five women

### CHARACTERS

(In the order of their first appearance)

SHELAH.....	Daughter of a Bethlehem shepherd
DEBORAH.....	Her friend, handmaiden to Herod's wife
RUTH	} .....Other royal handmaidens
TIRZAH	
MIRIAM	
SETH.....	A page
NATHAN.....	A young scribe
JACOB.....	The father of Shelah

TIME—The period of Christ's birth.

PLACE—Ancient Judea.

TIME OF PLAYING—Twenty-five minutes.

## THE SILVER STAR OF CHRISTMAS

### SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1. A room in King Herod's palace in Jerusalem. It is morning a few days before the first Christmas. During the scene, the curtain is dropped for a minute to indicate the lapse of two weeks, and the time changes to evening.

SCENE 2. A room in the cottage of the shepherd Jacob in Bethlehem. It is evening of the following day.

### COSTUMES AND CHARACTERISTICS

The costumes are the long, loose, gracefully flowing robes worn by the ancient Hebrews, consisting chiefly of the tunic, or inner garment, and the mantle, or outer garment. The tunics had wide, open sleeves and were caught in at the waist with woven belts or bright-colored cords. Men's tunics hung a little below the knees, while women's reached the floor. The mantle was a piece of cloth nearly square, which was wrapped around the body or tied over the shoulders. For this play, costumes may be made of cheesecloth and designed in various bright colors to make an attractive stage picture. As white was widely worn among persons of wealth and high station, the five royal handmaidens should wear white tunics, each with a mantle in a becoming color, as expressive as possible of the personality of the wearer. On their heads they may wear veils fastened to bead-trimmed head bands, or a scarf headdress. Both men and women wear sandals, preferably in brown or some other dark color. The men wear colored or striped tunics and their mantles should be in deeper and more brilliant hues than those of the women.

The five handmaidens are pretty girls between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one, Shelah being the sweetest and brightest-looking. Tirzah has a spoiled and arrogant expression, in keeping with her character. Shelah, the only character for whom a change of costume is absolutely necessary, should wear a rich-looking costume for the palace scene,

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changing to a much simpler one and in more subdued colors for the last scene, in the shepherd's cottage. Seth, a lively boy in his early teens, wears a knee-length tunic and sandals with thongs laced up his legs. Nathan, who is in his early twenties, is good-looking and has an air of distinction. He wears a pouch hanging from his belt and a turban to match the rich coloring of his mantle. Jacob, a man of about fifty with gray hair and beard, wears a shepherd's costume in brown, maroon, or some other neutral color, the tunic reaching to his calf. He also wears a turban to match his mantle.

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PROPERTIES

GENERAL

Divan, with pillows  
Low, ornate table  
Four low stools or cushions  
Window draperies  
Rugs  
Jewel box, with necklaces and bracelets  
Table scarf  
Candelabra and vases  
Bowl of fruit  
Small bells to imitate camel bells, ringing off stage  
Plain, rude table  
Several small benches  
White tablecloth  
Unlighted candle

PERSONAL

For SHELAH—Lighted candle.  
For DEBORAH—Sewing materials; embroidery.  
For RUTH—Pair of bracelets; half-finished woven belt of colored cords.  
For TIRZAH—Bouquet of flowers.

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For NATHAN—Scroll, made of heavy paper fastened to two parallel sticks and rolled; pouch containing coin.  
For JACOB—Knotted rope.

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STAGE DIRECTIONS

*Up stage* means away from footlights; *down stage*, near footlights. In the use of *right* and *left*, the actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

well with your beauty, Tirzah. Such a picture should lift the spirits of even an angry queen.

TIRZAH (*pleased in spite of herself*). A pretty compliment, Shelah. Would that certain others were of like opinion. (*Glances significantly toward the window, then starts toward left door.*) I go to arrange these flowers. If we are summoned for any reason, let me know.

MIRIAM. We will, Tirzah. (*TIRZAH goes off at left. MIRIAM rises and stretches.*) I think I should like a bit of fresh air myself. Let's go out for a few minutes while we have the opportunity.

(RUTH and DEBORAH rise.)

DEBORAH. Yes, let's go out to the garden. The boy will let us know if we are needed. (*DEBORAH, RUTH, and MIRIAM start off at right. There is a sound of a man's voice off left. SHELAH looks in that direction, lags behind the others, but still walks toward the right door. The other girls go off at right. DEBORAH calls from off right.*) Coming, Shelah?

SHELAH (*calls back*). I will meet you in the garden presently, Deborah. Don't wait for me.

NATHAN *enters at left. He is reading silently to himself from a scroll. SHELAH steps back to escape his notice, watches him cross the stage, and then steps forward suddenly to address him.*

SHELAH. Forgive me, sir. But I— (*Hesitates.*)

NATHAN (*startled*). So I am not alone!

SHELAH (*alarmed at her own boldness*). Oh, sir, I'm sorry to intrude. I—

NATHAN (*interrupts, smiling*). Is that what you were doing? I hardly recognized the offence in such charming company. You see, I wasn't expecting anyone like you in Herod's palace. Do you mind telling me your name?

SHELAH. It is Shelah, sir. I am handmaiden to the Queen.

NATHAN. And mine is Nathan. Rather more pleasing than "sir," don't you think?

SHELAH (*shyly*). Yes, sir.

(*Both laugh.*)

NATHAN. You were about to ask me something as I came in. Now that the introductions are over, shall I go back and come in again? This time I promise to answer you properly.

SHELAH (*laughs*). I only wanted to ask if you are a scribe.

NATHAN. I am, and one very much out of favor with King Herod. I just came from reading him this Scripture. (*He indicates the scroll.*)

SHELAH. Is it about the Messiah?

NATHAN (*suddenly serious*). Yes. And do you know about the Messiah?

(*They seat themselves on the divan.*)

SHELAH. All my life I have heard of him. He is to be a great and good king, they say. Maybe some day he will live in this very palace. Would it be too much to ask, Nathan, for you to read those words to me?

NATHAN. I shall be glad to. (*Reads.*) "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Those are the words of the prophet Isaiah.

SHELAH (*repeats*). "And his name shall be called Wonderful." How the people would reverence a king like that! How they would look up to him and love him!

NATHAN. Which is something they can't do for our present monarch. (*Looks around cautiously before continu-*

RUTH. It has something to do with the prophecies of the ancient Scriptures, I think. Something about a king.

*Their conversation is interrupted by the entrance of DEBORAH and SHELAH at left, talking as they enter.*

DEBORAH. Well, here we are, and none the worse for having braved the lioness in her den. (*Scats herself on stool up left center.*)

SHELAH (*sitting on stool up left near DEBORAH*). I think you must have been jesting. She really wasn't so frightful.

(*RUTH and MIRIAM return to their places on divan.*)

RUTH. You come back quickly. Tell us about it.

DEBORAH. Her esteemed Majesty was in an extraordinary humor this morning.

MIRIAM. She must have enjoyed the excellently prepared food which I served her for breakfast.

RUTH (*giving her a sidelong glance*). What do you usually serve her?

DEBORAH (*ignoring the interruption*). We performed the ceremonial bow at her door. There was perfect silence.

SHELAH. She appeared not even to see us.

DEBORAH. She was fondling a pet bird perched on her finger. Presently she said, still looking at the bird, "Come here, child. What is your name?"

SHELAH. So I went over to her and told her.

DEBORAH. She had Shelah walk across the room to fetch her a comb, and watched her every step of the way.

SHELAH. When I returned to her side, she took the comb, said, "You will take Rachel's place while she is gone," and dismissed me with a wave of her hand. I know not whether I pleased her or not.

MIRIAM. She approved, or you would have known otherwise.

RUTH. She is rarely in so mild a humor.

SHELAH. What a pity! She is a great lady, and her home

is a palace. She has everything to make her happy. (*Sighs.*) And a king for a husband!

DEBORAH. Even kings have their faults, Shelah. And this king has more than his share.

MIRIAM. Not the least of which is a terrible temper. Haven't you heard what a reputation Herod has for that? He is sometimes very cruel.

SHELAH. Some day there will be another king over Israel. I have heard of him ever since I was a child. When he, the Messiah, comes, he will not be despotic or cruel. He will be great and noble and kind. Oh, if he would only come in our time!

DEBORAH. King? Messiah? What do you know of this?

RUTH. Yes, tell us. I have heard there was to be one.

SHELAH. I know only what I have heard my father say. It is a favorite topic among the shepherds. Often as a little girl, I have crept out and sat in the circle of their campfire and listened as they talked. There under the stars God seemed so near that I just knew those Scriptures must be true.

MIRIAM. What do the Scriptures say? Do you know them?

SHELAH. No. I wish that I did. Being a girl, I could not go to school. Sometime I hope to find out the exact words. I do know that there is to come a Saviour who will redeem our people from their sins. His kingdom will be one of truth and righteousness. The day of his birth will be a happy one for Israel.

RUTH. Perhaps that is what King Herod is worried about lately. He has been calling in scribes to confer with him. Scribes, you know, are versed in the Scriptures.

*TIRZAH enters at right carrying a bouquet of flowers.*

TIRZAH (*to the flowers*). It is too bad that you must leave the sunlit luxury of your garden home to grace the Queen's chamber. Most likely she will not even notice you, fair flowers.

SHELAH (*admiringly*). What lovely blossoms! They go

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DEBORAH. Never mind us, Shelah. It is only that you blush so beautifully.

*(Camel bells are heard off right.)*

RUTH. What is that? *(She hurries to the window.)* Camels! Three of them! And upon them ride three men in costly garments. Who are they?

*(All the others rise and go to the window to look off up center.)*

MIRIAM *(excitedly)*. Even the trappings of the camels are of gold and precious stones. See how they sparkle in the starlight!

TIRZAH. Where are they from? They look almost like kings.

SHELAH *(playfully)*. Maybe they are some of Ruth's wise men, here to make her wish come true and tell us about the star.

*(All the others laugh in protest.)*

RUTH. Seriously, though, they do look as I've always imagined them.

DEBORAH. That's strange. I'm certain the King was not expecting any royal visitors. Surely preparation would have been made. The Queen would have told us. *(They turn away from the window.)* Perhaps we had better go at once and see if there is anything we can do.

*All go off at left, talking excitedly in pantomime. After a moment, NATHAN enters at right.*

NATHAN *(calls)*. Shelah! *(Waits for a moment.)* Shelah! *(Pauses, then calls.)* Boy!

SETH *enters at left.*

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SETH Yes, sir?

NATHAN. Where is Shelah?

SETH There are guests at the palace, sir. She is busy attending the Queen.

NATHAN *(taking coin from purse at his belt and giving it to SETH)*. Then here is a coin. Be sure that you give her this message: "The King is born." Is that clear?

SETH Yes, sir. "The King is born."

NATHAN. Also bid her send me return word at her earliest opportunity.

SETH. I will, sir.

NATHAN. That is sufficient. *(Goes off at right.)*

SETH *walks idly about the room. He eats a grape or two from the fruit bowl, then eases himself down on the divan. He lifts one foot tenderly and feels of it, yawns and stretches, lifts both feet upon the divan, lies down, and sleeps. SHELAH enters at left as if to get the jewel box. Discovering the sleeping boy, she bends over him tenderly. Her hand smooths a stray lock from his forehead. Then she straightens up, glances uncertainly toward the door and back at the boy, and finally leans over and shakes him gently.*

SHELAH. Seth! *(Shakes him.)* Seth!

SETH *(awakens and sits up quickly)*. Oh, Shelah! I—I'm sorry!

SHELAH. Sh! It is all right, Seth. I wanted to let you sleep, but I didn't want you to be caught and punished. *(Sits on divan beside him.)*

SETH Thank you, Shelah. Why are you so kind to me?

SHELAH. Because I once had a little brother like you.

SETH Where is he now?

SHELAH. He died. I think he is up there with God somewhere beyond the stars. Sometimes I fancy I see his smile in their friendly twinkle.

SETH I wish he were here where I could meet him.  
*(Gasps.)* Oh, good gracious, Shelah! I nearly forgot!

SHELAH. Forgot what?

SETH That I have a message for you from Nathan. I

*ing.*) I think Herod fears that this king of prophecy will displace him. That is why he rages so furiously at all who tell him what the Scriptures say. Herod is not a man who loves God. Rather, he fears God. He tries to cover this up by blustering.

SHELAH. And so he sent you away in anger?

NATHAN. Yes. Many scribes are cunning enough to twist the words of God into a permanent contract for a court position. But, to me, the Scriptures are too sacred for that.

SHELAH. I am so glad you feel that way about them.

NATHAN. I have a strange assurance that the fulfillment of this prophecy is not far off. Perhaps your eyes and mine, Shelah, will see the promised Messiah.

SHELAH. Does it say where he will be born, Nathan? Most likely he will come to this royal city of Jerusalem.

NATHAN. Not if these words are true. Listen. (*Reads.*) "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

SHELAH. Bethlehem! (*Repeats the word soundlessly with her lips.*)

TIRZAH *starts to enter at left, sees them, pauses in doorway, and watches jealously.*

NATHAN (*smiles*). A mere five miles from here. (*Rises.*) And now I must go. (*SHELAH rises. NATHAN looks at her earnestly.*) May I come again to see you? There are yet other words of prophecy which you might like to hear.

SHELAH. Oh, yes, Nathan. I should like very much to hear them and (*shyly*)—to see you.

NATHAN. To-morrow, then, at this same time. Until then, good-bye. (*He takes her hand, bows, and goes off right.*)

(*TIRZAH disappears off left.*)

SHELAH (*aloud, to herself, exultantly*). In Bethlehem—my little town—a king!

(*The curtain is lowered for a minute or two, to indicate a lapse of about two weeks. When it rises again, the time is evening, and the stage lights are more subdued than in the previous scene, the candles are lighted, yellow bunch lights are burning at the door off left, and blue offstage above the right door and outside of window up center, to indicate moonlight. Otherwise, the scene is unchanged. At rise of curtain, SHELAH stands by the window, looking off up center, DEBORAH sits on the divan working on some embroidery, RUTH sits beside her weaving a belt of various colored cords, MIRIAM is down left at the table sorting necklaces and bracelets and putting them into the jewel box, and TIRZAH lounges on the cushion down left, watching the other girls.*)

SHELAH. That bright star to the south has been shining for a number of nights now. It is so brilliant that it dazzles one's eyes to look at it. Yet it holds my attention strangely.

MIRIAM (*rises and crosses to window to look*). I never remember having seen it before just recently. Isn't it beautiful?

RUTH. They say that some men make a study of the heavens over their whole lifetime. They are very wise. For them the stars have mysterious meanings. If only we had such a sage scholar in court, we might ask him the significance of this new star. But such men live far in the East.

(*MIRIAM and SHELAH sit on divan.*)

TIRZAH (*pointedly*). Perhaps Shelah's scribe could give her the information.

DEBORAH. Hush, Tirzah. Would you have us believe you are jealous?

RUTH (*teasingly*). Nathan has been to the palace often of late. I'm sure it was not to see King Herod.

MIRIAM. Nor to visit Ruth, Deborah, Tirzah, or me, although he has been very charming to all of us.

SHELAH (*embarrassed*). I'm afraid that you mock me. Nathan came to read me the prophecies in which I am so interested. He has been very kind.

monarchs dropping in on the palace at once! (SHELAH continues to look off up center. TIRZAH briskly changes things around on the table.) What are you standing there mooning about?

SHELAH. I was watching them go. They are magnificent, Tirzah, and yet so humble in their quest.

TIRZAH. What nonsense! They are gone now. Come away from the window.

SHELAH. I am watching for— (Hesitates.)

TIRZAH. Nathan, I suppose. Well, Nathan is not coming.

SHELAH. Nathan—not coming? But why?

TIRZAH. He has found out that you are not really a royal handmaiden. He knows now that you are only a shepherd's daughter, a pretender in the palace. A scribe, you know, has to be careful whom he selects for friends.

SHELAH (trying to hide her chagrin). Oh—I see.

TIRZAH. It is unfortunate, of course, that all this has happened. A king also has to be careful whom he harbors in his palace. Any seeds of disloyalty have to be rooted out.

SHELAH. You are asking me to leave?

TIRZAH. Yes.

SHELAH. But the Queen expects me to fill Rachel's place until she returns. The Queen has not dismissed me.

TIRZAH. We had word to-day that Rachel returns tomorrow. There is really no longer any need of your remaining. You will find a donkey saddled in the courtyard and two servants ready to accompany you home.

SHELAH. I understand. (Slowly she removes her bracelets and necklace, laying them on the table while TIRZAH stands watching. SHELAH starts toward the right exit, then turns back.) I—I should like to say good-bye to Deborah and the others.

TIRZAH (crisply). They are busy. I will tell them.

SHELAH. Very well. (She looks around the room once more, her glance lingering.) Good-bye, Tirzah. (Exit at right.)

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

SCENE: A room in the home of the shepherd Jacob in Bethlehem, on the evening of the following day. It has two doors: one at right leading outdoors, and another at left leading to the rear of the house. A window is in the back flat up center. The furnishings are very simple and meager. At center is a plain table covered with a white cloth, with a small bench on the upstage side of it and two similar benches at right and left of it respectively. On the table is an unlighted candle. All stage lights are dim, to give the illusion of twilight, brightening a little after the lighting of the candle.

At rise of curtain, JACOB is seated at left of table, holding a knotted rope and trying to untie the knots. SHELAH enters at left, carrying a lighted taper.

SHELAH. Father! It is dark. You should not try to use your eyes in this gloom. Here, wait till I light this candle. (She lights the candle on the table from her taper. The stage lighting should become brighter at this point.)

JACOB. My old eyes are used to the dark of the fields at night. (Laughs softly.) I declare, Shelah, you treat me like a child. (Looks down at the rope.) I was just getting the knots out of this rope so I can use it on the door of my sheepfold.

SHELAH. Well, I have put away the supper bowls, and now I shall have time to help you. (She crosses and stands beside JACOB.)

JACOB. No, my fingers are stronger for this. That was a good meal to-night—a good meal. You don't know how I've missed you, daughter.

SHELAH (teasingly). Oh, so that's the only reason you're glad I'm home: on account of my cooking.

JACOB (pats her hand). Shelah! Shelah! You know it's more than that. (She smiles and puts her arm around his shoulder.) You're all I have, but your happiness is mine, my child. I tried to think of you as having a wonderful time in the King's palace.

knew I couldn't give it to you while you were busy with the Queen.

SHELAH. Quickly! What did Nathan say?

(SETH) Only this: "The King is born." And you are to send Nathan back some word.

SHELAH (*rises*). The King is born! (*Turns and places her hands on SETH's shoulders.*) Oh, Seth, do you know what that means? The Messiah has come! He will save our people from their sins. He will be a good king, full of kindness and love.

TIRZAH *enters at left and regards them coldly.*

TIRZAH. It seems to me that there is little time for loitering, with so much to be done for the royal visitors. And there is no need for you to get excited over this fabled Messiah. These very men within our gates have traveled miles seeking him. They have not found him yet. They even asked Herod if the child were here.

SHELAH (*wonderingly*). They must have seen the star!

TIRZAH (*scornfully*). They leave to-night, and if they do find such a babe, they are to tell King Herod where he is, so that he can "go to worship the Messiah, too." But do you want to know why he really is anxious to find out? It is so that he can have the child slain. (*Crosses to go off right, and flings the words back over her shoulder.*) And then where do you think your Saviour—your Messiah of the Scriptures—will be? (*Goes off at left.*)

SHELAH (*frightened*). Seth, quickly! I must send two messages. Will you go on two errands for me?

(SETH) Yes, yes! What shall I do?

SHELAH. One is to find Nathan and tell him to come here at once. The other is more difficult.

(SETH) I will do it. What is it?

SHELAH. We must save the newborn King, Seth. Already we are called upon to serve him. Now listen. (*Looks around carefully.*) Watch until the three kings of the East leave to-night. When they are outside the palace gates, approach them. Tell them that a humble worshipper of the

Messiah sends them this word: "King Herod is false of heart. He seeks to know the babe's whereabouts to slay him. Return not to tell Herod of his birthplace." Can you remember that?

(SETH) Yes, Shelah.

SHELAH. Then go; and God bless you!

(SETH) I go.

SHELAH *goes off at left, and he starts to exit at right, but meets TIRZAH as she is entering at right, and is pushed back into the room by her.*

TIRZAH (*angrily*). No, you don't go! Not now. I thought it would be like this; so I went around to the outer door and listened. You should be ashamed to raise your head, boy. Plotting with this impostor, this—sheep herder's daughter against your king! (*She shakes him and boxes his ears.*) You will not deliver the messages—not either of them. Do you hear?

(SETH) But I must! Let me go! I have promised!

TIRZAH. Such promises are better broken. This puts you in line for a good flogging, and it will not be gentle for a matter as serious as this. Perhaps I had better turn you over to the palace guard.

(SETH) No, no! They will beat me!

TIRZAH. Then come with me. I will see that you are safely locked up until she is gone and all this is over. (*She leads him off at right by the arm.*)

*After a minute, SHELAH enters at left. She straightens things on the table, rearranges the pillows on the divan, etc. Then she walks anxiously back and forth. Camel bells sound off right. She hurries to the window and looks off up center, anxiety and eagerness in her bearing. Meanwhile, TIRZAH enters at left.*

TIRZAH (*half to herself, half to SHELAH*). At last they are leaving! It's a wonder we wouldn't be informed of these things ahead. (*Grumbles.*) No less than three foreign



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SHELAH (*sits down beside him*). I did at first, father. It was thrilling to think of myself as the Queen's handmaiden. And my surroundings reached my highest dreams of splendor and luxury. But there was something missing.

JACOB. In what way?

SHELAH. In the atmosphere, I think. The Queen was spoiled and discontented. The King was selfish and cruel. Tirzah, the handmaiden who sent me away, was displeased at my presence there. There just wasn't the harmony one would expect to accompany such beauty. Why, father, there is more loveliness here or in the dwellings of any of our humble neighbors than at the royal court!

JACOB. I'm glad you see that, Shelah. It is a lesson few learn.

SHELAH (*sadly*). Once I would have said Nathan would understand it, but—

JACOB (*interrupts*). Ah, Nathan again, it is, daughter? (*He lifts her chin with his hand.*) You have spoken much of him since you came home. You love him; don't you?

SHELAH. To do so is to step out of my place. But I shall always remember him as one who taught me more about God than I have ever known before.

JACOB (*rises*). And God works all things out for the best. You can depend on that, Shelah. Well, I must go out and take care of my sheep for the night. (*Exit at right.*)

(SHELAH remains seated thoughtfully for several moments. Suddenly NATHAN'S voice is heard as if from a distance.)

NATHAN (*calling from off right*). Shelah! Shelah!

SHELAH starts, rises, and turns toward the right, a glad surprise lighting her face. NATHAN enters at right.

NATHAN (*holds out his arms*). Shelah!

SHELAH. Nathan! (*Goes to him.*)

NATHAN. Oh, Shelah, I looked everywhere! Why did you leave the palace so suddenly?

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SHELAH (*remembers and draws away from him*). Rachel was to return to-day. I was no longer needed.

NATHAN. But to go away like that without letting me know—

SHELAH (*interrupts*). Tirzah told me that you would not come again and that shepherds' daughters and scribes do not mix.

NATHAN. Foolish one! I suppose you believed her.

SHELAH (*smiles*). I'm afraid so, Nathan.

NATHAN. Perhaps in the course of time I can help you to change your mind. (*He takes her hand and leads her to the bench at right of table, where they sit.*)

SHELAH. How did you find me, Nathan? Did Seth give you my message to come to the palace?

NATHAN. No, the poor little fellow was discovered and locked up overnight by Tirzah.

SHELAH. How cruel of her! And then what?

NATHAN. Deborah found him this morning and released him. She told me you had gone home. Tirzah was severely reprimanded. She will be more careful after this.

SHELAH. I am glad she was not discharged. I am too happy to wish anyone ill luck. My place is not in Herod's palace, Nathan. I shall be happier here in Bethlehem serving another king.

NATHAN. And so shall I.

SHELAH. You have seen the child? Where is he?

NATHAN. In a little stable in back of the inn. You see, because of all the people coming to be taxed, there was no room left anywhere else.

SHELAH. A little king in a cattle manger!

NATHAN. But his presence makes it glorified. A majesty is there, Shelah, and you feel that nothing is so wonderful as the King himself.

SHELAH. It is almost as though you brought some of his glory here with you. You are somehow different, Nathan.

NATHAN. I am not the same person I was before I went to the manger. He who once looks into the face of the Christ must ever be changed. The words of the Scriptures then become a reality.

SHELAH. We are on the threshold of a new life. God has come to earth! Father told me that the angels sang the night when the babe was born. He and the other shepherds left their sheep to go to the manger. Since then, many have come to worship the King, among them the wise men. *(She suddenly looks alarmed.)* Nathan!

NATHAN. What is it? What is the matter?

SHELAH *(frightened)*. The wise men did not get my message!

NATHAN. About Herod? Yes, they did, but not through Seth. Those at the stable told me that the three kings were warned by God in a dream and have gone home by another road.

SHELAH. God works in wonderful ways! But will not Herod make further attempts on the babe's life?

NATHAN. By that time, his parents, Mary and Joseph, will have taken the little Messiah to a place of safety. God will take care of them.

*(There is a rap at right door.)*

SHELAH. Who can that be? *(Goes to right door and throws it open.)*

*SETH enters at right, out of breath.*

(SETH) Shelah! Nathan!

NATHAN. Seth!

SHELAH. Seth! How did you get here?

(SETH) I ran away, Shelah. Don't send me back. Please!

SHELAH *(puts her arm around him)*. Of course not, Seth. But why did you do it?

(SETH) I do not like it at the palace. I want to serve the real King. But I have no other home. And you have no little brother. Could I be your little brother, Shelah?

SHELAH *(embraces him)*. Yes, Seth. And you and Nathan and I will work together for the little Messiah's new kingdom.

*("O Little Town of Bethlehem" is played softly on the organ, or voices hum the melody softly, off stage. The music continues pianissimo to end of the play.)*

NATHAN *(quoting)*. "And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

SHELAH. He will be no ordinary king. Nations will look to him and call him blessed. He will speak truth, and the ages will listen. The world will never forget his birthday.

(SETH) Even the children will love him.

SHELAH. Take us to worship him, Nathan.

NATHAN. The air is like crystal to-night. The hills lie silent as in adoration. High in the heavens over your Bethlehem, God's silver star is shining. And the way to the manger is not far. Shall we go?

*(Slowly and reverently the three exeunt at right. The music swells in a finale as—)*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.