

MALKAI: Our job is to read the sky, shepherd. But I think you speak a riddle. Did your message say, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased”?

BENJAMIN: Who gave you those words?

BALSHAI: The parents of the child told us about you.

DAVID: Then what brought you to this land?

NEZZAR: We read the sky. We saw a message, a star. We knew the King of the Jews was born and we must come and worship him.

MALKAI: But you must help us. He is in danger from Herod. God has warned us. As long as we are here, Herod may try to find out our secret. The parents and child, too, must soon escape.

DAVID: We will help you, wise men, for now we know that this child, our Saviour, Christ the Lord, was not just born for us. He came for you and for the whole world.

(The shepherds direct the wise men by another way)

He came, not just for the shepherds and wise men of long ago, but for you and for the whole world!

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Not Just for Us

Bible Reading: Matthew 2.1-12

Peter J Blackburn

In the East takes us to Babylon where Nemzi and Padri have arrived for the weekly meeting of the Babylonian Magi Association. What was “the star of Bethlehem”? This drama assumes the proposal of some scholars that it was in fact a conjunction of three planets calculated as having occurred around that time and recurring over a two-year period. It would have been in that part of the sky designated “the house of the Hebrews” by the astrologers. There was an important Jewish community in Babylon.

Not Just for Us

The stars were shining brightly against the dark sky as Benjamin, David and Ezzai made themselves comfortable near their fire. Apart from an occasional “baa”, their sheep had settled down too. In the distance the last flickering oil lamps in Bethlehem were being put out.

BENJAMIN: Hey, fellows! I was just remembering that night!

DAVID: You mean the night we saw the angel? A bit scary at first, don't you think?

EZZAI: Speak for yourself, David! I must admit, though, that the whole affair was most unusual! Most unusual!

DAVID: More than unusual, Ezzai! People don't usually see angels, do they? “Don't be afraid, shepherds!” he said.

BENJAMIN: “I've come with great news for you!”

DAVID: “It will bring much joy to all the people!”

EZZAI: “This very day in David's town your Saviour was born – Christ the Lord!”

DAVID: And there he was – in the feed-box down in the stable! Just like the angel said! But why such an important message to ordinary shepherds like us?

BENJAMIN: Look, someone's coming. Three people, in fact. They'd better not disturb our sheep!

(Malkai, Balshai and Nezzar enter)

MALKAI: Greetings, shepherds! We come from far away and we need your help.

BENJAMIN: It's OK for you to camp over there, so long as you don't disturb the sheep!

MALKAI: But we urgently must be on our way!

DAVID: You speak in a riddle, sir. First you ask for help. Now you seem as if you must depart!

MALKAI: I cannot explain now. There is danger. We hurry home. But we must find a way that is not through Jerusalem. We must go.

EZZAI: You have come from Bethlehem, I see. A peaceful place, the old home of King David. Not many days ago we hurried in there in the middle of the night. As we came back to our sheep, we remarked how peaceful the town is!

BALSHAI: (to Malkai and Nezzar) Could these be the shepherds they told us about?

NEZZAR: I don't know, Balshai. And there is such great danger. We don't know who to trust in this foreign land.

BALSHAI: You were always the cautious one, Nezzar. But something about these three rings true. I can feel it!

NEZZAR: Could be the fresh night air getting to you! Remember, we didn't suspect King Herod, either! “Come and tell me when you find him”, he told us, “so I can worship him too.” What do you think, Malkai?

MALKAI: These shepherds can help us on our way, but we mustn't leave any suspicious trails. Herod could get nasty with us, but it's the child who is in the greatest danger!

BALSHAI: (to the shepherds) Bethlehem is indeed a town of peace. But there have been strange events and evil men now cast a watchful eye upon it.

BENJAMIN: (to David and Ezzai) He talks about strange events. Well, we saw something strange too. I hope there's no danger to the child!

EZZAI: Don't say too much. These men are Gentiles, foreigners. Perhaps we've been too kind to them already. We've been telling everyone about the child, but only Jews.

DAVID: But Benjamin has a point, Ezzai. If they want to protect the child from danger, we must give what help we can.

EZZAI: (to the strangers) Strangers, we too have seen strange things in the heavens as we have watched our sheep.

NEZZAR: You saw the star?

EZZAI: Oh no, it was much more important than a star!

DAVID: The whole sky was filled with messages from God!