



Crescent Chronicles

Bonus
Price
For
Duration
Of the
Census

One
Shekel

Weather Forecast

The forecast for Bethlehem during the period of the census is as follows. Daytime temperature will be a mild 10 degree with no prospect of rain. However the evenings will be markedly colder than the daylight hours. Expect frost in the early morning, but there is very little chance of snow falling. Remember that you are travelling in the peak winter month and come prepared with warm clothing and the expectation of sustaining food and drink.

Strange Events in Bethlehem

From our special correspondent; John-bar-Jacob

I visited Sarah, the wife of the Innkeeper at the "Golden Boar" in Bethlehem after a tip off from an informant of mine. This is the story she told me:

"It all happened while that stupid census was taking place. The town was heaving with folk travelling here to be registered. Good for business I suppose, but very tiring! Late in the afternoon a man and his wife appeared asking for a room. She was riding a donkey – and she was pregnant – very near her time it looked to me, poor lass, only a slip of a girl too. We had no rooms to offer and apparently most of the inns in Bethlehem were the same. My husband was for sending them on their way, but I had an idea, they could bed down in our stable for the night. Not very comfortable for the girl, but better than a night by the roadside.

So they made themselves as comfortable as possible on the straw in the stable and I was not much surprised when it became obvious the young woman (her name was Mary) was going into labour.

I left my husband (in spite of his grumbles) to attend to the Inn and I went to the stable to help the poor girl. Fortunately all went well with her and before long she was the proud mother of a beautiful baby boy. It was then that odd things began to happen.

Please turn to page two for the continuation of these odd things

Travel News –

Report for holiday makers to the town of David post census

Times are changing and the little town of Bethlehem will never be the same again as it will be featured in all the holiday brochures around the world.

This has come about because of the visit of some shepherds to a very special baby born in a manger (because there was no room available anywhere else due to a census) to a young girl called Mary.

A few days later a bright star heralded the arrival of three kings from the Orient. The streets were filled with people eager to see these kings and they were amazed at the sight of their jewellery and magnificent robes, They travelled slowly to the manger where they offered the baby exotic gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then they left for their journey home by a different route — why?

But that is another story. In the meantime, get your holiday brochure before they all go

Strange Events in Bethlehem—the continuation

An hour or two later four big fellows arrived with a very strange story to tell. They were shepherds and had been out with their sheep on the hillside above the town. Suddenly there appeared a shining being, right there beside them. They were terrified- he was unlike any human being they had ever seen. This angel, I suppose that is what he was, told those shepherds to go to Bethlehem and there they would find a baby who had born to be king – the Messiah the Jews had been waiting for for so long. But he wouldn't be in a king's palace, but in a manger, in a stable, at an inn. So those shepherds arrived at our little inn and there was the new-born lying in the manger . None of us could understand what this was all about but the shepherds went off back to their sheep with a lot to think about and I reckon a lot to talk about to all the folk they met on the way. But that's not all.

A day or so later, when Mary was recovering three more men arrived looking for the baby. They were very obviously very wealthy men. They had come from the east and said they were astrologers. They told me that they had seen a great star which foretold the birth of a great king of the Jews and they had come to find him, having been directed to Bethlehem by scholars in Jerusalem. The star, they said, directed them to the very place of his birth. I stood by the door and watched while these important men knelt down on the straw beside the child in the manger and gave him gifts in jewelled boxes.. Gold , frankincense and myrrh I found out later. Gifts for a king. They went away and I never saw them again.

Then something very mysterious happened. Next morning I went to the stable to see all was well and found that Joseph, Mary , the baby and the donkey had gone – packed up and gone without a word! They had left money beside the manger, but why had they left so suddenly when we had shared so much and become good friends? And where had they gone? In the middle of the night? I'll never know I suppose, and never see that beautiful baby again!"

That was the story the innkeeper's wife told me, but I have a strange feeling that we have not heard the last of that baby in the manger.

John – Bar - Jacob

Odd Object Competition



Send us your own photos of the odd goings on during the census and we will publish the best of them.

10 shekel prize money for the winner

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sir/Madam

Now that the big census has finished, I thought your readers might like to know how my wife and I benefited from the influx of so many people who came to Bethlehem to register.

I grew up in Jerusalem in a happy Jewish family. After I finished my basic education, I was fortunate enough to find employment with the Roman Government in their tax department where I thought I would remain until I retired. However, in my mid 20's I married a girl from Bethlehem whose parents ran the local inn and hostelry. When my father in law retired, my wife and I were persuaded to take over the family business which meant, of course, a move from Jerusalem and I had to leave my employment with the government.

The inn was quite well known and successful but very run down so when we heard that thousands of people would be coming to Bethlehem for the census, we decided to borrow some money from the local money lender to make improvements to the inn. This decision really paid off – we now have a very modern and up-to-date property and, as a result, we were fully booked for the duration of the census, so much so that we had to turn people away.

One night a young couple called enquiring after a room and the wife was obviously just about to give birth. My wife and I were so concerned about them that we offered them accommodation in our stable, which they gratefully accepted. I am not sure that was a wise decision as they seemed to have so many visitors over the time they were there – mainly poor people like some shepherds from the surrounding area, but also some very influential and wealthy foreigners, too, and the noise was almost unbearable – lots of loud singing and shouting. However, it eventually passed and the young family went away – I think they went over into Egypt. My wife and I now have a very successful and lucrative business and our future is secure as a result of the census which we weren't looking forward to at all! I think we have a lot to thank the Roman government for.

I wonder what happened to the young couple

Editorial – Now that it is all over and the large number of people who came to Bethlehem to register for the Romans' census have returned home, we can consider the success or otherwise of the venture. Counting all the people in any country is a major undertaking and is bound to arouse opposition. Some consider it an unwarranted invasion of their privacy, others suspect it is a prelude to higher taxation, and yet others object to taking time from their work to register. In an occupied country such as Israel under the Romans, there is the added resentment of the occupying power. The decision to make people register in the ancestral home of their tribe or clan only added to the problems, resulting in our town being crowded by descendants of King David, some of whom had rarely if ever been there before. A few, indeed, even came from Galilee, that part Gentile province on the northern edge of Israel. On the whole, the town authorities can look back with satisfaction on an orderly process. Although there was certainly overcrowding, there was no more rough sleeping than is usual at this time of year. There was no rioting or even unseemly scrambling over the sale or distribution of food to the crowds. As reported elsewhere in this paper, there was apparently some sort of disturbance in the pastures below the town where shepherds claimed to have seen angels who announced the birth of a Saviour, the Messiah. Bethlehem's greatest claim to fame is, of course, its position as the home of David, Israel's greatest king, but one of the lesser-known prophets, Micah, declared that another great king of Israel would one day come from the town. How uneducated shepherds came to know of this prophecy is a mystery, and the baby they said they had found in a manger is hardly what we expect of a Messiah. However, they kept their celebrations reasonably quiet and caused no trouble for the authorities. It cannot be stressed enough how important it is for us to remain on as good terms as possible with the Roman authorities who have thus far allowed us an unusual degree of freedom in the practice of our religion, particularly at the Temple in Jerusalem.



Stop Press—King Herod is reported to have ordered soldiers to Bethlehem - watch this space

Fake News

A most interesting and rather alarming conversation was overheard in the Bethlehem Arms by our correspondent Eve Dropper. Apparently some of the shepherds, working for a local farmer, were high up on the hillside outside the town late at night when they became scared stiff. Everything had been ordinary with sheep nibbling away, the weather cold but dry and everyone pleasantly grumbling while sharing a flask. Suddenly the sky became brilliant and there was noisy, joyful singing and an apparition appeared. You can imagine how terrifying it must have been. The message was don't be afraid, but leave your sheep and go into town and find a newborn baby who is to be the saviour of the world. Believe it or not, but the shepherds reckoned it was an angel they saw and off they went into town right away. This becomes even more incredible as these good folk actually found a newborn in the outhouse of this hostelry.

Now can this actually be true or is it another example of fake news? These shepherds all live close by so maybe they will come in for a drink sometime and we can hear it from the horse's (or rather sheep's) mouth. It sure is hard to believe.

Our roving reporter, Lazarus the Wandering Jew, continues the series of tales by residents affected by the recent census. Today the owner of the livery stable writes:-

"What a busy couple of days I have had.

First off I'm woken late at night by the local innkeeper wanting me to take in a donkey and to let its owners sleep in with it. It turns out the owners are a gentle silent man and an unmarried heavily pregnant girl – yes – my imagination ran riot. I bet she had been sent away from her family and neighbours to have the baby and the census was a perfect opportunity.

However, the next day, after the baby arrived, a group of ruffians who had been out all night on sheep duty arrived claiming angels had sent them to see:-

"Christ the Lord, born this very day in Bethlehem"

A likely story, I bet they only wanted a couple of hours in my nice warm stable to sleep off their hangovers.

Yet there was more to come. A train of camels arrived carrying rich powerful men from the east who were obviously lost but claimed to have followed a star leading them to:-

"The birthplace of the King of the Jews"

A likely story, can you imagine a star leading anything!

But these lost men seriously bowed down before the new born baby and gave him the most expensive gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. What stupid things people do when lost and not wanting to admit they have got things wrong.

However it has been a profitable few days for me!"

**Don't miss next weeks
issue –place your order
now**