

JESUS

His life

A detailed account by mystics of the past

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EPISODE 4

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INT. NATIVITY ROOM — NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE JUNE 31 AD BETHLEHEM

A vaulted space with a ceiling supported by tree trunks covered in cobwebs, a dirty earthen floor full of holes, rubbish and excrements. A fireplace close to the entrance. A small fire is smouldering.

The disciple JOHN puts more wood on the fire probing it with a stick.

JESUS sits near the manger, the oil lamp in front of him.

His disciples SIMON THE ZEALOT and JUDAS sit next to Him, impatiently waiting for John to sit down again.

When the flames flare up and the fire is burning again John sits down with them.

JESUS

The wind picked up when they left  
Rachel's tomb and though my Mother  
was tired and cold and hungry --

SUPERIMPOSE HISTORICAL MAP SHOWING THE ROAD FROM JERUSALEM TO BETHLEHEM

FLASHBACK EXT. RACHEL'S TOMB - DAY

JESUS (V.O.)

-- she succeeded to lift her  
spirits and smile at Joseph who was  
tending to Her, leading the donkey,  
encouraging him and even the people  
around them unaware they're already  
breathing the air of the Saviour...

An icy gale is blowing them in the face as JOSEPH helps MARY mount the DONKEY in front of the white domed building. She grabs the luggage-rack with a little trunk on it to steady herself while she sits down in the saddle.

Joseph feels her sandaled feet, warms them in his hands, then takes a blanket from his shoulders and wraps it around Her lap and legs, tugging in her feet.

She smiles at him, thankfully.

FLASHBACK EXT. ON THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM - DAY

JESUS (V.O.)  
 -- when they were close to  
 Bethlehem they met Elias, a  
 shepherd moving his herd to the  
 fields --

A shepherd, ELIAS (25), crosses the slippery road with a HERD OF SHEEP.

Joseph leading the donkey with Mary on its back, holding her belly, looking pale and exhausted, sees him. They move slowly.

JOSEPH  
 Hey! Wait!

He leaves Mary and runs towards Elias.

Elias turns, sees Joseph and waits.

From a distance Mary watches them talk.

Joseph goes back to Mary, takes the reins and leads the donkey to the herd grazing in the field.

FLASHBACK EXT. FIELD ON THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM - DAY

Elias sits on his knees holding a bowl and milking a SHEEP WITH BIG SWOLLEN UDDERS. When he finishes he hands the steaming milk to Joseph who takes it to Mary.

She thirstily takes some sips, then hands the bowl back to Joseph.

MARY  
 May God bless you both.

Elias observes Mary stroking her pregnant belly, shivering from the cold.

ELIAS  
 (to Joseph)  
 Must be hard travelling in Her  
 state. You've come from far?

JOSEPH  
 Nazareth. We're going to Bethlehem,  
 we're looking for a place to stay.

Elias WHISTLES, shakes his head.

ELIAS

Good luck! The city is flooded with people travelling to their hometowns to get registered.

(grimaces )

Herod's census. Heard of it?

Joseph nods.

FLASHBACK EXT. ROAD TO BETHLEHEM – AFTERNOON

ELIAS (V.O.)

This road takes you straight into the city. You could try the inn in the largest square near the fountain. You can't miss it. But I doubt they've any rooms left.

Joseph and Mary moving slowly on a crowded road winding through a wide valley with houses on the soft slopes.

Many PEOPLE - Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, scribes, Essenes - travelling on foot or on WHEELED CARTS DRAWN BY HORSES pass them by.

ELIAS (V.O.)

Why don't you ask for lodgings in the houses along the way?

SERIES OF IMAGES OF Joseph going from door to door asking for a room getting the door shut in his face while Mary is waiting on the donkey.

SUPERIMPOSE: HISTORICAL MAP OF THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM SHOWING THE MAIN ROAD, THE MANY NARROW AND CURVED STREETS AND QUARTERS

SUPERIMPOSE OVER MAP: THE CITY OF BETHLEHEM

FLASHBACK MAIN SQUARE IN BETHLEHEM – AFTERNOON

A trapezoidal form consisting of larger and smaller houses, some facing it with an orchard, others facing away from the square.

The dominant building on the long base near the fountain is the inn, a long and low building without windows in the smooth bare wall, only wooden doors through which we glimpse the inner yard crowded with PEOPLE.

ELIAS (V.O.)

If you can't find a room, you could always try the grotto's in the mountains. Merchants use them when they can't find a room. The road behind the inn will take you there.

Mary waits next to the donkey near the fountain. Joseph enters the doors.

FLASHBACK EXT. INN INNER COURTYARD — AFTERNOON

SOUND OF CHATTER AND LAUGHING, SHEEP BLEATING, HORSES WHINNYING, DONKEYS BRAYING.

The windows on the first floor look out on a large arcaded courtyard crowded with PEOPLE camping in tents and on carts. Their DONKEYS, SHEEP AND HORSES are tied to rings on the pillars and drink from troughs, more sheep are kept in a large wooden animal shed. The floor is strewn with straw and rubble.

Under one of the porches with a view on the fountain in the square stands Joseph. He is talking to HEZEKIAH (25), the inn-keeper, who keeps shaking his head.

JOSEPH

Please! We've travelled for so long.

He points to Mary on the square.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

My wife is pregnant. Please have mercy.

Hezekiah turns to look at Mary. Their eyes meet. Suddenly his face shows fear.

HEZEKIAH

(in anger)

Let me be! I told you, I've got no room for you. Go away!

FLASHBACK EXT. MAIN SQUARE IN BETHLEHEM — AFTERNOON

Joseph leads Mary on the donkey to A GROUP OF TRAVELERS talking to each other on the square.

JOSEPH

My wife is about to give birth. I beg you, if you have a room, please have mercy and give it to Her.

The travelers just look at them in contempt. One of them, a RICHLY DRESSED PHARISEE standing close to Mary steps away as if She were a leper.

It enrages Joseph. Mary sees it and puts Her hand on his wrist to calm him.

FLASHBACK EXT. CAVERNS BETHLEHEM HILLS - DUSK

JESUS (V.O.)

So the search continued but they  
remembered Elias' words of advice  
and went up into the mountains --

MONTAGE OF IMAGES of Mary on the donkey waiting while Joseph checks out grotto after grotto, dark caverns with low ceilings, cold and damp, only to find they're already taken.

Joseph enters the last grotto. An OLD MAN IN THE GROTTTO angrily blocks his way.

OLD MAN IN THE GROTTTO

Ehi! It's taken.

Then he sees Mary on the donkey. He turns back to Joseph and points to the distance, friendlier now.

OLD MAN IN THE GROTTTO (CONT'D)

Galilean! See those ruins there at  
the end?

FLASHBACK EXT. RUINS MIGDAL EDER BETHLEHEM VALLEY - NIGHT

OLD MAN IN THE GROTTTO (V.O.)

There's an underground den  
somewhere. Try there.

The ruins of an ancient huge building.

SUPERIMPOSE HISTORICAL MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE  
NATIVITY GROTTTO

SUPERIMPOSE OVER MAP: NIGHT OF 25TH KISLÈV, HANUKKAH, IS THE  
NIGHT BETWEEN 8-9 JANUARY 1 D.C. (LUKE 2, 6-7)

Mary sits on the donkey watching Joseph searching the ruins.

FLASHBACK INT. RUINS MIGDAL EDER BETHLEHEM VALLEY - NIGHT

JESUS (V.O.)

-- then Joseph discovered a hidden  
entrance in the devastated building  
--

Joseph cautiously leads the way through a labyrinth of dark cellars.

Mary and the donkey very slowly follow him. Joseph enters a vault.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO — NIGHT

A LOUD BELLOW echoes on the walls.

They halt in their tracks in the pitch-dark vaulted space. Joseph looks back and gestures to Mary to stay put and keep silent.

Joseph takes the knapsack from his shoulders and pulls out tinder and flint and lights a little lamp.

They look around and in the dim light see the vaulted space with a ceiling of rubble supported by coarse tree trunks covered in cobwebs, a dirty earthen floor full of holes, rubbish, excrements.

In a corner near a loop-hole close to the entrance is a fireplace with a rough seat and two big stones, the wall behind it blackened from past fires.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- it was a friendly ox that welcomed them. --

A big WHITE OX is lying in the rear next to a manger filled with hay. The animal turns its head and stares at them with its large eyes and chewing mouth, strands of hay hanging from its lips.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- Only then did My Mother feel how tired and cold she was --

Joseph hangs the lamp on a nail in one of the trunks to light the space. Then he helps Mary dismount. She looks around shivering from cold and fatigue.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- She warmed her hands on the animal's neck --

Mary walks up to the ox, puts Her hands on its neck to warm her hands.

It BELLOWS again but doesn't stir. Not even when Joseph pushes it aside to take an armful of hay from the manger. When the donkey starts eating from the hay the ox moves aside.

Joseph helps Mary to sit down on the seat near the fireplace.

He starts searching the room and finds a battered bucket on the floor.

JOSEPH

I'll be right back.

Mary nods and leans back closing her eyes.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTO – NIGHT CONTINUED

JESUS (V.O.)  
--and Joseph went to fetch some  
water from a stream --

Joseph returns with the bucket full of water and an arm full of twigs and finds Mary still seated with her eyes closed.

Joseph lets the donkey drink.

Mary opens her eyes, watches Joseph lighting a fire in the fireplace. Soon it burns and the flames light the room. He sees Mary is awake and hurries to her side.

JOSEPH  
You alright?

Mary smiles and stretches Her hands to warm them.

JESUS (V.O.)  
-- He made her a bed close to the  
animals but the hay was damp and he  
decided to dry it first --

Joseph sweeps the floor around the manger with some twigs, then gathers heaps of hay, takes it to the fire and starts to dry it a handful each time.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTO – NIGHT CONTINUED

The bed is ready and Joseph helps Mary to sit down on the thick layer of hay.

Mary takes off Her mantle revealing Her deep blue dress. She is shivering from the cold, glad to settle in the warm hay.

Joseph covers Her with Her mantle and wraps an extra woolen blanket around Her. Then he hangs his own mantle as a curtain above the entrance.

He rummages in his knapsack, takes out some bread and cheese and hands Mary a flask. She drinks some of the water, leans back against one of the tree trunks and finally relaxes.

MARY  
Thank you.

JOSEPH  
Now you must eat something and get  
some sleep.

Holding each other's hands, they eat the bread and cheese.



JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I'll keep the fire going, I hope the wood is dry enough so I won't have to use the lamp oil.

MARY

Won't you be cold without your mantle?

JOSEPH

No. I'll sit close to the fire.

Mary lies down and closes Her eyes. Joseph tugs Her in.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You rest now. I'll keep watch.

Then he crawls to the fire, sits down, takes off his sandals and warms his hands and feet.

A moment later he turns to look at Mary, half hidden by the tree trunk and the ox. In the dim light Joseph can just make out Her face, Her eyes are still closed, and She is breathing calmly as if She were asleep.

He turns back to look at the fire, breaks the remaining twigs into little pieces. Every time he throws a piece onto the fire the flames highlight his hands and face and the whiteness of the ox.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY ROOM - NIGHT CONTINUED

JESUS (V.O.)

-- But Joseph was overcome by exhaustion and fell asleep --

The room has become dark. Joseph is asleep next to the smouldering fire.

Mary slowly raises Her head, Her white veil white sets off against the darkness. She Smiles lovingly when She sees Joseph dozing, his head bowed over his chest.

She sits up, and holding her belly turns to kneel. Stretching out Her arms, almost in the shape of a cross, with the palms of Her hands facing up and forward, She starts praying silently, a blissful smile on Her face.

In the corner Joseph stirs, shivering from the cold. He looks around, sees Mary rapt in prayer.

Seeing the fire is nearly extinguished he quickly rekindles it with a handful of heath and some of the twigs he has left.

When it is ablaze again he warms his hands, puts on his sandals and quietly crawls to Mary now bent down with Her face in the hay, rapt in an even more ardent prayer.

JOSEPH  
You must rest, Mary.

Mary sits up and smiles at him.

MARY  
I'm fine. Praying doesn't tire me.

JOSEPH  
Well, may God be with You then.

MARY  
And with you, Joseph.

She resumes Her prayers.

Joseph goes back to sit near the fire and silently prays with his hands pressed against his face. Now and again he stops to tend to the fire.

There is no other sound but the CRACKLING OF THE FIRE and the OCCASIONAL NOISE OF THE DONKEY STAMPING ITS HOOVES on the ground.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY ROOM - NIGHT CONTINUED

A THIN RAY OF MOONLIGHT FALLING IN THROUGH A CRACK SLOWLY CREEPING ON THE FLOOR LIKE A SILVER BLADE UNTIL IT HIGHLIGHTS MARY'S HEAD, WHERE IT FORMS A HALO OF LIGHT.

Mary wakes as if She had a celestial call. She lifts Her head, gets up to kneel and starts to pray again.

THE LIGHT AROUND HER SEEMING TO ORIGINATE FROM WITHIN HER INCREASES. IT LOOKS AS IF SHE IS FLOATING.

THE DEEP BLUE DRESS PALED TO A MYOSOTIS BLUE, HER HANDS AND FACE BECOME CLEAR BLUE AS IF PLACED UNDER THE GLARE OF A BLUE SAPPHIRE.

THE BLUE HUE SPREADS IN THE ROOM.

THE INTENSE LIGHT COMING FROM MARY'S BODY ABSORBS THE MOONLIGHT. THEN MARY DISAPPEARS IN IT AS IF ABSORBED BY AN INCANDESCENT CURTAIN OF LIGHT.

The ox BELLOWS LOUDLY and STAMPS HIS HOOVES, the donkey STARTS BRAYING.

Joseph, enraptured in prayer, suddenly sees the STRANGE LIGHT FILTER THROUGH THE FINGERS OF HIS HANDS that he holds pressed against his face.

He turns round in amazement, shielding his eyes with his hand looking at THE RADIATING LIGHT DIMINISHING.

Now Joseph sees Mary holding something on her heart and in her arms.

SOUND OF A BABY CRYING.

THE LIGHT DISAPPEARS.

Joseph sees the crying new-born Son, BABY JESUS, rosy, plump. Mary looks at Him adoringly, weeping and smiling at the same time, kissing Him on His chest.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. NATIVITY GROTTO — NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE JUNE 31 AD BETHLEHEM

Jesus sits on the stone near the manger. John rekindles the fire that has almost gone out. Simon the Zealot hands a flask to Jesus who takes a sip and then hands it to Judas.

JESUS

My Mother didn't suffer from any pains when I was born. She only knew joy.

JOHN

Who else but You would be born that way.

Judas passes the flask to John.

JESUS

I was born in the same way that God planned each and every child to be born. Until Eva corrupted mankind sinning with the serpent first and then with Adam. And they continued to sin and thus stole from God the joy of being Father not only of all souls, but also of all bodies of humankind. That is the sin that brought all sorrows, all illnesses and finally death to mankind.

JOHN

Really we may venerate Your Virgin Mother!

JUDAS

I can't believe it. She had no pains at all?

JESUS

Don't think She won't know any sorrow.

(MORE)

JESUS (CONT'D)

For My Mother is to suffer a pain  
that will hurt much more than  
childbirth.

FLASHBACK INT. NATIVITY GROTTTO — NIGHT

JESUS (V.O.)

For God has chosen her to wash away  
Eva's sin with her tears. To  
sacrifice herself because she loves  
mankind like no other creature has  
ever loved.

SOUND OF A BABY CRYING

Mary is leaning on the hay with Her left hand, cradling the  
Child close to Her heart with Her right arm.

MARY

Joseph, come!

Joseph rushes in, sees Her, halts in his tracks, struck by  
reverence, kneels at the spot.

She gets up and moves slowly, remains standing close to the  
straw bed.

MARY (CONT'D)

Come, Joseph.

Joseph, torn between his desire to go and his fear of being  
irreverent, hesitatingly walks forward and joins Her.

They look at each other, both weeping blissfully.

MARY (CONT'D)

Come, let us offer Jesus to the  
Father.

Mary stands between two trunks supporting the ceiling, and  
lifts up Baby Jesus in Her arms.

Joseph kneels down next to Her.

MARY (CONT'D)

Here I am. On His behalf, O God, I  
speak these words to You, here I am  
to do Your will. And I, Mary, and  
My spouse, Joseph, with Him. Here  
are Your servants, O Lord. May Your  
will always be done by us, in every  
hour, in every event, for Your  
glory and Your love.

She offers the crying Baby Jesus to Joseph.

MARY (CONT'D)

Here, Joseph, take Him.

JOSEPH

What! I?... Me?... Oh, no! I'm not worthy!

MARY

No one is more worthy than you,  
that's why the Most High chose you.  
Take Him, Joseph, and hold Him  
while I look for linen.

Joseph hesitatingly takes the screaming Baby Jesus from her. When he has Him in his arms, he clasps Baby Jesus to his heart, kisses His tiny feet and bursts into tears.

JOSEPH

(weeping)

Oh! Lord! My God!

A cold wind blowing from the entrance sweeps up Joseph's mantle.

Joseph sits down on the ground holding Baby Jesus close to his chest then covers Him with his brown tunic to keep Him warm.

Mary opens the trunk and pulls out linen and swaddling clothes holding them close to the fire.

Joseph gets up and sits down between the ox and the donkey, with his back to the door. Then he bends over sheltering Baby Jesus with his body, the grey head of the donkey with his long ears on one side, and the huge white muzzle of the ox with his steaming nose and two gentle soft eyes on the other.

Mary wraps Baby Jesus in the linen and protects Its little head with Her veil. When she tries to breastfeed him Baby Jesus SCREAMS even louder.

MARY

(weeps)

I've no milk...

FLASHBACK EXT. SHEPHERDS FIELDS OUTSIDE BETHLEHEM - NIGHT

SUPERIMPOSE: THE SHEPHERDS (LUKE 2, 8-20).

A very wide countryside with fields and enclosures. A bright moon at its zenith.

FLASHBACK EXT. SHEPHERDS SHED - NIGHT

An enclosure with thorn-bush hedges on two sides and a low stone wall on the other sides.

Against the wall is a large low shed, built in stone and a part in wood that can be opened up in summer.

FLASHBACK INT. SHEPHERDS SHED - NIGHT

A dark wide dirty space, the ground covered in straw.

SOUND of A large HERD OF SHEEP stand crowded together on one side of the space bleating in the straw.

On the other side hardly visible in the faint moonlight that falls in through the roof twelve shepherds lie together in the straw, some of them asleep, ELIAS, SAMUEL (50), JONAS (40), ISAAC (30), BENIAMIN AND JOSEPH THE SHEPHERD (30, twins), DANIEL (25), JOHN THE SHEPHERD (25), JONATHAN (20), SIMEON (18), TOBIAS (18) and LEVI (12).

ELIAS

Winter on a plain, summer on the mountains. We keep moving our sheep all the time.

SAMUEL

So what?

JONAS

What else is new?

ELIAS

Roman soldiers say their shepherds migrate only in summer. In winter they have a rest.

MORE BLEATING.

SAMUEL

Cause Roman meadows are not as arid as ours in summer, their shepherds can forage all summer, they can afford to rest in winter. Our plains are dry and torrid in the summer forcing us to move up to the mountains of Judea or High Galilee. Why, even in the cold season our herds must live on pastures.

JONATHAN

Besides in Rome they don't need to raise lambs for the all those sacrifices on Easter, they must be born in winter and without the slightest birthmark. We don't have the luxury to rest in winter.

ISAAC

Only spotless lambs for the God of Israel.

SAMUEL

Blessed be He forever and ever and  
ever.

ALL SHEPHERDS

Maranathà!

A loud BLEATING while at the same time --

THE SHED LIGHTS UP AND THE LIGHT BECOMES BRIGHT AND SPARKLING

The shepherds sit up and look at each other, alarmed,  
surprised.

LEVI

(frightened)

What's that?

Elias scrambles to his feet to open the door.

FLASHBACK INT./EXT. SHEPHERDS SHED - NIGHT

A BLINDING LIGHT COMING FROM THE SKY.

Standing in the doorway Elias lifts his arm to shield his  
eyes from the light and looks up.

Now all shepherds crowd the door.

BENIAMIN

What's happening?

JOSEPH

Is it the moon?

Levi starts crying.

TOBIAS

It's alright Levi.

SAMUEL

(to Levi)

What are you afraid of, you fool?  
Never seen a bright moon before?  
You've been tied to your mother's  
apron strings too long. There are  
many things to see out there, boy,  
if you don't die of fright!

Samuel laughs. Levi hides behind Benjamin and Joseph the  
shepherd.

BENIAMIN

Leave him be, Samuel.

SAMUEL

(to Levi)

When I was your age I was rich and adventurous. Once, I'd gone as far as the Lebanon mountains. High up. Then... one night I saw such a bright light. I thought Elijah had come back in his chariot of fire. And an old man said to me 'A great adventure is about to take place in the world.' Only it turned out to be a misadventure for us, because the Roman soldiers came and invaded our country.

Suddenly little Levi leaves the threshold and walks to the grassy fold in front of the shed leaving Samuel and the other shepherds amazed.

FLASHBACK EXT. SHEPHERDS FIELDS - NIGHT

Levi walks about the grass like a sleep-walker, he looks around and up as if hypnotised, then halts in his tracks and slightly stretches out his arms.

LEVI

(petrified)

Oh!

FLASHBACK EXT. SHEPHERDS SHED - NIGHT

The shepherds look at him in amazement.

ISAAC

What's the matter with the fool?

JONAS

I'll send him back to his mother.  
He's too mad to guard sheep.

SAMUEL

Perhaps he's seen a wild animal or a robber... We should go and check.

Elias turns in the doorway to the other shepherds.

ELIAS

Oy, get out here. And bring your sticks!

All shepherds exit the shed carrying torches and clubs.



FLASHBACK EXT. SHEPHERDS FIELDS - NIGHT

The shepherds join Levi excitedly pointing up at the sky smiling like a mad man.

LEVI

(shouting)

There, look! Above that tree, see that light? It walks on the moon ray.

(points)

There! There it is, it's coming towards us. Oh, look how beautiful!

JONAS

I only see a bright light.

The other shepherds staring up mumble and nod in agreement.

SAMUEL

Yeah. Me to.

ELIAS

(amazed)

No. Look, it's like a body. Up there!

He points up. The others follow his stare in disbelief.

LEVI

(shouting in excitement)

It's... it's an angel! It's coming down!

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL DESCENDING FROM THE SKY

All shepherds fall to the ground, the older ones with their faces down, the young ones on their knees, looking up.

LEVI (V.O) (CONT'D)

(soft in amazement)

He is coming ... down!

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL STOPS IN MID-AIR ABOVE THE ENCLOSURE WALL, WAVING HIS LARGE WINGS MADE OF LIGHT AND FIRE, A PEARLY BRIGHTNESS SURROUNDED BY WHITE MOONLIGHT.

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

(voice like a harp)

Do not fear me. I'm not here to bring you misfortune.

All shepherds look up now.

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL (CONT'D)

I'm here to announce a great joy  
for the people of Israel and for  
all the people of the world. Today,  
in the City of David, the Saviour  
has been born --

AS ARCHANGEL GABRIEL SPREADS OUT HIS WINGS WIDER AND WIDER, A  
STREAM OF GOLDEN SPARKS AND PRECIOUS STONES SEEM TO FALL FROM  
THEM: CREATING A TRIUMPHAL ARCH ABOVE THE SHED LIKE A RAINBOW

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL (CONT'D)

-- the Saviour, Who is Christ, --

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL SHINES WITH AN EVEN BRIGHTER LIGHT WHILE  
HIS WINGS, NOW MOTIONLESS, POINT UPRIGHT TOWARDS THE SKY LIKE  
TWO SAILS OR TWO FLAMES.

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL (CONT'D)

-- Christ, the Lord!

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL COVERS HIMSELF WITH HIS WINGS, HIS ARMS  
CROSSED OVER HIS HEART BOWS DOWN IN ADORATION, WHILE HIS HEAD  
DISAPPEARS IN THE SHADE OF THE TOPS OF THE FOLDED WINGS AND  
HE BECOMES AN OBLONG BRIGHT MOTIONLESS SHAPE.

ANGELS SINGING THE "GLORY" IN ARAMAIC.

SUPERIMPOSE: GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND ON EARTH PEACE  
TO PEOPLE OF GOOD WILL.

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL STIRS. HE SPREADS OUT HIS WINGS, LIFTS HIS  
FACE BRIGHT WITH A SMILE THAT BECOMES SERIOUS ALMOST SAD.

ARCHANGEL GABRIEL (V.O.)

This is how You will recognise Him:  
in a poor stable, behind Bethlehem,  
you'll find a baby in swaddling  
clothes, in a manger for animals  
because no roof was found for the  
Messiah in the city of David.

MANY ANGELS DESCENDING A LADDER FROM THE SKY DIMMING THE  
MOONLIGHT WITH THEIR BRIGHTNESS.

THEY GATHER ROUND THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL, FLUTTERING THEIR  
WINGS, PLAYING THE "GLORY" AGAIN.

The sheep start BLEATING for the early sun.

THE SINGING SLOWLY FADES AWAY, AS WELL AS THE LIGHT, AND THE  
ANGELS ASCEND TO HEAVEN.

The shepherds remain motionless and speechless, as if  
hypnotised.

TO BLACK

EXT. BETHLEHEM VALLEY - NIGHT

ELIAS (V.O.)

I think I know where the Child is.

In the moonlight the shepherds carrying torches, walk down a country path between thorn-bush hedges. Elias leads carrying a SHEEP on his shoulder.

The others carry little flasks of milk, or nets woven from esparto grass containing small round cheeses, three have baskets with a BLEATING LAMB, others carry with tanned hides.

EXT. IN THE PLAIN BEFORE THE NATIVITY GROTTO - NIGHT

Bright moonlight highlight the ruins as the shepherds approach them, Elias up front still carrying the sheep.

JONAS

(surprised)

I know this place, these are the sacred ruins of Migdal Eder...

ISAAC

Migdal Eder...

Elias puts the sheep on the ground, holds it by a rope on its neck.

SAMUEL

(to Elias)

Elias, you go first!

ELIAS

(shyly)

No...

SAMUEL

Come on, go in!

ELIAS

No!

SAMUEL

At least have a look.

Elias turns and waves to Levi behind him.

ELIAS

Come here, Levi.

The boy approaches a little shy.

ELIAS (CONT'D)  
 You saw the angel first. That means  
 you're better than we are. Look  
 inside.

The boy hesitates and looks questioningly at the others. The other shepherds remain silent.

LEVI  
 Okay.

He walks to the entrance, pulls Joseph's mantle a little to one side and cautiously looks in...

ELIAS  
 (whispers)  
 What do you see?

Levi turns his head back, his eyes glittering with enrapture.

LEVI  
 A beautiful young woman and a man  
 bending over a manger.

MUMBLED SOUND OF A BABY CRYING.

The shepherds recoil in surprise.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - NIGHT

LOUD CRYING OF A BABY

Joseph gathers the dirty linen. Mary lifts the crying Baby Jesus from the manger and kisses it.

MARY  
 Oh! If only I had some milk.

FLASHBACK EXT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - NIGHT

Levi pulls back from the opening.

LEVI  
 She wants milk.

ELIAS  
 (to Levi)  
 Call Her! Tell Her we have milk.

LEVI  
 You call Her, you brought us here  
 and you know Her!

Elias opens his mouth, and shuts it again, moaning faintly.

Joseph emerges from under the mantle and looks in amazement at the shepherds. Elias hides behind the others.

JOSEPH

Who are you?

JONAS

(to Joseph)

Shepherds. We brought you some food and wool. We've come to worship the Saviour.

Joseph holds the mantle up, makes a welcoming gesture.

JOSEPH

Please, step inside.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTO - NIGHT

The shepherds go in except Elias. The older push the young ones in front of them. Their torches light up the room.

Mary turns round and smiles at the shepherds.

MARY

Come.

She gestures them to come near Baby Jesus.

THE BABY CRYING DIMINISHES.

The shepherds slowly proceed. When Levi shyly approaches Her Mary draws him near. He smiles.

The others place their gifts at Mary's feet shyly uttering a few words, smiling at Baby Jesus still sobbing a little.

Joseph the shepherd unwraps one of the gifts and hands a white woolen sheep hide to Mary.

JOSEPH THE SHEPHERD

Mother, take this. It's soft and clean. I made it for my own child who'll be born soon. But I offer it to You now. Wrap your Son in it. It'll keep Him warm.

Mary lifts Jesus and wraps Him in the hide. Then She shows Him to the shepherds.

The shepherds kneel on the hay and look up at Him in reverence.

Baby Jesus starts CRYING LOUDER again.

ISAAC

He should drink some milk, or  
better still, some water and honey.  
It's good for newborns. I know,  
I've raised seven.

TOBIAS

(to Mary)

Here's some milk. Please take it.

He bends towards Her to hand Her a bottle.

Daniel steps forward and snatches it from his hand.

DANIEL

You can't give Him cold milk!  
Where's Elias? He has a sheep that  
lambd a month ago and is full of  
good and warm milk.

Daniel turns to search for Elias who is nowhere to be seen.

The SOUND OF BLEATING outside declares Elias' presence.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

(shouts)

Hey, Elias! Come in here! You're  
wanted!

Elias lifts the mantle at the entrance, his face hidden in  
the shadows.

ELIAS (O.S.)

Yeah. What?

DANIEL

Bring your sheep. The baby needs  
warm milk.

JOSEPH

(to Daniel)

How did you find us? Did someone  
guide you here?

Elias walks in with the BLEATING sheep.

DANIEL

An angel. But Elias here showed us  
the way.

Joseph and Mary both recognize him. Elias looks embarrassed  
under everyone's stare.

JOSEPH

It's you!

MARY

We're grateful for your help,  
Elias.

Elias smiles shyly and sits down to milk the sheep, then hands the bowl to Mary.

Mary dips a piece of linen into the warm creamy milk, then moistens the Baby Jesus' lips. Baby hungrily sucks the cloth.

They all smile when Baby Jesus falls asleep comforted by the warmth of the wool, and sucking the linen between His lips.

ELIAS

(to Joseph and Mary)

You can't stay here. It's cold and damp. And... stinks of animals. It's not right... it's no place for the Saviour.

MARY

(sighs)

There's no room for us in Bethlehem. We sought everywhere.

SAMUEL

Take heart, Woman. We'll look for a place for You.

ELIAS

I'll ask my mistress, Anna. Her house is crowded but she'll find room for You. Why, I'm sure she'd even give You her own room. As soon as it's daylight, I'll go and see her.

MARY

That would be wonderful. Even if it's only for the Little One. Joseph and I can sleep on the floor.

JOSEPH

There's a constant draft in here and the smoke of the fire makes Him cough... he cries all the time --

ISAAC

Don't worry, we'll see to it. We could host you in our shed only it's too cold for the Child to go outside and too far away. When we tell the people what the angels told us You'll lack for nothing, you'll see. For now, we can only offer our humble gifts. We're but poor shepherds...

JOSEPH

We're grateful. Only we can't  
reward you...

JONAS

The Lord already rewarded us when  
He sent the angels who told us that  
Peace will come to men of goodwill.  
And He already gave us peace when  
the angel said that this Child is  
the Saviour Who is Christ, the  
Lord. We may be poor and ignorant  
but we do know that the Prophets  
foretold that the Saviour will be  
the Prince of Peace.

(to Mary)

And You are blessed, Woman, You  
bore Him, You must be holy! We're  
your humble servants my Queen,  
happy to serve You. Just tell us  
what can we do for You? Are there  
any relatives whom You wish us to  
inform that He has been born?

MARY

Yes, but they're far away, at  
Hebron.

ELIAS

I'll go. Who are they?

MARY

Zacharias, the priest, and My  
cousin Elizabeth.

ELIAS

Zacharias? Oh! I know him well. I'm  
a friend of his shepherd. I go up  
the Hebron mountains in summer  
because the pastures are rich and  
beautiful there. When you're  
settled, I will go and see  
Zacharias.

MARY

Thank you, Elias.

ELIAS

No need to thank me. It's a great  
honour for me, a poor shepherd, to  
visit the priest and to be allowed  
to tell him that the Saviour has  
been born.



MARY

Tell him this: 'Your cousin, Mary of Nazareth, has said that Jesus has been born, and that you should come to Bethlehem'.

ELIAS

I will do as you ask.

MARY

May God reward you. I'll remember you, Elias --  
 (she looks around)  
 -- and every one of you.

LEVI

Will You tell Your Baby about us?

MARY

Of course I will.

LEVI

I 'm Levi.

Samuel pushes the boy out of the way.

SAMUEL

And I'm Samuel.

One by one the shepherds introduce themselves.

JONAH

Jonah.

ISAAC

Isaac.

TOBIAS

Tobias.

JONATHAN

Jonathan.

DANIEL

Daniel.

SIMEON

Simeon.

JOHN THE SHEPHERD

John.

JOSEPH THE SHEPHERD

I'm Joseph and this is my brother --

BENIAMIN

-- Benjamin. We're twins.

MARY

(smiles)

I'll remember all of you and your names.

SAMUEL

We'll be back... and bring others to worship Him.

(to the others)

We must really go..

JONAH

Glory be to God Who has shown Him to us!

LEVI

(to Mary)

Can we kiss His dress?

Mary sitting on the hay wraps Baby Jesus' feet in linen, then raises Him offering Him to be kissed.

Levi bows and kisses Him first, then cries.

The shepherds cleaning their faces and beards as best they can, bow down to the ground, and kiss the tiny feet.

They walk out backwards, their emotions on their faces.

Mary and Joseph watch them go, She with the Child on Her lap, he leaning with his elbow on the manger.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - THE FOLLOWING MORNING

Joseph wakes up and doesn't find Mary and the Child by his side. He jumps up and runs outside.

FLASHBACK EXT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - MORNING CONTINUED

Mary is sitting on a stone breastfeeding Jesus in the pale winter sun.

RUNNING FOOTSTEPS

Mary looks up, happy.

MARY

I've got mother milk, Joseph!

Joseph sits beside Mary, takes her hand and kisses it.

MARY (CONT'D)

I wanted to see Jesus in the daylight.

JOSEPH

I'll light a fire out here in the field, that way the grotto won't get so smokey.

FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - MORNING CONTINUED

In the most sheltered corner Mary washes Baby Jesus in an old tub.

Joseph enters with a steaming cup, and cautiously adds the warm water into the tub.

FLASHBACK EXT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - MORNING CONTINUED

Mary is washing napkins in the stream, wringing them out then hangs them to dry in the sun. She looks up at the SOUND of voices.

A STREAM OF PEOPLE led by the shepherds is approaching, Bethlehemites, many of them carrying gifts, among them ANNA OF BETHLEHEM (50), Elias' mistress.

She is with a GROUP OF WOMEN, among a few whom Joseph had asked for lodging and seen the pregnant Mary

Up front walks ARCH-SYNAGOGUE (50), a rabbi with a wary look on his face.

Joseph, watching them approach understands he is obviously not yet convinced that Baby Jesus is the Saviour. The people halt before him.

JOSEPH

I'm Joseph from Nazareth, in Galilea, of David's blood. We are here for the census.

Mary now joins them carrying Baby Jesus in her arms. Joseph nods at Her. The people look at Her curious to get a glimpse of the baby in Her arms.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

My wife Mary is also from Nazareth and of David's blood as well. She was offered by her parents in the Temple as virgin at the age of three years. High priest Simeon ben Boethus married us almost one year ago according to the law of the orphans-heirs. We couldn't find a room in Bethlehem and the Child was born here under these ruins.

When Joseph points at the ruins behind them the face of the arch-synagogue rabbi flinches.

ARCH-SYNAGOGUE RABBI

The Baby was born there? Really? Do you know what these ruins were? Why did you seek refuge right there?

JOSEPH

All other stables near here were already taken, there was no place for us except for this stable, we had to share it with that ox. But tell me what about these ruins? Why shouldn't we stay here?.

ARCH-SYNAGOGUE RABBI

These are the ruins of... Migdal Eder....

When he mentions the name, Mary startles and cradles the bundle in which Jesus is sleeping, swaying closing her eyes as if she ere in great pain.

Joseph looks at her in surprise and hurries to support her.

The Arch-synagogue falls to his knees.

SUPERIMPOSE: MICAH'S PROPHECY

ARCH-SYNAGOGUE RABBI (CONT'D)

And the prophet Micah said this:  
'And you, *Migdal Eder*, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, to you shall it come, even the former dominion shall come, the kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem.'

MARY

Migdal Eder... The tower where the perfect lambs were born to be sacrificed in the Temple at Pesach... As Joseph told you, I grew up in the Temple, most honoured Rabbi.

ARCH-SYNAGOGUE RABBI

And Prophet Micah also said : 'But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me One who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. So the Lord will hand the people of Israel over to their enemies until the time when the woman in labor gives birth.'

## MAN 1 IN THE CROWD

The Messiah has to come from King David and his father Jesse like Isaiah said: 'A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.'. We've been waiting for a long time...!

## ARCH-SYNAGOGUE RABBI

(to Joseph)

And you, man, can you confirm that the Baby, as the shepherds have reported, was born today, 25 of kislèv?

## JOSEPH

Yes. He was born tonight.

## MAN 2

A great sign!

## WOMAN

Today is the Feast of the Purification!

## MAN 3

When the Temple was freed from the pagan idols and rededicated to the worship of the only God!

Anna comes forward.

## ANNA OF BETHLEHEM

(to Mary)

I'm Anna. Elias told me about you. Come to my house. I have a place for You.

She points at the group of women who accompany her.

## ANNA OF BETHLEHEM (CONT'D)

These women will help You to wash the blood from Your linens. And they'll make you some tea from herbs to reduce the cramps of the womb.

## FLASHBACK INT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - MORNING CONTINUED

The women hesitatingly enter the grotto and see that there are no blood traces of the birth, they bow down.

When he Arch-synagogue rabbi enters behind them and sees it too he immediately falls to his knees.

ARCH-SYNAGOGUE RABBI  
 Prophet Isaiah says "*The virgin  
 will conceive and give birth to a  
 son*".

Now the rest of the people coming in understand the divine origin of the Baby and bow down like him.

FLASHBACK INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - DAY

Anna runs out into the lobby and opens the front door to ZACHARIAS.

ANNA OF BETHLEHEM  
 Welcome. Is your wife not with you?

ZACHARIAS  
 No, Elizabeth stayed home.

FLASHBACK EXT./INT. ANNA'S HOUSE - DAY

ANNA OF BETHLEHEM (V.O.)  
 Follow me, they're in here.

A KNOCK.

Joseph opens the door to a small room, and utters a cry of joy when he sees Zacharias holding two bags.

JOSEPH  
 Zacharias, what a pleasure to see you! Come let me help you

FLASHBACK INT. ANNA'S HOUSE JOSEPH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Joseph carries the bags inside followed Zacharias. The little room is as small as a corridor, sparsely furnished with a single bed and couch propped against the wall.

JOSEPH  
 Mary is suckling the Child in another room. She won't be long. Sit down, you must be tired.

He gestures to the couch, they sit down.

ZACHARIAS  
 The man you sent to fetch me told me you were homeless when He was born. How dreadful. You and Mary must've suffered a lot.

JOSEPH

We worried more about the Child's health than our own discomfort. He suffered quite a lot. And of course Mary suffered seeing Him suffer.. and me. so you can imagine Her anguish! She fed Him with milk and tears, milk and love... We're lucky to be here now.

(a beat)

If only He'd been born in Nazareth! I'd made Him such a comfortable cradle and Mary fitted it with the softest little mattress...Ah!

ZACHARIAS

But Christ was to be born in Bethlehem. As was prophesied.

Mary enters in a white woolen dress, bareheaded, with Baby Jesus asleep in Her arms wearing His white swaddling clothes.

Zacharias stands up and bows in veneration. Then he takes a closer look at Jesus and bends down to pay Him homage.

MARY

Here, hold Him.

She offers Baby Jesus to Zacharias who takes Him holding Him like an object of piety, then hands Him back to Mary a little unnerved.

They all sit down on the couch.

JOSEPH

(to Zacharias)

How's little John?

ZACHARIAS

He's getting as strong as a little colt. He's teething now and suffering a little. That's why Elizabeth stayed home. She was very upset she couldn't join me but the season is too rigorous!

JOSEPH

It's rigorous indeed.

ZACHARIAS

Elizabeth prepared some gifts and some linens she made for Your blessed Son.

He rises and carries the two bags to the couch, gives the heavier one to Joseph.

Zacharias unwraps the gifts: a soft handwoven woolen blanket, some linen and little dresses, some honey, Joseph unwraps the gifts in the other bag: some snow-white flour, butter, apples and bread and many more little things.

MARY

Please tell Elizabeth that I'm very grateful to her, as I'm grateful to you, too. I would've been so happy to see her and little John of course, but I understand the situation.

ZACHARIAS

But You'll see them in spring.  
We'll come and visit You.

JOSEPH

Really? Nazareth is far away.

ZACHARIAS

Nazareth? No, you must stay here. The Messiah must grow up in Bethlehem, David's town. The Most High, through Caesar's will, brought Him to the town in David's land, the holy land of Judaea. Why take Him to Nazareth? You know in what opinion the Jews hold the Galileans. This Child is destined to be the Saviour of His people. The capital town must not scorn its King because He comes from a despised land. You know as well as I do how captious the Sanhedrin is and how disdainful its three main castes are... Here, near me, I'll be able to help you and be at the service of this New-Born Baby. And when He's old enough to understand, I'll be very happy to be His teacher, like I'll be for my own son. Later, when He is grown up, He'll bless me. We must consider that He's destined for great things and must be in a position to present Himself to the world with all the possible means to win His game. He'll certainly possess Wisdom. But the simple fact that He was educated by a priest, will ensure that the difficult Pharisees and Scribes will accept Him. You will make His mission much easier by staying here.

Mary and Joseph look sadly at each other.



MARY

But how? Everything we have is in Nazareth. Joseph has worked so hard for My Jesus, not sparing labour or money. He worked in his own shop at night, so that during the day he could work for other people to earn enough to buy the best wood, the softest wool, the finest linen, and prepare everything for Jesus. He built beehives, even worked as a mason to modify the house, so the cradle and His bed could be placed in My room, because Jesus will stay with Me until He is an adolescent.

ZACHARIAS

So? Joseph can go and fetch your belongings.

JOSEPH

We can't afford to, Zacharias. At least there we have a house and work.

MARY

Suppose we find work here where would we live? This good woman can't put up with us forever. Besides I won't allow Joseph to sacrifice himself more than he already has for My sake!

JOSEPH

That's nothing! I'm more concerned about Mary. I know how deeply it would grieve Her to leave Her own house...

Tears well from Mary's eyes.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

That house is as dear to Her as Paradise, remember the mystery that took place there. If it wasn't for that, I'd have no problem moving. But if Mary agrees to move because you say we must... well, you can count on me. I'm young and strong, I'll work more. I'll do whatever you think is best. Provided it will help Jesus.

ZACHARIAS

It would certainly help. Think it over, and you'll see the wisdom in my reasoning.

MARY

We listen to you with sad hearts  
but we believe you, priest, though  
my heart aches to leave the house  
where I became a Mother. Will I  
ever see it again?

TO BLACK

FLASHBACK EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE IN BETHLEHEM - NIGHT

JESUS (V.O.)

And thus we stayed in Bethlehem.  
Till one night, almost one year  
after My birth --

SUPERIMPOSE: DECEMBER 1 AD (MATTHEW 2, 1-12)

A clear, starry moonlit sky. The square is empty, silent.

On the narrow base of the trapezoidal square is a small house  
with a terraced roof. An exterior dark stone staircase leads  
to the entrance on the first floor.

The BLUISH LIGHT IS INCREASING similar to the one that  
emanated from the moon first and then from Mary in the  
Bethlehem grotto when Jesus was born.

A STAR BIGGER THAN THE MOON AND BURNING BRIGHT LIKE THE SUN  
MOVING FAST ACROSS THE SKY ABOVE BETHLEHEM, LEAVING A  
MULTICOLOURED TRAIL IN AN UNDULATING MOVEMENT SHINES ON THE  
CITY THAT NOW BASKS IN THE BLUE SILVER LIGHT.

THE RADIATING STAR STOPS OVER ANNA'S HOUSE AND ITS SHINING  
TRAIL ACCELERATING ITS PULSATIONS WAVERS OUT IN A SEMICIRCLE.

IT SETS ANNA'S HOUSE AGLOW, AS IF IT WAS MADE OF SILVER AND  
SPRAYED UPON WITH GLITTERING DIAMONDS AND PEARL DUST.

FLASHBACK EXT. THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM - NIGHT

SOUNDS OF HOOVES LIKE WATER RUSTLING AND BREAKING AGAINST THE  
STONES OF A TORRENT, HORSES WHINNYING, DROMEDARIES AND CAMELS  
SNORTING

In the distance an exotic CAVALCADE approaches the town lit  
up by the star, THREE RICHLY ATTIRED RIDERS, two on HARNESSED  
HORSES and one on a RICHLY CAPARISONED CAMEL head the  
procession, followed by DROMEDARIES AND CAMELS carrying  
luggage escorted by numerous SERVANTS ON FOOT. Their  
harnesses, clothes, luggage, even their faces, everything  
shines and glitters in the light of the star. All seem  
radiant with joy.

FLASHBACK EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE IN BETHLEHEM - NIGHT

SOUNDS OF HOOVES LIKE WATER RUSTLING AND BREAKING AGAINST THE STONES OF A TORRENT, HORSES WHINNYING, DROMEDARIES AND CAMELS SNORTING CONTINUES

JESUS (V.O.)

-- Then the Three Magi, men of royal and sacerdotal descent who started out from different far away kingdoms but bound in a shared belief, arrived in Bethlehem driven by the star, bearing gifts --

The cavalcade halts on the square. Servants tend to the animals while others help the richly attired riders, THE THREE MAGI dismount:

JESUS (V.O.)

-- Melchior, the oldest, was from the mountains in Mongolia, the kingdom of eagles and vultures, where God - Whom they call Tengri - speaks with roars of winds and torrents and writes words of mystery on the immense pages of glaciers. He was a fond astronomer and the Magi's spokesman --

MELCHIOR (65), with almond-shaped eyes in a long and slender face, slim and wide mouth, straight and thin nose, dismounts his splendidly harnessed horse. He is wearing a beautiful striped yellowish hooded robe, and a richly embroidered cordon of a golden colour.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- Balthasar came from Ethiopea, a descendant from the Queen of Sheeba, converted by Solomon to the God of Israel. --

BALTHASAR (40), an oval face of dark complexion, with big, open and dark eyes; a long and thin nose and a very fleshy mouth, dismounts from the camel. He wraps himself in a shamma, traditional Ethiopian garment of pure bright silk, held tight to his waist by a precious girdle, from which a dagger or sword hangs with a jewel-studded hilt.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- and Gaspar from Persia, the land where the people of Israel had been deported to when the Assyrians conquered Babylon. --

GASPAR (28) dismounts his horse. He is wearing a turban held by a little chain covered with diamond settings, a silk shirt puffing out of long baggy trousers, narrow at the ankles. He is wrapped in a bright shawl with a flower motif.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- Melchior explained that their mutual millenary cults were in contact and foretold of the coming of the Saviour, He Who God would send to set free the mankind from Evil. Different beliefs, he specified, though similar to the one of the God of the Jews, he said. --

The three men walk to Anna's house, bend, touch the soil with their foreheads and kiss the soil. Then they rise while their servants proceed and knock on the front door.

SOUND of knocking.

FLASHBACK EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE IN BETHLEHEM -- NEXT DAY

JESUS (V.O.)

-- In Mongolia many generations had awaited a celestial sign, in fact so many that the land was strewn with towers on mountaintops, pyramid-shaped buildings to watch the sky and read the stars for the coming of the Liberator. --

A sunny afternoon. One of the servants of the three Magi exits the inn, crosses the square and climbs the steps of the little house and enters. A few moments later the same man exits again and goes back to the inn.

The three Magi exit the inn, are even more richly dressed than the night before in shining silks adorned with sparkling gems sparkle. Gaspar's turban is decorated with a big bunch of feathers, quivers and shines.

JESUS (V.O.)

In Persia the ancient emperors Cyrus and Darius had embraced a similar messianic belief in a Saoshyan, a divine Liberator born from a Virgin. And so Gaspar too was awaiting the Redeemer begotten from a Virgin.

Three servants carrying gifts follow them. One carries a heavy inlaid coffer, its metal engraved with gold. The second a beautifully wrought chalice with a gold lid very finely finished. The third a wide low golden amphora, closed with a pyramid shaped lid with a diamond at the top.

JESUS (V.O.)

The same belief was shared by  
Balthasar who came from the Land  
where the Nile rises and flows with  
its green-blue waters towards the  
azure heart of the Mediterranean.

SUPERIMPOSE: FROM THE TANA LAKE, THE BIGGEST IN ETHIOPIA, KNOWN FOR HIS BLUE-GREEN WATERS. THE BLUE NILE IS AN EMISSARY OF THE LAKE AND IN KHARTOUM JOINS THE WHITE NILE, THUS FORMING THE NILE RIVER.

A few PASSERS-BY halt to stare in amazement at the exotic stately men in splendid dress and the servants carrying the riches, all proceeding very slowly and solemnly, crossing the square, ascending the steps entering a house

FLASHBACK EXT./INT. ANNA'S HOUSE IN BETHLEHEM — AFTERNOON

The Magi enter a large room with a window with a view of a little kitchen garden at the back.

The three servants wait in the doorway with the gifts waiting for orders from their masters.

Behind them Anna of Bethlehem, ANNA'S HUSBAND, some BOYS and younger CHILDREN cast sidelong glances inside.

Joseph stands next to Mary dressed in white and Her hair plaited, sitting on a chair with a blond curly haired BABY JESUS (1) in Her lap dressed in white linen, sandals on his tiny feet.

When the Magi enter Mary gets up and bows.

MARY

(to the Magi)

May God be with you.

The three Magi halt, astonished to see Her bow. They kneel at Her feet as do the three servants near the threshold.

Mary sits back down with Baby Jesus on her lap. He starts smiling and prattling with a shrill voice like a little bird.

The three Magi remain kneeling, relaxing on their heels, their servants follow their example.

MARY (CONT'D)

Please sit down. And tell us how  
you came here.

The three Magi sit down and contemplate Baby Jesus, lively and strong, His little hands groping for his Mother's clothes.

MELCHIOR

One night in December about ten months ago, a star of an unusual brightness appeared. Most people didn't pay any attention to it, because their souls are steeped in mud and they can't read the words that God writes with stars of fire in the vault of Heaven. May He be blessed forever.

But astronomers can. Only no one had ever seen it before nor was it in any map. So we decided to devote ourselves to study this new star that seemed born out of the bosom of God to tell men a secret. After many hours the rare surprising conjunction, the time, the season, the calculation of the hours passed and the astronomic combinations finally revealed its secret.

(a beat)

We calculated that its name was Liberator. And it meant The Liberator had now come to our world...

Melchior looks at Balthasar and Gaspar.

MELCHIOR (CONT'D)

So we set out to find Him and worship Him following the Star. Balthasar from the South, Gaspar from the East and I from the North. Unknown to each other we travelled night and day, crossing mountains, and valleys, seas and deserts. And by a miracle of God we met.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- God's Will gathered them together beyond the Dead Sea. For it was His will that led them there, and the Eternal Father bestows on them the gift of understanding and making themselves understood, as it happens in Paradise, where only one language is spoken: God's. --

MONTAGE OF IMAGES of the three Magi meeting; Balthasar showing manuscript rolls, showing their content to the Melchior and Gaspar

## BALTHASAR

I told them in my own language that the Liberator born from a Virgin, in the stable, is the Awaited one, the Messiah begotten by a Virgin - as Micah prophesied - for David's house, He Who had to be born in Bethlehem of Ephrata, also said Bethlehem of Judah. The 'celestial sign' was Jacob's star as prophesied by Balaam.

SUPERIMPOSE: "I SEE HIM, BUT NOT NOW; I BEHOLD HIM, BUT NOT NEAR. A STAR WILL COME OUT OF JACOB; A SCEPTRE WILL RISE OUT OF ISRAEL. HE WILL CRUSH THE FOREHEADS OF MOAB, THE SKULLS OF ALL THE PEOPLE OF SHETH." NUMBERS, 24:17

## MELCHIOR

We went to Jerusalem because the Messiah was to be the King of Jerusalem, the King of the Jews. When we arrived at the Well of En Rogel, the star had concealed itself and we first thought we had failed to deserve God. But then we asked King Herod in which palace the King of the Jews was born so we could go and adore Him.

## JESUS (V.O.)

The king had gathered his chief priests and his scribes - Hillel the Great, Shammai the Hard and Gamaliel the Severe, the three learned men that would later dispute with Me in the Temple when I was twelve - and had asked them where the Messiah might be born. And they had replied: In Bethlehem, in Judah.

MONTAGE OF IMAGES of the three Magi heading the cavalcade travelling together following the moving star to Bethlehem.

## MELCHIOR

When the star stopped above this house we understood that the Divine New-Born Baby was here. We'll go back to King Herod and report to him. He's keen to adore Him too.

## JESUS (V.O.)

-- and they offered my Mother their gifts and their hearts --

Melchior gestures to his servant who comes forward carrying the heavy coffer.

## MELCHIOR

In the meantime we'd like to offer you the gold that befits a king, the gold from my mountains, 'Altaj' means Golden Mount, it's so rich with gold you just have to dig into the soil with your bare hands to find it.

Melchior's servant opens the lid to reveal a coffer full of shining gold.

Mary and Joseph are in awe.

Balthasar gestures to his servant and he comes forward to present the chalice with the gold lid. Balthasar takes it from him and offers it to Mary.

## BALTHASAR

I offer you incense that befits a God. My kingdom is the only one country in the world where it grows in abundance.

Gaspar takes the amphora with myrrh from his servant and presents it to Mary.

## GASPAR

Mother, I bring You myrrh from Persia. Your Child is both God and Man and He'll experience the bitterness of the flesh and of human life as well as the inevitability of death. Our souls, full as they are of love, prefer not to think of death and we would wish that His flesh were as eternal as His Spirit. But, Woman, if our writings and above all our souls are right, He's Your Son, the Saviour, the Christ of God and consequently destined to save the world, He'll carry the burden of all evil in this world, and the ultimate punishment of death. This myrrh is for His final hour. That His holy flesh may not rot of putrefaction, but may its integrity be preserved until its resurrection.

He hands the myrrh to Mary. She accepts it touched by his words.

## GASPAR (CONT'D)

May He remember us and save His servants allowing them to enter His Kingdom.

(MORE)



GASPAR (CONT'D)

In the meantime will You, Mother,  
trust Your Little One to our love,  
that we may be sanctified. That His  
heavenly blessing may descend upon  
us, while we kiss His feet.

Mary offers the Child with a sad smile to Melchior. He kisses Him and caress Him.

Baby Jesus smiles and plays with his robes. Melchior hands Him to Balthasar and he to Gaspar.

Baby Jesus interest is captured by the sparkling gold in the open coffer, and He cries with joy when the sun highlights the chalice and produces --

A RAINBOW OF COLOURS.

Gaspar hands Baby Jesus back to Mary.

The three Magi prepare to leave and bow to Mary.

Mary gets up and bows to the men.

GASPAR (CONT'D)

(to his servant)

Go back to the inn and prepare our  
departure.

The three servants leave.

They cannot make up their minds to depart from the house. Tears shine in their eyes. At last they move towards the door, accompanied by Mary and Joseph.

The Child wanted to get down and give His hand to the old Melchior, and He walks thus, held by His hands by Mary and the Wise Man, both of whom bend down to steady Him. Jesus walks with a hesitant step, like all children, and He laughs stamping His little feet on the strip of the floor lit up by the sun.

When they reach the threshold – the room is as long as the house – the Magi take leave kneeling down once again kissing Jesus' feet. Mary, bending down over the Child, takes His hand and guides it, in a blessing gesture over the head of each Wise Man.

MARY

Let's trace the sign of Tau, My  
little One.

She guides Jesus' little fingers.

The three Men go down the steps. The caravan is already there waiting for them. The horses' studs shine in the setting sun. People have gathered in the little square watching the unusual sight.

Jesus laughs clapping His hands. His Mother has lifted Him up on the wide parapet of the landing and is holding Him against Her breast with an arm so that He does not fall. Joseph has gone down with the Magi and is holding the stirrup to each of them while they mount their horses and the camel.

Servants and masters are now all on horseback. The starting command is given. The three Men bow down as low as the necks of their mounts in a final gesture of homage. Joseph bows down.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- And that gentlemen was the story  
of my birth.

Also Mary bows and then She guides Jesus' hand again in a gesture of goodbye and blessing.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. THE NATIVITY ROOM - NIGHT

Jesus and his disciples sit covered in their mantles. The fire has gone out and only the oil lamp is burning

JOHN

How did you escape Herod's  
massacre?

JESUS

That my friends is a story for  
another day. I'm tired, let's get  
some sleep.

He lows out the flame of the lamp.

TO BLACK

EXT. THE NATIVITY GROTTTO - DAYBREAK

A bright summer morning. Jesus in a loincloth washes His face in a stream.

SIMON THE ZEALOT (O.S

Getting ready to go, Master?

Jesus turns to see Simon the Zealot approaching Him from behind.

JESUS

Yes.

(smiles)

Are the young ones still asleep?

Simon the Zealot nods, takes off his short tunic, enters the stream and washes himself shivering from the cold.

Jesus finishes washing, then gets out and puts His clothes on.

JESUS (CONT'D)  
 (smiles)  
 Cold, isn't it? I find it clears  
 the mind..

Simon the Zealot quickly jumps out again and dresses again, shivering.

JOHN (O.S.)  
 Hail, Master, are we late?

They both turn and see Judas and John approach.

JESUS  
 No, my friends. It's early still  
 but since you're awake let's go.

The two disciples quickly undress, splash their faces in the stream, crying out from the cold.

Jesus gets up and wanders off to pick some flowers, puts them carefully inside a small wooden box and returns to the stream.

JESUS (CONT'D)  
 For My Mother. She'll love them.

John and Judas are getting dressed, still shivering.

JESUS (CONT'D)  
 Ready? Let's go.

JUDAS  
 Where to, Master?

JESUS  
 To Bethlehem.

JUDAS  
 Again? You think it's wise? The  
 situation there isn't exactly  
 favourable for us...

JESUS  
 It doesn't matter. I want to show  
 you where the Magi were and where I  
 stayed as a baby.

JUDAS  
 Excuse me, Master, but please let  
 me do the talking in Bethlehem?  
 Galileans are not very much liked  
 in Judaea, especially here.

(MORE)

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Anyone can see that You and John are Galileans. Your clothes, your hair! Why do you have to wear it so long?

Judas looks at them, then an idea hits him. He takes off his yellow, brown, red, green striped mantle and starts unwrapping his headcloth.

JUDAS (CONT'D)

We exchange clothes. Master, give me your mantle.

(to Simon)

Simon, give swap yours with John.

They exchange mantles.

Judas wraps his head cloth around Jesus' head, adjusting it along His cheeks to hide His long fair hair. Simon does the same with John.

JUDAS (CONT'D)

You'll look more Judaeen now.

When they've finished, Judas looks at the result.

JUDAS (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Oh! Much better. Don't I have a practical sense, now?

JESUS

Yes, you do, Judas, I must admit. But see to it that it doesn't overshadow your other sense.

JUDAS

Which one, Master?

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Your spiritual sense.

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Sometimes it pays to be more of a politician than an ambassador. Which reminds me...please don't intervene if I should say something... let's say not entirely true.

JESUS

Lies? No. I don't want any lies in Me or around Me.

JUDAS

Only half-lies. That we've returned from remote places, perhaps Egypt, and that we're seeking news of dear friends, perhaps we're Judaeans returning from exile. In any case there'll be some truth in it. Besides I'm saying it, not You. One lie more, one less... It's for your own good!

JESUS

But why deceive, Judas?

JUDAS

What does it matter, Master. The world turns on deceit. At times it's a necessity.

Jesus shakes His head.

JUDAS (CONT'D)

Okay then, I'll say that we've come from far and that we're Judaeans. At least it's true for three of us.

He turns to John.

JUDAS (CONT'D)

(to John)

And you, don't say anything at all. You'd give yourself away in an instant.

JOHN

My lips are sealed.

JUDAS

All right then... Remember, I do the talking. I'm the shrewd one here.

JESUS

I know that, Judas though I'd prefer you to be more simple.

JUDAS

'Simple' doesn't help us much now. Of all your disciples I'm best suited for the 'difficult' missions. Just let me handle this and we'll be fine.

Jesus is reluctant but sort of consents silently.

EXT. RUINS MIGDAL EDER BETHLEHEM VALLEY - DAYBREAK

Jesus and the three disciples walk along a windowless massive wall on the other side of the ruins.

SOUNDS of braying, mooing, neighing, bleating and the queer cry of camels or dromedaries.

EXT. MAIN SQUARE IN BETHLEHEM - DAY

Jesus and the three disciples cross the square with the fountain and the inn.

SOUNDS of chatter, shouting, laughing.

The square is full of people around vendors of foodstuffs, utensils, clothes etc. All the goods are on mats or in baskets on the ground, and most of the merchants are also crouched in the centre of their... shops, with the exception of those standing up, shouting and gesticulating with stingy buyers.

SIMON Z.

It's market day.

EXT. RUINS OF ANNA'S HOUSE MAIN SQUARE IN BETHLEHEM - DAY

They proceed and halt in front of Anna's house, now in ruins. Only the staircase with its little landing is still standing.

EXT. INN MAIN SQUARE IN BETHLEHEM - DAY

DONKEYS laden with goods and their OWNERS exit the main gates.

Judas and his disciples wait until they have gone, then enter the gates, Jesus first.

EXT. INN INNER COURTYARD - DAY

Judas, impressive in Jesus' dark red mantle worn on top of his sumptuous yellow tunic full of fringes, seizes a HOSTLER BOY in a short sleeved tunic down to his knees, sweeping the floor with a broom.

JUDAS

(haughty)

The landlord! Quick! And don't make me wait.

The man runs away dragging the broom behind him.

JESUS

Judas! Your manners!

JUDAS

Believe me, Master. I know what I'm doing. It's important that they think we're rich people from the city.

The landlord, HEZEKIAH (now 55), emerges from under the porches and hurries towards them, bowing repeatedly.

HEZEKIAH

(bowing)

My lords... your servant.

JUDAS

Stand up, man. We're Judaeans of the Asiatic communities, we've come from far.

(points at Jesus)

This gentleman, born in Bethlehem but exiled, is looking for news on some dear friends of His. We accompany Him, we've just been to Jerusalem where we worshipped the Most High in His House. Can you help us?

HEZEKIAH

Just ask me.

JUDAS

Do you know Anna, the woman whose house was opposite your inn? Do you know where she is?

HEZEKIAH

Sure! Poor woman! You'd find her in Abraham's bosom, I'm afraid. And her children along with her.

Jesus and his disciples look shocked.

JUDAS

She's dead? How?

HEZEKIAH

You must've heard of Herod's massacre? The whole world knows about it, even Caesar called him a pig who feeds on blood.

He suddenly stares suspiciously at them.

HEZEKIAH (CONT'D)

How do I know you won't report me to the authorities? Are you really Judaeans?

Judas shows him his signet ring displaying a carved lion.

JUDAS (V.O.)

The sign of my tribe. Now, speak up, man.

CLOSE-UP OF THE RING

HEZEKIAH

She was killed by Herod's soldiers, and all of her children except one daughter who lived in Jerusalem at the time with her husband.

JUDAS

Why did they kill them?

Hezekiah gestures to Judas and the others to follow him.

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)

(conspiratorial voice)

These walls have ears and it's dangerous to talk about these things.

INT. INN HEZEKIAH'S ROOM - DAY

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)

Anna gave hospitality to a couple who said they were the Messiah's parents... But please follow me inside --

A low dark room, simple furnishings. Hezekiah gestures them to sit down on a low couch.

HEZEKIAH

You see... I'm from a family of innkeepers. I have their malice in my blood. I didn't take the couple in though I did have room... but I'm no fool, you see!

JUDAS

Of course not...Go on.

HEZEKIAH

I just knew... I felt they were different... that woman's eyes... Something in them... like she had a demon inside of Her.



He shudders at the memory.

HEZEKIAH (CONT'D)

So I sent them away. But Anna, now she's as innocent as a little lamb, and she puts them up, a few days after the Child was born.

He looks around to make sure no one else can overhear them.

HEZEKIAH (CONT'D)

Then the rumour starts spreading the Child is the Messiah... And suddenly people flood in, from everywhere, the seaside, even from Egypt. Nothing to do with the census. All they want is to see the Messiah... The couple stayed for a year! You can't imagine the money I was making!

JUDAS

I can actually...

HEZEKIAH

That's not all. After one year the three Wise Men come to visit Anna's house and stay at my inn, kings from faraway kingdoms, sorcerers of some kind... Man, what a train they brought! Endless! Took up all my rooms and stables, they did. Paid for it in solid gold. Brought gifts you wouldn't believe! For everyone, the hostlers, the women! Me! They bought hay to last them a month, stayed one night only. Left it all behind.

JUDAS

(sarcastic)

You must've been very pleased with the Messiah's presence.

The sarcasm is lost on Hezekiah and he smiles broadly.

HEZEKIAH

(laughs)

Sure I was. I couldn't care less if he was true or false. He was good to me!

(beat)

I was lucky none of my family died during that massacre. Didn't have any children yet. What a pig, that Herod.

JUDAS

Between us, my friend. We all know how old Herod obtained the throne, political intrigues with Rome. Being half Idumaeen and half Arab he was always afraid the people of Israel would overthrow him. And since he was no descendant of David he oppressed them all, disregarded our sacred traditions! During his reign, and later his sons', the old covenant between God and the people of Israel has been broken.

HEZEKIAH

The three Magi told him they'd come to visit the descendant of David prophesied to reign. But when they didn't return to disclose the Messiah's whereabouts, Herod went mad! He had all children under the age of two killed, even his own son!

HEZEKIAH (CONT'D)

Thank God he kicked the bucket decades ago. Though his legacy still weighs on our people. His son, Herod Antipas, is even more lascivious than he was, and then this corrupted bunch he replaced our High Priests with.

JUDAS

Let me tell you this, we're living the times when Daniel's prophecy will come to pass. Once Moses' atavistic line of succession is broken, the Messiah will rise and --

Jesus steps forward and interrupts him.

JESUS

We would like to see where the slaughter took place.

Hezekiah turns in surprise to Jesus.

HEZEKIAH

Are you kidding? That means every house for miles around the city! Let me show you something. Come.

EXT. ROOF TERRACE INN IN BETHLEHEM - DAY

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)

See what I mean? You know they  
burnt down houses just because  
fathers took up weapons to defend  
their children.

Hezekiah, Jesus and the disciples are standing on a large terraced roof looking out at the countryside and the whole of Bethlehem spread upon the hills like an open fan, a city and countryside strewn with ruins and burnt down houses.

Hezekiah leads them to another side of the terrace. He points to a well-like ruin covered with ivy.

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)

Look, that ruin covered with ivy,  
that's what left of the synagogue.  
They burnt it down with the rabbi  
in it because he declared it was  
the Messiah. Not Herod's men, mind  
you, but survivors whose family and  
children had just been crushed  
against a wall, thrown from a  
house, stabbed or beheaded...

BACKGROUND SOUNDS OF THE MASSACRE; WAILING, SCREAMING

IMAGES OF THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS; HOUSES BURNING,  
CHILDREN AND ADULTS DEAD BODIES IN THE STREETS; SURVIVORS  
ATTACHING SOLDIERS RUNNING AROUND CRYING, SCREAMING AND  
WAILING; BABIES SCREAMING; CLASHING OF WEAPONS

His voice trails as if he remembers it vividly.

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)

See those sepulchres over there,  
and there, there? That's where  
they're buried, like sheep spread  
all over the fields. All the  
innocents, children, fathers,  
mothers...

BACKGROUND SOUNDS OF THE MASSACRE

MONTAGE OF IMAGES OF NUMEROUS SEPULCHRES

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)

That brook there flowed pink from  
the blood.

BACKGROUND SOUNDS OF THE MASSACRE

## IMAGES OF A GENTLY FLOWING STREAM

Hezekiah takes them to the front of the building and points at Anna's house, now in ruins.

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)  
And there's what's left of Anna's  
house...

Jesus cries when he looks at the devastated house in front of them.

HEZEKIAH (V.O.)  
Did You know her well?

## BACKGROUND SOUNDS OF THE MASSACRE

MONTAGE OF IMAGES OF ANNA'S HOUSE BEING PLUNDERED AND DEVASTATED; ANNA AND HER FAMILY SCREAMING OF TERROR BEING KILLED.

JUDAS  
She was like a sister to His  
Mother. Isn't that right, my  
friend?

Jesus silently nods, bends forward and whispers something to Judas.

JUDAS (CONT'D)  
(to Hezekiah)  
Can we visit the ruins?

HEZEKIAH  
Of course.

## EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE IN BETHLEHEM - DAY

Jesus climbs the staircase that has remained and stands on the landing in His red mantle looking down at His disciples below on the street.

Behind him we see the remains of Anna's kitchen garden and field, now devastated and full of debris.

JESUS  
My Mother stood here and made Me  
wave to the Three Wise Men...

FLASHBACK of the three Magi bowing down to Mary as low as the necks of their mounts in a final gesture of homage. Joseph bows down.

Also Mary bows and then guides Jesus' hand again in a gesture of goodbye and blessing.

END FLASH

FLASHBACK INT. ANNA'S HOUSE JOSEPH'S BEDROOM IN BETHLEHEM --  
NIGHT

A ray of moonlight filters in through the window shutters left ajar. Joseph wearing a white short-sleeved tunic is asleep in the bed, smiling in his dream.

The smile turns into anxiety and he awakes with a start. He sits up, in shock. He grasps his robe, puts it on groping for his sandals and hurriedly ties them and gets up. He lights a small single flame oil lamp and exits the door facing his bed.

FLASHBACK INT. ANNA'S HOUSE MARY'S BEDROOM IN BETHLEHEM --  
NIGHT

A night lamp barely lights the room that is larger than Joseph's, with similar furnishings. Baby Jesus' cradle stands next to the single bed where Mary is asleep.

SOUND OF SOFT KNOCKING

Mary wakes up as Joseph enters. She sits up, startles when she sees his worried face.

JESUS (V.O.)  
That same night Joseph had a dream,  
an angel warned him they were  
coming to kill Me --

Joseph gestures Her to be silent hurrying to Her, then bends down to whisper in Her ear.

CLOSE UP of Mary's shocked face.

FLASHBACK EXT. ANNA'S HOUSE MAIN SQUARE BETHLEHEM -- DAYBREAK

JESUS (V.O.)  
-- they packed some bare essentials  
took the Magi's gifts, wrapped Me  
in a cloth and fled --

In the faint eerie glow before sunrise we see THREE DONKEYS patiently waiting on the square while --

Joseph straps the coffer and all of their belongings to the saddle of the pack donkey. We can see his carpenter tools sticking out of one of the sacks.

Mary mounts one of the other two donkeys.

Anna, holding Baby Jesus, kisses His forehead, then hands Him back to Mary when she sits in the saddle. The two women hug each other one last time.

JESUS (V.O.)

-- And so we set off to Egypt, to a village called Matarea, a small Jewish colony.

Then Joseph ties the pack donkey's reins to his donkey, takes the reins from Mary's animal, and mounts his own.

After a last greeting to Anna, Joseph kicks his donkey and sets off, leading Mary's and the pack animal.

Anna watches them go until they are out of sight.

END OF THE FLASHBACK

EXT. RUINS ANNA'S HOUSE MAIN SQUARE BETHLEHEM -- DAY

The three disciples look around the ruins while --

Jesus standing on the landing takes off his mantle that slides to his feet revealing his snow white tunic.

HIS OUTLINE IS CLEARLY CUT AGAINST THE SUN, FORMING A HALO AROUND HIS GOLDEN HAIR, OFFSETTING HIS WHITE GARMENT.

Judas notices that PEOPLE on the square start staring and whispering among them, curious. More and more people halt and gather.

Judas rushes up the stairs to the landing, desperate to prevent his Master from speaking.

JUDAS

(hisses to Jesus)

Don't! For God's sake, don't be a fool, don't --

Jesus stretches out His arms to the people on the square below them and His powerful voice already thunders over the square.

JESUS

Men of Judah!

The crowd look up to Him in anticipation, John and Simon the Zealot in a look of surprise, Judas halting on the last steps, shakes his head in disbelief, closing his eyes in despair.

JESUS (CONT'D)

Men of Bethlehem, listen!

TO BE CONTINUED