

INTRODUCTION: The date? It's 27AD.

The place? It's a small, grubby, disorganized back street warehouse in the unfashionable end of Jerusalem's main retail park.

The time? It's about 3:30 in the afternoon.

It's also the middle of long hot summer and the last customer came in approximately 4 days ago.

**F/X: \_\_\_\_\_ RINGING TELEPHONE**



ARTHUR:

Good afternoon! You've through to Jerusalem Premier Bathroom Supplies, the number one distributor for all the latest in Roman bathroom technology and the Middle East's only licensed distributor for the patented Babylonian donkey-powered Jacuzzi. My name is Arthur how may I help you?

(PAUSE)

Oh hello Ron. What can I do you for today?

(PAUSE)

Would you mind repeating that? I just want to grab a pen and write it down.

Three hundred bottles of shampoo, six hundred bars of soap, a thousand bath-towels, four hundred hand-towels, three hundred hairnets, fifty pairs of swimming goggles? We don't do swimming goggles – we do bathing supplies!

(PAUSE)

OK scratch the goggles. Carry on.

And twenty non-slip rubber bathmats.

(PAUSE)

How heavy are they? I don't know. About one and a half shekels I

guess. Why?

(PAUSE)

I don't *know* if that's heavy enough to stop them being washed downstream! *Downstream?* Why would they be in a stream?

(PAUSE)

OK river not stream – it makes little difference as they're premium quality non-slip *bath*mats. Therefore, ipso-facto, they go in a bath, not in a stream. Or river. Or the sea for that matter.

(PAUSE)

Yes I suppose you *could* weigh the edges down with rocks but I still don't really follow why they'd be in the river in the first place.

(PAUSE)

You're setting up a mobile bathing stall near the river? Have you gone stark staring mad Ron? I know you've tried some pretty hair brained schemes in the past but...

(PAUSE)

You want a such as? OK such as; Pre-packed bags of rocks for the stonings, the drive-through donkey wash or the do-it-yourself embalming kit – in fact on a hot day I think you can still smell those wafting over from the Mount of Olives. Anyway who goes to wash in the river? Everyone's having their own on-site bathing facilities installed at home, and those as can't afford it use the public Roman baths.

(PAUSE)

What do you mean there's thousands of people down there washing every day. Since when?

(PAUSE)

Since John The Baptist started the fad for open air bathing! It's been a while since you attended the synagogue isn't it?

(PAUSE)

Well if you had you'd know a few things about John and his baptism. He's the talk of the town at the moment. Have you ever been down there and watched what's going on?

(PAUSE)

I didn't think so. They don't all get in the water in their smalls and splash about for ten minutes scrubbing that's what. John preaches a sermon to the crowd then they troop in there one at a time fully clothed, wade up to him and he dunk's 'em under the water for a few moments and then they're off; back out!

(PAUSE)

Market research wasn't ever really your strong suit was it Ron?

(Stage Whisper – Hand over phone mouthpiece) Mind you, walking and chewing gum isn't Ron's strong suit.

Look Ron – it's not about being clean – well it is and it isn't. It's about being clean on the inside.

(PAUSE)

No swallowing soap is not a better way than dunking in the Jordan.

It's spiritual – John's a Prophet, a Seer, a Holy Man...

(PAUSE)

No Ron *not* a nutter. Prophets always look like that and anyway camel hair's very cooling in the desert.

(PAUSE)

Well it stands to reason doesn't it – camel's wear it! Anyway as I was trying to explain, John dunking these people is called baptism and it's all about repenting from your sins and getting forgiveness

for them.

(PAUSE)

No not from John obviously, from God. God forgives you for the sins you've committed. I went down there myself a few days ago.

It was great!

(PAUSE)

No they didn't have to hold me under for half an hour to get rid of all my sins, thank you very much! I'm going to see him again next week – you should come.

(PAUSE)

Well he says *he* isn't the messiah – but he pointed some bloke out last week who's going to take away the sins of the whole world apparently. I bet we hear more about him, I didn't catch his name but from his accent he's from Nazareth or thereabouts.

So how do you want to pay for all this clobber then?

(PAUSE)

Ron? Hello? Ron? Are you there?

**F/X:                    HANGS UP PHONE**

ARTHUR:                    Well done Arthur! Talked yourself out of that sale very nicely.

END