

The Star Hotel



Phone Rings

Good evening. The Star Hotel, Bethlehem's premier Bed & Breakfast accommodation. This is Zerubabel the duty manager speaking how may I help you? Ahh Nathaniel, how are you? Sorry I didn't recognize your voice.

You're on your mobile? No I can never get a decent signal near Jericho either, I think the Mount of Olives is in the way.

The Star Hotel? Oh we changed the name about nine months ago... seemed like a good marketing opportunity as we're the only hostelry in the area with an illuminated sign!

I hope you're using your hands-free kit – you know what the centurions are like about driving a chariot without both hands on the reins. Anyway what can I do for you?

A Room? Tonight? Are you stark staring mad?

'Cos it's the middle of the busiest time of the year, that's why! There's people in from all over 'cos of this census – no I'm sorry I can't help you.

Desperate you might be mate, but there's nothing available. I'm even renting my own room out to a party of scribes from Jerusalem and I'm kipping round at mums tonight. What do you need it for?

Your wives have thrown you out? What all three of them? I'm sure it does seem unfair but there are more of them than there is of you – even with your spare tire! Perhaps you should learn to watch your mouth a bit...

All right all right I'll leave it – I know you get enough of that at home. But it is your fault...

Of course it's your fault – you married the three of them so you have to expect three mothers in law staying during the holidays!

All my rooms are full. No you can't sleep in the lounge I've got a family of eight in there, three on the sofa, one in each armchair, the parents on the rug in front of the fire and the baby in the fruit bowl.

No the bridal suite has got two families from Cesarea in it. Nope, the out-house has got four pilgrims from Nain staying in it.

No you can't sleep in the kitchen – the staff are sleeping in there!

No the loft has got everyone's luggage in it and the joists are creaking like it's all going to collapse at any moment. I'm sorry Nathaniel I'm full.

...and so are The Travellers Rest, The Travel Inn, The Inn Place, The Inn Of Good Cheer, Bethlehem Towers and even The Travel Lodge.

No you can't even have the stable. I've got everyone's camels, horses, donkeys, mules, cattle, sheep, chickens and pet hamsters in there. Oh and a family who were pretty desperate.

What do you mean not as desperate as you? You're not desperate you're just too proud to apologise to your mothers in law.

Yes they *were* desperate. Well she was giving birth to a baby and he was having kittens.

No I'm not asking her if she's finished and is there room for one more!

They're tired and need some sleep – as do I.

Well they've had a lot of visitors. You know how everyone wants to see a new arrival. And in her case I think I mean everyone – and some right queer looking folks too.

Well first of all she had a bunch of shepherds in. Yeah, all smelly and unkempt. They turned up banging on my door and shouting about seeing glowing men in the sky singing who told them to visit the new born King.

Naturally I thought they were drunk and slammed the door on them. I heard them arguing outside and then they knocked on the door again. This time they were a little calmer and they explained that they weren't drunk – just very very excited. Excited!

There's an excuse you can use on the wives next time you roll home at midnight as "excited as a newt".

But they knew he was in the manger in the stable which was odd, 'cos he hadn't been crying so in the end I reluctantly let them in. Then they got all weird; they bowed down to the baby and worshipped him for a few minutes then ran straight back out and started telling everyone that this tiny little nipper was the Messiah, the saviour of the whole world and singing praises to God!

Yes Shepherds! They woke everyone up; the guests were all out on the landing in their pyjamas with these wild men from the hills regaling them with their tale! Once they'd gone I counted the sheep and the horses in the stable and they hadn't nicked anything. Not even one of the hamsters.

Anyway things were calming down again and everyone was just getting back into bed when there's more knocking on the door! I've got a huge "no vacancies" sign up outside it's obvious we're full...

Ahh no I've thought of that, it's in Hebrew, Greek *and* Latin so everyone can read it – except Shepherds obviously, who can't read.

I open the door ready to send them away with a flea in their ears – or more fleas in their ears at any rate - but there's these three very posh looking eastern gentlemen standing there.

No I didn't send them away! Posh means rich so I was just about to chuck the pilgrims from Nain out of the out-house when they asked me if there was a baby here and would I please water their camels as they'd come a long way. I pointed out the stables and they went through and then just seemed to be overcome with emotion. They bowed down to the baby and presented him with some fantastic presents. Some Gold, some frankincense and a bottle of myrrh!

They told me on the way out that they'd set off almost a year ago to come to The Star, to my Hotel!! I didn't realize the Good Inn Guide got distributed that far out of the province! I knew changing the name would get us noticed.

Oh... I suppose they *might* have meant the star that appeared above the hotel nine months ago as opposed to The Star Hotel. Still they came. They're bound to tell their friends how well I looked after their camels! No they didn't stay the night. Two reasons really Nathaniel.

1. They were warned in a dream to leave immediately and to avoid Herod at all costs and
2. We're FULL!