

The Gospel According to

SAINT MATTHEW

SAINT MARK

SAINT LUKE

SAINT JOHN

NOTHING RECORDED	NOTHING RECORDED	CHAPTER 2, VERSES 6-7	NOTHING RECORDED
		<p>2:6 - And so it was, that, while they were there¹, the days were accomplished² that she should be delivered³.</p> <p>2:7 - And she brought forth her firstborn⁴ son, and wrapped him in swaddling⁵ clothes, and laid him in a manger⁶; because there was no room⁷ for them in the inn⁸.</p>	

CHRONOLOGY: April 6, 4BCE*

* The established year for this chapter is based on the year of Jesus' birth, which is highly debated. Below is a list of possible years for Jesus' birth. The chronology of Jesus' life in this book is based on the author's belief that Jesus was born in 4BCE. The most likely years for Jesus' birth are 1BCE, 4BCE and 5BCE. The other years are problematic.

Year theories:	1 BCE -	Supported by the Apostle James E. Talmage & Secular Biblical Scholars Pearson and Hug & the creator of Gregorian Calendar: Dionysius Exiguus.
	2 BCE -	Supported by Secular Biblical Scholar Scalinger.
	2/3 BCE -	Supported by early Christian writers and historians Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Africanus, Hippolytus of Rome, Hippolytus of Thebes, Origen, Eusebius and Epiphanius.
	3 BCE -	Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Baronius and Paulus.
	4 BCE -	Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Bengel, Wieseler & Greswell. Supported by this Author.
	5 BCE -	Supported by the Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, the Apostle J. Rueben Clark , and Secular Biblical Scholars Usher and Petavius.
	6 BCE -	Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Strong, Luvin and Clark.
	7 BCE -	Supported by Secular Biblical Scholars Ideler and Sandclemente.

LOCATION: Bethlehem, Judaea (5 Miles south of Jerusalem)

COMMENTARY: As prophesied, the Son of Man was born in a small village nestled on the top of a stony knoll. Though once the home of Israel's King David, it was destined to be the birth place of the Messiah. The humble village that was probably home to but a couple dozen families was overrun by descendants of generations past assembling to submit to the Roman Census. The Caravansaries were full, forcing the mother and fostering Father of the soon to be born savior to take refuge in one of the nearby caves used by Bedouin shepherds to shelter their sheep. His birth by any measure was humble. He was bound tight in strips of linen as was custom, and laid in what was most probably a stone manger.

FOOTNOTES:

1- there - The "there" spoke of references the vicinity of Bethlehem. So what did "there" look like? **"Mitri Raheb** said that the landscape around Bethlehem was largely the same, except that it used to be forested. Finding a tree in Bethlehem now is pretty rare, but in 4BCE, pines were plentiful. They were all cut by the Romans and Turks sometime after Christ's birth. Bethlehem was actually on the edge between the desert and the farmland. And there was tension between the shepherds of the desert to the East and the farmers to the West. In fact, that the shepherds came to Bethlehem to see Jesus was a very big deal. The tension between the groups was overcome by the necessity to see the baby. The population was only 300 - 1,000 people, so Bethlehem truly was a "little town"... The people in Bethlehem were mostly Jewish and spoke Hebrew, however there were also other religions in the area. Most notably religions honoring "fertility". In Aramaic, "Bethlehem" means "House of the Fertility God". Wow. That was a new one for me. By the year 142 CE, not a single Jew lived in the area. Most of the residents of Bethlehem were stone masons, others were wheat farmers, livestock farmers (sheep and goats, not cows), and weavers. And today stone masonry is still the largest industry (outside of tourism, I suppose). Jesus was probably not born in the winter, because "shepherds were watching their flocks by night". Shepherds only watch their flocks by night when it is comfortable outside. And I can verify that it is cold in Bethlehem in December." (<http://www.bobmay.info/dec142001past.htm>).

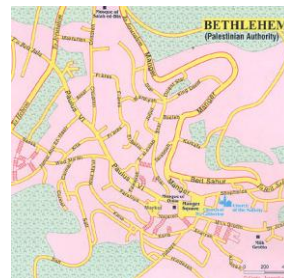


ancient JUDAEAN ROAD



Speaking of the word "there", Bible scholar Joseph Fitzmyer wrote, **"This implies that Mary and Joseph have arrived in Bethlehem...literally 'it happened, in their being there, (that) the days of her giving birth were (ful)filled.'"** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 407). The journey would have been a 4 to 5 day journey over difficult terrain. Sure there were roads, but they were not the roads you and I envision. Their roads were much rougher, uneven, and rocky. We have no information on Mary and Joseph's arrival, but we might assume that Mary would have been tired. Nine months pregnant, and making such a long trip, would have undoubtedly been challenging. Depending on the route they chose to travel, and I would guess that Joseph took his very pregnant wife via the shortest route through Samaria, they would have traversed 92 miles. I hiked 50 miles with a group of scouts on the John Muir Trail. It took 5 days, and I was physically taxed. I couldn't imagine 92 miles and being 9 months pregnant. Even so, that is exactly what the couple did. Amazing!!

When they arrived in Bethlehem, they found a small Judean town. Based on archeological data, it is estimated that only 500 or so people lived in Bethlehem. It was not a big town. Though the town has grown over the centuries, it is still just a small town. In 1948, Bethlehem and the surrounding area grew to 48,000 people. Of course, this was after Israel was again established as a State. It has since decreased in population. The modern day map of the city of Bethlehem tells the story. There are just a couple dozen roads in the city. It would be hard to get lost in Bethlehem.



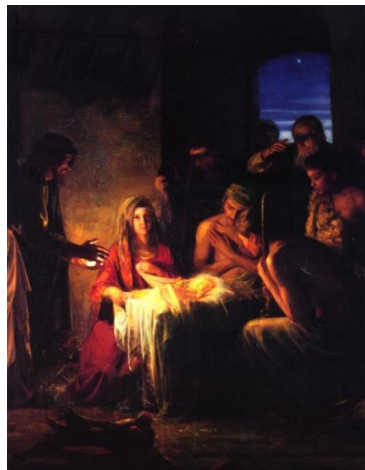
- 2- **The days were accomplished** - Literally, "the time came". This term gives indication that the full term of Mary's pregnancy was accomplished. She was in labor. One might wonder if the trip started her labor. Though this is based on some conjecture, the indication is that Mary was a full term of 40 weeks. With this assumption, one can work backwards to establish some dates. She would have conceived 40 weeks or 280 day prior to April 6, 4BCE. That means that she conceived on approximately July 2, 5BCE.

This brings us back to the same problem: What was the year? Apostles J. Ruben Clark, Bruce R. McConkie and James E. Talmage all studied the date of Jesus' birth. Elder Bruce R. McConkie was the third General Authority to prepare a systematic study of the life of Christ. Deseret Book Company published the four-volume series, *The Mortal Messiah*, beginning in 1979. McConkie reviewed the positions and reasoning of both Talmage and Clark with regard to Jesus' birth date and stated that he would follow Clark's course. Accordingly, Clark dated the Annunciation to Mary in March or April of 5BCE, and the birth of Jesus in December of 5BCE (with the caveat that his birth could also have occurred from **January to April of 4BCE**). So what is the answer to our problem? The honest answer, I don't know with any surety. My study leads me to believe that Jesus was born on April 6, 4BCE.

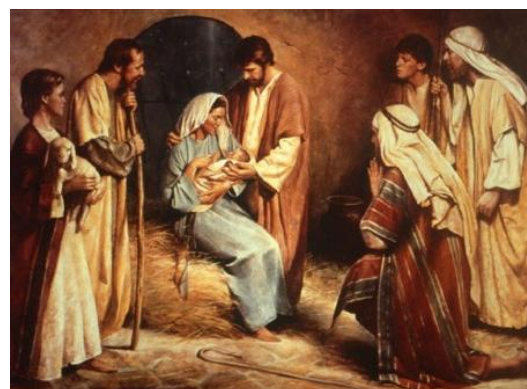
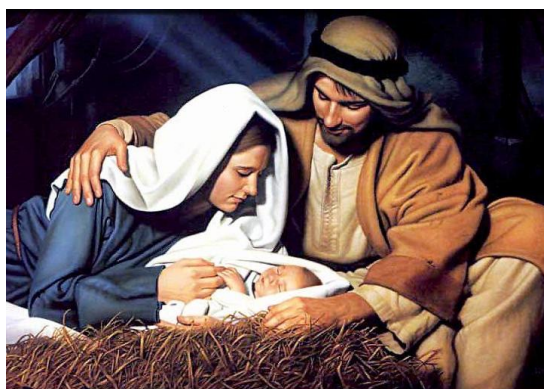
"In treating this topic Dr. Charles F. Deems (*The Light of the Nations*, p.28), after giving careful consideration of the estimates, calculations, and assumptions of men who have employed many means in their investigation and reach only discordant results says: 'It is annoying to see learned men use the same apparatus of calculation and reach the most diverse results. It is bewildering to attempt a reconciliation of these varying calculations.' In an appended note the same author states 'For example: the birth of Our Lord is placed in B.C. 1 by Pearson and Hug; B.C. 2 by Scalinger; B.C. 3 by Baronius and Paulus; B.C. 4 by Bengel, Wieseler, and Greswell; B.C. 5 by Usher and Petavius; B.C. 6 by Strong, Luvin, and Clark; B.C. 7 by Ideler and Sanclemente.'" (*Jesus the Christ*, James E. Talmage, page 109).

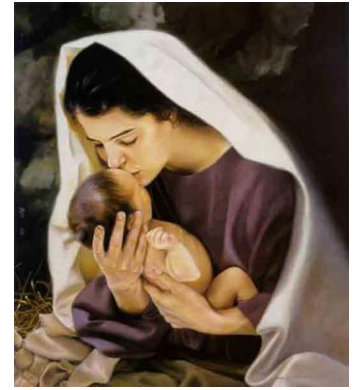
- 3- **delivered** - She should be delivered, means the time had arrived for Mary to give birth to Jesus. Jewish law prohibited Joseph to look upon Mary during labor and birth. The culture required the female neighbors and relatives to gather together to assist Mary in her delivery. The culture would dictate that Joseph wait outside the delivery location and await the news of the birth. One must wonder if the culture was followed given the extraordinary circumstances of Jesus' birth. Luke gives no insight into the delivery, only that she should be delivered. We do have a couple of apocryphal works that shed some light on the subject. The Prophet Joseph Smith instructed that such works may contain useful information; however, they must be read with the spirit since the errors of man are often included. So here are some sources for review with careful and prayerful study.

Apocryphal Work: "Chapter 1, verse (2) Joseph therefore arose, and taking Mary his spouse, went away to Jerusalem and came to Bethlehem, to be enrolled along with his family in his native city. And having come to a cave, Mary told Joseph that the time of the birth was at hand, and that she could not go into the city; but, said she, let us go into this cave. This took place at sunset. And Joseph went out in haste to go for a woman to be near her. When, therefore, he was busy about that, he saw an Hebrew old woman belonging to Jerusalem, and said: Come hither, my good woman, and go into this cave, in which there is a woman near her time. (3) Wherefore, after sunset, the old woman, and Joseph with her, came to the cave, and they both went in. And, behold, it was filled with lights more beautiful than the gleaming of lamps and candles. Or, with the lights of lamps and candles, more beautiful than lightning, and more splendid than sunlight. and more splendid than the light of the sun. The child, enwrapped in swaddling clothes, was sucking the breast of the Lady Mary His mother, being placed in a stall. And when both were wondering at this light, the old woman asks the Lady Mary: Art thou the mother of this Child? And when the Lady Mary gave her assent, she says: Thou art not at all like the daughters of Eve. The Lady Mary said: As my son has no equal among children, so his mother has no equal among women. The old woman replied: My mistress; I came to get payment; I have been for a long time affected with palsy. Our mistress the Lady Mary said to her: Place thy hands upon the child. And the old woman did so, and was immediately cured. Then she went forth, saying: Henceforth I will be the attendant and servant of this child all the days of my life." (*The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour*, Chapter 1, verses 2-3)



Apocryphal Work: "Chapter 1, verse (7) ...The old man therefore, righteous Joseph, rose up and took the virgin Mary and came to Bethlehem, because the time of her bringing forth was at hand. Joseph then inscribed his name in the list; for Joseph the son of David, whose spouse Mary was, was of the tribe of Judah. And indeed Mary, my mother, brought me forth in Bethlehem, in a cave near the tomb of Rachel the wife of the patriarch Jacob, the mother of Joseph and Benjamin." (*The History of Joseph the Carpenter*, Chapter 1, verse 7)





4- **firstborn** - The Greek word from which "firstborn" is translated is "πρωτότοκος" or "prōtotokos". **"The adj. prototokos does not necessarily mean 'firstborn' of many."** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 407). Though many argue that stating "the firstborn" of Mary gives implication that she had more children. True, He was the Only Begotten, in the flesh, of His Father in Heaven; however, there is much to support that Mary and Joseph had other children after Jesus. ***"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"*** (Mark 6:3). Some of Jesus siblings are mentioned in the Bible, though they were indeed only half-brothers and half-sisters. Those mentioned in the Bible are:

- James
- Joseph
- Simon
- Judas
- Un-named Sister



The argument that Christ had siblings is compelling; however, not absolute. The terms "brethren", "brothers", and "sisters" in the ancient script can take on the connotation of close relatives, friends, allies, and yes immediate family. Because neither the Hebrew or Aramaic, the languages spoken by Christ and his disciples, had words such as cousin, the term brother and sister were often used to describe cousins. The writers of the New Testament were brought up to use the Aramaic equivalent of "brethren" to mean both cousins and sons of the same father, in addition to other relatives and even non-relatives. When they wrote the Greek they did the same thing the translators of the Septuagint did. In the Septuagint, the Hebrew word that includes both brothers and cousins was translated as "adelphos", which in Greek has the usually narrow meaning that the English term "brother" has. Unlike Hebrew or Aramaic, Greek has a separate word for cousin, "anepsios", but the translators of the Septuagint favored "adelphos", even for true cousins. There is an Apocryphal work that claims that Joseph had children from a previous marriage, implying that Jesus was the only Son of Mary. This supports a middle ages belief that Mary remained a virgin for the rest of her life. It is doubtful that this is factual. This belief was created during a movement to deify Mary. Even so, here is what the apocryphal work says;

Apocryphal Work: "Chapter 1, verse (2) There was a man whose name was Joseph, sprung from a family of Bethlehem, a town of Judah, and the city of King David. This same man, being well furnished with wisdom and learning, was made a priest in the temple of the Lord. He was, besides, skilful in his trade, which was that of a carpenter; and after the manner of all men, he married a wife. Moreover, he begot for himself sons and daughters, four sons, namely, and two daughters. Now these are their names--Judas, Justus, James, and Simon. The names of the two daughters were Assia and Lydia. At length the wife of righteous Joseph, a woman intent on the divine glory in all her works, departed this life. But Joseph, that righteous man, my father after the flesh, and the spouse of my mother Mary, went away with his sons to his trade, practising the art of a carpenter." (The History of Joseph the Carpenter, Chapter 1, verse 2)

Let's not get stuck on whether or not Mary had more children after Jesus. Whether she did or not does not lessen the real point being made. Jesus was the not only the firstborn of Mary, but He was the firstborn of God the Eternal Father. He was the Firstborn in several ways.

First, He was the first born spiritually. ***"In the pre-mortal spirit life Jesus, Lucifer, and all of us were the spirit children of God and His wives"*** (Gospel Through the Ages, pp. 15, 93-99; Journal of Discourses, Vol. XI, page 122). According to Joseph F. Smith, sixth president of the Church, ***"Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first-born was and is Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors,"*** (Gospel Doctrine, Joseph F. Smith, page 70). Apostle Bruce McConkie wrote, ***"The first spirit to be born in heaven was Jesus"*** (Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, page 129).

Second, he was the first born in the flesh. Joseph F. Smith, Jr. said, ***"The birth of the Savior was a natural occurrence unattended with any degree of mysticism, and the Father God was the literal parent of Jesus in the flesh as well as in the spirit"*** (Religious Truths Defined, page 44). President Hinckley taught, ***"He is the Son of the living God, the Firstborn of the Father, the Only Begotten in the flesh, who left the royal courts on high to be born as a mortal in the most humble of circumstances."*** (General

Conference, "We Look to Christ", Gordon B. Hinckley, April 2002). He is not only the firstborn of the Father in the flesh, but He is the Only begotten in the flesh. Of Jesus the scriptures teach, **"Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him."** (Psalms 89:27-28).

Finally, Jesus is the firstborn of the resurrection. Prior to Jesus, death bound all man and ended his eternal progression. Jesus broke the bands of death and became the first of the resurrection. The Apostle Mark E. Peterson said, **"He died on the cross to atone for the sins of all who will obey Him, and He broke the bands of death to provide a resurrection for us all."** (General Conference, "Creator and Savior", Mark E. Peterson, April 1983).

- 5- **swaddling** - Swaddling clothes are simply strips of cloth, similar to bandages that were tightly wrapped around the newborn child. A lot can be learned about a child's social class by the swaddling clothes used. The elite would use swaddling clothes of great splendor and costs. Such clothes might be of fine linen woven with pure gold thread, or cloth of brilliant color such as purple and blue. The poor, on the other hand, would use wide strips of common cloth.

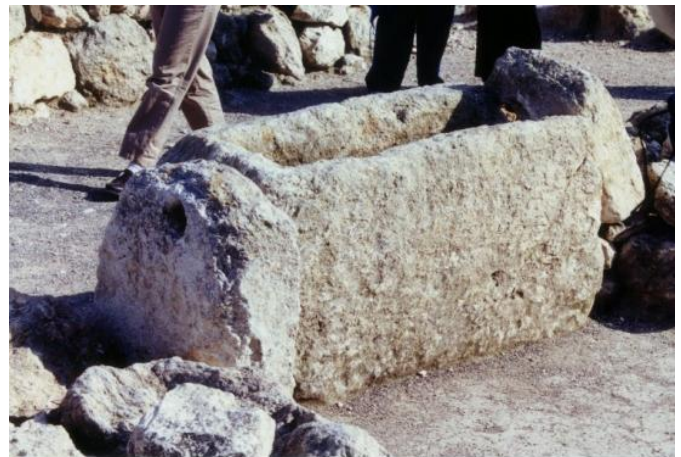


The practice of wrapping an infant in strips of cloth might seem odd to our society; however, it is a practice that is still done in the East. It is believed that a new-born baby's limbs are fragile and pliable. For this reason, the mother will set the arms and legs of the infant in a proper position and then wrap the baby tightly to assure that the bones are set in the proper position. The tightness of the wrap gives the infant the feeling of the tightness experienced in the womb and often brings calmness and comfort. **"The statement declares Mary's maternal care; she did for Jesus what any ancient Palestinian mother would have done for a newborn babe."** (The Gospel According to Luke: I-IX, The Anchor-Yale Bible Commentary, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, page 408).

- 6- **manger** - The word "manger" is derived from the Greek word "φάτνη" or "phatne" which is literally translated as a crib or a manger. In Luke 13:15, the same word is used for the word "stall". In the Septuagint, the Greek term used for this footnote is "ebus", which translates as a crib, but not as a manger.



A manger is a trough used for the feeding of animals. In Westernized nativity scenes, the manger of Christ's birth is one of wood and straw. The reality of the story is that Near Easter mangers were typically made of stone. It is quite probable that the Savior's crib was a stone manger or feed trough similar to a stone manger discovered in Meggido from the same era. The mangers from Meggido are pictured on either side of this paragraph. They were carved into stones by Beduin shepherds who would carve them and leave them for the next shepherds. Some speculate that the Shepherds that were in the field would have used the very same feed trough used as



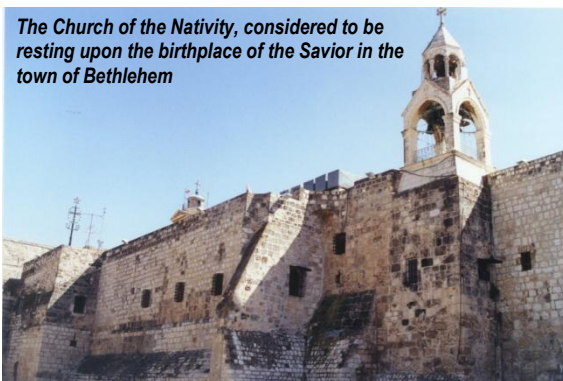
Jesus was laid in as a crib.

- 7- **room** - The Western world widely accepts that Jesus was born in a stable, and yet the term stable is not found in the New Testament at all. The assumption is made that Mary and Joseph must have retired to a place where animals were stabled, since there was a manger present. If this assumption is true, it is most probable that they retired to one of the many limestone caves that dot the land. Such caves were commonly used by Beduin shepherds for stabling their sheep. They would carve stone mangers and vacate them for others to use, or for the next time they were in the area. It would not have been unlikely for Mary and Joseph to find an empty stone cave with a manger available for their new child to be laid. In fact, Queen Helena, the mother of Constantine, identified a cave in Bethlehem as the birth place of the Savior in the year 400CE. Since that time, the Catholic church has erected and maintained the church of the nativity which was built over the cave.



**An example of a natural limestone cave in Israel,
This one is near Shiloh**

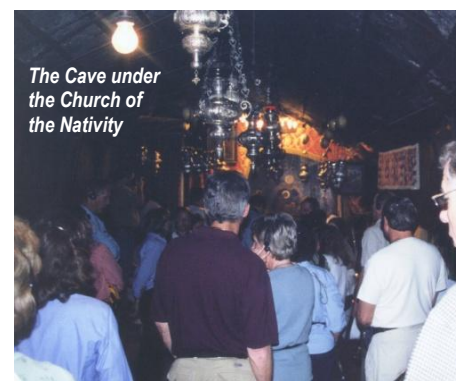
Elder James E. Talmage wrote, **"The Shelter within which Jesus was born was that of one of the numerous limestone caves which abound in the region, and which are still used by travelers as resting places. Canon Farrar said, 'Palestine is not infrequently happens that the entire khan, or at any rate a portion of it in which the animals are housed, is one of those innumerable caves which abound in the limestone rocks of its central hills...'"** (Jesus the Christ, James E. Talmage, page 106).



**The Church of the Nativity, considered to be
resting upon the birthplace of the Savior in the
town of Bethlehem**



**The later re-enforced cave roof under
the church of the Nativity**



**The Cave under
the Church of
the Nativity**



The Catholic Church identified this spot in the cave as the actual spot of Jesus' Birth



The Catholic Church identified this spot in the cave as the spot of Jesus' Manger

8 - inn - The term "inn" is translated from the Greek word "κατάλυμα" or "katalyma" which means a lodging place, an inn, an eating room, a dining room, or a guest chamber. Interestingly, the same Greek word is used for the upper room of the Last Supper. Most scholars feel that the Gospels are referring to the numerous "khans" found throughout the middle east. "On unfrequented roads, where villages were at great intervals, or even outside towns, there were regular **khans**, or places of lodgment for strangers. Like the modern **khans**, these places were open, and generally built in a square, the large court in the middle being intended for the beasts or burden or carriages, while rooms opened upon galleries all around. Of course the rooms were not furnished, nor was any payment expected from the wayfarer. At the same time, some one was generally attached to the **khan** – mostly a foreigner – who would for payment provide anything that might be needful..." (Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Alfred Edersheim, page 49).

What is a Khan? The caravanserai was also known as a khan (Persian خان) or han (Turkish). A caravanserai (Persian: کاروانسرا kār-vānsarā, Turkish kervansaray) was a roadside inn where travelers could rest and recover from the day's journey. The word is also rendered as caravansarai or caravansary. The Persian word kār-vānsarā is a compound word combining "kār-vān (caravan) with sara (palace, building with enclosed courts), to which the Persian suffix -yi is added. Here "caravan" means a group of traders, pilgrims, or other travelers, engaged in long distance travel. Caravanserais supported the flow of commerce, information, and people across the network of trade routes covering Asia, North Africa, and South-Eastern Europe.



Ruins of an Ancient Israelite Caravanserai

Most typically, it was a building with a square or rectangular walled exterior, with a single portal wide enough to permit large or heavily laden beasts such as camels to enter. The courtyard was almost always open to the sky, and the inside walls of the enclosure were outfitted with a number of identical stalls, bays, niches, or chambers to accommodate merchants and their servants, animals, and merchandise. Caravanserais provided water for human and animal consumption, washing, and ritual purifications. Sometimes they even had elaborate baths. They also kept fodder for animals and had shops for travelers where they could acquire new supplies. In addition, there could be shops where merchants could sell some of their goods.



According to 'Manners and Customs of the Bible' by James M. Freeman, "The Eastern 'inn', or caravanserai, bears no resemblance to the inns with which we are acquainted. There are various kinds of these Oriental inns, some being merely small, rude resting-places, such as mentioned in Jeremiah 9:2, while others are capacious and comparatively comfortable. Such an inn presents, at a distance, the appearance of a fortress, being a quadrangular building about a hundred yards long on each side of the square, having its wall about twenty feet high. An arched gateway, surmounted by a tower, opens into a large court, surrounded by a platform, on the level of which are the travelers' rooms. These rooms are not furnished, each traveler being expected to provide for himself everything but actual shelter. He must carry his own bedding, provisions, and cooking utensils. In case of sickness the porter in attendance may minister to his wants...The horses, camels, and baggages are placed in the extensive court, in the center of which is a fountain. Sometimes there are stables formed of covered avenues, extending between the rear wall of the lodging rooms and the exterior wall of the quadrangle, the entrance being at the corners of the quadrangle. These stables are on a level with the court, and thus below the level of the platform on which are the travelers' apartments. This platform; however, projects into the stable, thus forming a ledge or bench above the stable floor. On this ledge the cattle can, if they wish, rest the nose-bags of hair-cloth which contain their food." (Manners and Customs of the Bible, James M. Freeman, page 406). Many believe that it was in such a stable that the Savior was born. Others believe that it was such an inn that Joseph and Mary were turned away from. Note that the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) changes inn to inns. Possibly making reference to multiple Khans or more probably the multiple spaced in each Khan.



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Ruins of another Ancient Israelite Caravanserai

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