

# Joseph's Son

A Musical Telling of the Christmas Story

*Book by Bil Rodgers*

*Music and Lyrics by Ken Cooper*

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**STORY OF THE PLAY**

We powerfully follow an old, blind rabbi, Eleazar, as he returns with his grandson to Nazareth to find the answer to a question that has plagued him for most of his adult life: "Who was the son of his old friend, Joseph?" In seeking the answer, Eleazar takes a journey back in time to remember the strange events that came with a simple carpenter to the village on the edge of nowhere...of the romance that bloomed between Joseph and the daughter of Joachim...of the disgrace that stained the betrothal of Joseph and Mary...of the events that set them all on the road to Bethlehem. This is the story of the Nativity as never seen before, told with a Broadway like score and a libretto from the pen of an award winning playwright. About 90 minutes.

## **CHARACTERS**

*(9 men, 6 women, plus ensemble. In order of appearance)*

**OLD RABBI:** He is a man of seventy and totally blind. He wears the garments of a pious Jewish rabbi, complete with prayer shawl, phylacteries, and gray beard. They are, however, well worn and tattered indicating that while a scholar, this man is poor.

**REUBEN:** The Old Rabbi's ten-year-old grandson. A little precocious, perhaps, but the old man depends heavily upon him for assistance.

**YOUNG ELEAZAR:** The Old Rabbi at thirty. He wears a much newer duplicate of the Old Rabbi's costume. He also wears a dark beard, which helps the resemblance to the actor playing the Old Rabbi.

**UZAL:** A grower of grapes and figs, he is roughly the same age as Young Eleazar, give or take a year or two.

**ADINA:** She makes and sells scarves, but is also the village gossip in Nazareth, an ugly woman by demeanor.

**HEBER:** A maker and seller of wines.

**JOSEPH:** The carpenter is about thirty, not bad looking, the romantic lead. Like all pious Jews, he wears a beard.

**MARY:** The actress cast should have the mature voice to sing the role, but capable of looking like a reasonably young girl.

**JOACHIM:** Mary's father, a man of middle age.

**MARY'S SISTER #1:** Mary's oldest sister.

**MARY'S SISTER #2:** The middle sister, a little older than Mary.

**ANNA:** Mary's mother, a few years younger than her husband.

**ELIZABETH:** Mary's older cousin, a woman about sixty.

**ZECHARIAH:** Elizabeth's husband who is a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem and should be dressed accordingly as a very pious Jew.

**PASHUR:** A male servant in the house of Zechariah.

**THE COMPANY:** Represents the citizens of Nazareth. Also from it's ranks are taken some of the minor speaking parts such as Man #1, Man #2, Man #3, Woman #1 and Woman #2, et cetera.

**TIME:** The Roman Year 786 with flashbacks to the Roman Year 746.

**PLACE:** The Holy Land (Nazareth, Hebron, Bethlehem.)

## **MUSICAL NUMBERS**

### ACT I

#### OVERTURE

1. I JUST DON'T KNOW - (Old Rabbi.)
- 1a. INCIDENTAL
2. SONS OF NAZARETH - (Young Eleazar & Company.)
3. NAZARETH - (Young Eleazar.)
4. THERE IS MONEY TO BE MADE - (Young Eleazar.)
5. BEHOLD THOU ART FAIR - (Joseph.)
6. NEGOTIATION - (Young Eleazar.)
7. SISTER MARY - (Mary's Sister #1 & Sister #2.)
8. BLESSING - (Company.)
- 8a. INCIDENTAL
9. TRIO – Part 1 (Mary, & Joseph)  
TRIO – Part 2 (Zechariah.)  
INCIDENTAL
10. WEDDING DANCE - (Company.)
- 10a. INCIDENTAL

### ENTR'ACT

### ACT II

11. GOSSIP - (Adina, Young Eleazar, Company.)
12. WHY, LORD? - (Joseph.)
- 12a. INCIDENTAL
13. ON THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM - (Men of the Company.)
14. MY LITTLE ONE - (Mary & Women of the Company.)
15. A CHILD IS BORN - (Company.)
- 15a. INCIDENTAL
16. LOVELY ONE YOU ARE - (Joachim, Eleazar & Company.)
17. WHAT DID THEY KNOW? - (Old Rabbi.)
18. HE WASN'T JOSEPH'S SON

## **ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION NOTES AT END OF SCRIPT**

**ACT I  
SCENE 1**

MUSICAL - OVERTURE

*(AT RISE: The stage is in total darkness. Immediately as the OVERTURE ends out of that blackness comes the OLD RABBI.)*

OLD RABBI: Stop!

*(The LIGHTS come up. On the stage looking lost are a boy, REUBEN, and an OLD RABBI who stand near a waist-high stone wall. Actually, we don't yet know that the old man is a Rabbi, but from his Tallit prayer shawl and his phylacteries, we can see he is a very pious man. We know he is blind, because he rests his hand on the boy's shoulder and is led wherever he goes. In his free hand the Old Rabbi carries a staff. Reuben is between ten and twelve years of age. Over his free shoulder he carries a large bundle. If we were to hazard a guess, we'd say they are travelers. And, from their well-worn clothing, we'd say they are poor.)*

OLD RABBI: *(Sniffing the air.)* This is it!

REUBEN: How do you know, Grandfather?

OLD RABBI: *(Taps his nose.)* By my nose, Reuben. The smell of this village has always been enough to make anyone want to stop breathing. This is the village in which I lived for years. We are home.

REUBEN: *(Looking around.)* I can see why you left it, Grandfather. What I can't see is, why we have come back.

*(REUBEN'S expression tells us that he thinks this place is the pits.)*

OLD RABBI: The questions, Reuben. I've told you ...

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*(REUBEN mimics the OLD RABBI, mouthing the next four words silently with his Grandfather.)*

OLD RABBI: *(Cont'd.)* ...it is the questions that have brought me back. The questions my mind has asked day and night, night and day for forty years.

REUBEN: Yes, well, maybe we should find a place to stay.

OLD RABBI: *(Lost in his own thoughts.)* This is where those questions began.

REUBEN: It could rain tonight, you know. I see clouds. We should have a roof over our heads. We should hurry before all the cheap places are taken.

OLD RABBI: *(Still not listening.)* Who was he? Why did such things happen? Was he this? Or was he that? For forty years I've been trying to understand.

MUSICAL #1 - I JUST DON'T KNOW

OLD RABBI: To find the answers about Joseph's son.

*(Sings.)* THERE ARE DREAMS WITH SHADOWS  
UNCLEAR TO ME.

THERE ARE 'WHYS', THERE ARE 'WHATS,'  
WHY CAN'T I SEE?

THERE ARE QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS  
THAT I DON'T KNOW.

THERE ARE THINGS I HAVE HEARD  
BUT ARE THEY SO?

THERE ARE RIDDLES AND PUZZLES  
TO BOGGLE THE MIND.

BUT SOLUTIONS? OR RESOLUTIONS?  
I JUST CAN'T FIND.

OLD RABBI: *(Continuing, Spoken over VAMP.)* Forty years ago in this very street the questions began.

REUBEN: I'm hungry, Grandfather. Soon people will be coming in from the fields. Caravans will be stopping for the night. We have to find a place to stay before things fill up.

## **End of Freeview**

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