

Christmas 0025

By Philip Smith

A young man is going back to a place he knows well. It's a bit of a trek from home but he knows he must go. It's a sort of pilgrimage, especially when it has more memories for his Mum and Dad than for him. They used to talk about it a great deal when he was old enough to understand. Although it wasn't exactly the same time of year, the town was still pretty full and he knew enough details to be able to find the place wondering if it was still there and if anyone might remember his parents. Amazingly it was, and he hoped he would find the usual Middle Eastern hospitality that everyone expected from what was on paper a bit of a back water.

He found his way into the main quarter and asked around for anyone who may have been working there some 25 years back. To his surprise one of the women, he met assured him that it was still in the same old hands and though the boss was now getting on a bit, hearing going and bad back, he was still in fine fettle, making folk welcome and telling them yarns well into the night. The owner was ushered into his company though neither recognised each other and he wondered what the stranger may bring forth. The young man though strong from his father's profession was not the handsomest kid on the block except for a glint in his eye that his father assured him came from his mother.

'Well young man, how can I help you the owner piped up.'

'Oh, thank you, I was wondering if you might remember something quite a long time ago in fact about 25 years.'

'That's a way back and my memory not's so good as it used to be, but it's not bad either.'

'My parents came here one year, well they had to, a census and all that and my mum was heavily pregnant with me ha-ha. They hadn't expected the place to be so busy and family in town seemed unhelpful shunning my mum but I'm guessing it may have been

you who was very kind to them and to cut a long story short, well I was born round the back.'

'Does that ring any bells?'

'Ring any bells ha-ha, I should say so. There's not a day goes by when I don't recall your Mum and Dad , it caused quite a stir, though not many others got to know except a few of the locals, shepherds they be, we don't often get them along here, too busy and they can wreak a bit, but that night the few that were here, well we welcomed them too with open arms. I think we would have welcomed the whole world that night if they turned up. My, my look at you, how you've grown. So why have you come?'

'I've come to say thank you, to you and everyone who helped my Mum that night. I doubt if you could imagine how much your kindness meant to my parents. Mum will be surprised that I met you and that you remember her.'

'So, what about your dad?'

'Oh, he died a few years back, but it's not just me and mum back home. There's my half brothers and sisters. Oh dada, as I always called him wasn't my real father, but he loved me to bits and I love him. I've not just come back to say thank you, there's something else. How has life gone for you?'

'Well after you left everything took a turn for the worse. Our eldest boy was killed by Herod and his thugs. We've got other children but we miss our lad as if he was still with us.'

'So why else have you come? Well, my parents heard about that too. We managed to escape and spent some time in Egypt but Mum and Dad felt bad that they and I had survived when they knew others hadn't. I can't explain all of it yet but I told Mum I would come and say thank you and I would say sorry too for what you all went through and I wanted to tell you one other thing. I promise you, one day you will see your son again.'

'Something tells me we will. Thanks for taking the trouble to find us. I've always wondered how you would turn out. You tell your mum she should be proud of you, in the best sort of way and you give her our regards and don't leave it 25 years until you call again.'

'I can't promise that that. Shalom.'

'Shalom, shalom'

Have a blessed Christmas 2025

Keep the Faith, but never ever to yourselves.

Love Philip x