

On their way, they came to Jerusalem. Herod lived there, a very nasty character. When he heard that a new king was to be born, he became frightened. The little king would surely not want to claim his throne? He lied to the Three Wise Men: "Go and search for the new king, so that I, too, can go and see him and worship him."

Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar promised to do so and continued on their journey. Then the time came: the star hovered in the sky above a stable in the little town of Bethlehem. There in the stable were Maria, Joseph and Jesus, the Christ Child, sleeping peacefully in his crib. As the Three Wise Men approached, the baby woke up and smiled gleefully at his visitors. The Wise Men from the East knew at once, that this must be a very special baby and bowed down before him in awe.

And because you don't go visiting empty-handed, especially not when visiting a real king, they had brought something with them: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Those were very precious gifts. That night, an angel appeared before the three men. He said to them: "Don't tell Herod where baby Jesus is, because he does not want to worship him, he wants to harm him." Being wise, as they were, Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar listened to the angel and decided: "We'll return to our homes in the East without calling on Herod on the way back."

And so it was possible for Joseph to take Mary and the Christ Child and flee to far-away Egypt, to protect his son from the wicked King Herod. Now you know what really happened in Bethlehem long ago!

If you'd like to learn more about the story, then open up your bibles and read the story in Matthew 2, 1–12.



Autor: Udo Peise
Illustration: Antje Flad
Graphics / Design: Jonas Jungblut
Product management: Anneli Ganser
Copy editing: Nicola Berger
Translation: Birgit Irgang
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Arnoldstraße 13d
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CH: Dessauer, 8045 Zürich
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Come on, off we go to Bethlehem

A very holy journey to Bethlehem for 2 to 4 players aged 4 years and up

No doubt you know the story of the Three Kings who followed a star...

The journey was long and arduous. They were tired and exhausted.

The camel complained constantly about his legs aching. But still they kept going, on and on, always following the star. For they really wanted to know where it was leading them to. There! Suddenly it stopped! The kings opened their eyes wide. Their destination was close at hand. One king called out, full of joy: „Look, the star has stopped over there. Come on, we're almost there!“ Nothing and no-one could stop them anymore. Only a short time later, they were standing in front of baby Jesus and his parents.

He was laughing, overjoyed, in his mother's arms, looking at the visitors with curiosity...

You have certainly already noticed that there are four of the Three Kings in the game, and not three. Well, that is all because the camel can't count properly. It could just as well have said, there were five or twelvety-three Kings. But it thought that four Three Kings was a good number. But you know that's nonsense...

The aim of the game

Each of the kings would like to be the first one to see baby Jesus. So that the other kings don't notice that, each one of them tries to push himself ahead of the others. The first king to reach the Holy Family is the winner.

Your game pieces

- 1 Maria with baby Jesus
- 1 Joseph
- 4 Holy Kings
- 1 camel
- 1 die
- 4 king tokens



Game set-up

A game board is not necessary for the game. Play it on a large table (ideally 60 x 120 cm) or on the floor. Take the Holy Family and place them at the edge of the table or at one corner of the table. If you are playing on the floor, then look for a nice spot and stand the Holy Family there. Stand the four Three Kings and the camel in a row, side by side, about one metre away so they are all the same distance away from the Holy Family.

Note: Don't worry! It makes no difference if you play on a smaller table and the Holy Kings are less than one metre away from the Holy Family. Just try to place them as far apart as possible. The lesser the distance between the Holy Kings and the Holy Family, the shorter the time of play. Shuffle the four king tokens face down. Next, each one of you takes one of them and looks at it, secretly. The colour of the king token shows you which king you are playing with. But psst! Don't let on which king is yours! Spare king tokens are moved to one side, face down. They are still in the game but they are not turned over to show the colours hiding underneath until the end of the game. Have the die ready.

How to play

The youngest player begins. Then you are playing in turns, in a clockwise direction. Depending on the number you throw, you can move any king 1, 2 or 3 camel steps forward.

How does a King move forward?

Take the camel and place it in front of a king of your choice, very close. The camel's bottom must touch the king's tummy. Then lift the king up and stand him in front of the camel. Make sure the camel's muzzle is touching the king's back. That counts as one camel step. Depending on the number thrown, you must repeat this 1, 2 or 3 times.



What does the red One mean?

You are allowed to move any king back one camel step: place the camel behind any king, so that the camel's muzzle touches the king's back. Lift the king up and set him down behind the camel so that his tummy touches the camel's bottom.

Tip: It's best if you don't move your own king forward every time, so that your fellow players don't notice which king is yours. Otherwise, your fellow players can easily annoy you by purposely moving your king back, when they throw a red One.

End of the game

The game ends when one king has reached the Holy Family: that means the space between the king and the Holy Family is so small that a camel no longer fits in between them lengthwise. Now you can turn the king tokens over, including those lying at the side. The winner is the player whose king is standing directly in front of the Holy Family. The others may continue to throw the die and catch up fast. If no-one has the corresponding king token for the king who reaches the Holy Family first, then the score is a tie.

For the younger players in the nativity game (aged 4 to 5 years)

The game is played as described above but with one exception: the king tokens are not used but returned to the box. Each child chooses a king. The remaining kings are also returned to the box.

The Three Kings -

A read aloud story by Nicola Berger

As you know, in reality, there were not four, but only three Kings – even if the camel who can't count insists on there being four of them. And another thing: the kings weren't really kings, but wise men, very clever men. But here too, the camel must have got things mixed up. Please don't take offence though, the camel is getting on a bit. Now to the true story and how it's supposed to have taken place in Bethlehem:

The Three Wise Men were called Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar and came from the East. They knew a lot about the stars and had discovered a new brightly shining star in the sky. "Mmmh, I wonder what the meaning of that star is", thought Caspar. "It could lead us to a new-born king!" contemplated Melchior. "Come on, let's go and find out!" suggested Balthasar. So they set off together with their camels on an arduous journey through the desert, on a search for the baby king.