

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing



LEW WALLACE'S

BEN-HUR

Dramatized by
JOHN MCGREEVEY



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and professional acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our Web site: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law, is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MCMLX by JOHN MCGREEVEY and
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved

(BEN-HUR)

BEN-HUR

A Dramatization

FOR TEN MEN, TEN WOMEN AND EXTRAS

CHARACTERS

JUDAH	BEN-HUR
TIRZAH	his sister
MIRIAM	his mother
AMRAH	nurse of the Hurs
MESSALA	a Roman
CAPTAIN	of the Roman guard
SIMONIDES	former chief steward for the Hurs
ESTHER	his daughter
IRAS	an Egyptian
BALTHAZAR	her father
SHEIK ILDERIM	an Arab chieftain
QUINTUS ARRIUS	a Roman tribune
FESTUS	chief of the rowers
DRUSILLA	a Roman matron
MAID	a slave girl
THORD	} gladiators
IRMIN	
RUTH	a servant
ANNA	a woman of Jerusalem
MARTHA	of Bethany
EXTRAS	Soldiers, Women, Men, Children, Joseph, Mary, Gaspar, Melchior

SYNOPSIS

PROLOGUE: *The Nativity.*

SCENE ONE: *The rooftop of the Hur palace in Jerusalem.*

SCENE TWO: *Section of a Roman galley, three years later.*

SCENE THREE: *A rocky beach, the next morning.*

SCENE FOUR: *Reception hall in Simonides' house in Antioch,
five years later.*

INTERMISSION

SCENE FIVE: *Room in the apartments of Messala in Antioch, two weeks later.*

SCENE SIX: *Outside the tent of Sheik Ilderim, that same evening.*

SCENE SEVEN: *A section of the tower-roof in the Circus in Antioch, the next afternoon.*

INTERMISSION

SCENE EIGHT: *The same as Scene One, rooftop of the Hur palace in Jerusalem, two years later.*

SCENE NINE: *Road near Jerusalem, the following day.*

SCENE TEN: *Rooftop of the Hur palace again, Good Friday.*

EPILOGUE: *Calvary, Good Friday.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

COSTUMING: Strict authenticity is not essential in planning the costumes. Strive to achieve the general feeling in the robes and tunics of the period. Inasmuch as the staging of the play stresses simplicity, use color generously in the costuming. The many excellent costume books available will aid you in costuming the play easily and inexpensively.

JUDAH: When the play opens, he is about twenty, a well-built, handsome youth with gentleness and sensitivity in his face and manner. As the play progresses he becomes an impressive-looking young man. He is dressed as a Roman in simple luxury when we see him in Scene Four and changes for the chariot race in Scene Seven.

TIRZAH: She is a charming girl in her late teens. Toward the end of the play, in Scene Nine, she is heavily veiled, and the rest of her body is also covered. From her movements we sense that the disease (leprosy) has begun to cripple and deform her.

MIRIAM: She is a smallish woman in her forties; no vanity mars her true loveliness. She dresses simply but beautifully in Scene One. In Scene Nine, like Tirzah, she is heavily veiled, and her movements indicate the extent to which she, too, has been affected by the disease.

AMRAH: She is in her sixties, a devoted nurse and serving woman. In Scene Eight, her hair is white, her face heavily lined by suffering and privation, and she walks with a slight limp.

MESSALA: He is a handsome youth in his early twenties at the opening of the play. His manner is haughty, his smile patronizing. When we see him again five years later, there is little change, although around the eyes and mouth are subtle signs of dissipation.

CAPTAIN: He is a young, virile Roman guard.

ESTHER: She is a shy, unassuming young girl in her teens, tender and compassionate.

SIMONIDES: He is in his late fifties, but seems older. He is terribly crippled as the result of beatings and tortures suffered at the hands of the Romans. He uses two canes when he walks.

IRAS: She is an incredibly beautiful Egyptian girl in her early twenties. She has the poise of a queen. Her clothing accentuates her natural beauty, and she wears an abundance of jewelry.

BALTHAZAR: He is a venerable man in his seventies, with a gentle spirituality. He has a flowing white beard, and his hair is also snow white. He should wear simple robes, with a brightly-colored shawl around his shoulders.

SHEIK ILDERIM: Dressed in the robes of an Arab chieftain, he is an imposing figure, robust and hearty. He is in his sixties, and yet there is a youthful vigor in his movements. His beard may be gray, but his eyes retain the sparkle of youth.

QUINTUS: He is a distinguished-looking Roman of fifty. His proud carriage and direct look mark him for the brilliant soldier he has been.

FESTUS: He is a chunky, burly man, chief of the rowers. His passive, methodical nature makes him ideal for the job he has been given.

DRUSILLA: She is a hard, vain and superficially beautiful woman in her late thirties. She is richly dressed.

MAID: She is a very pretty serving-maid in her teens. She has a cool, fresh beauty.

THORD: He is a huge blond giant of a man. His face is scarred and brutalized by his long years as a gladiator.

IRMIN: Thord's companion is younger and not as bulky a man; in fact he bears a slight resemblance to Judah.

RUTH: She is a servant; she can be any age.

ANNA: She is a young mother.

MARTHA: Martha is a woman of middle age, whose bearing suggests strength of purpose.

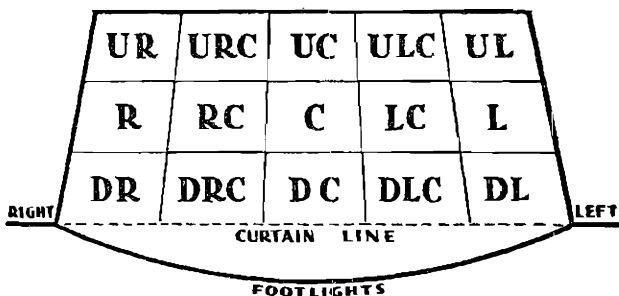
PRODUCTION NOTES

STAGING: This is a simple play about people and events, not a spectacle concerning itself with elaborate pageantry and chariot races. Complicated scenery is unessential; to the contrary, it would be a hindrance to the deep spiritual message the play offers. A setting of curtains, or a bare stage with a plain backdrop is the only requirement. Lighting will enable the director to evoke the mood of each scene as well as to indicate the time of day: bright lighting to indicate sunlight and the daytime; somber, dim lighting to suggest the more dramatic scenes, the rocky beach or the scene at Calvary. Many of the same pieces of furniture can be used again and again merely by covering them with different pieces of cloth, or adding a brightly-colored cushion to a stool or couch.

Hold the attention of the audience during the short waits between scenes by keeping the house lights lowered and by using brief interludes of mood music.

TEMPO: Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag. It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only, with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

PROPERTIES

Prologue

GENERAL: Manger with baby wrapped in swaddling clothes.
WISE MEN: Gifts.

Scene One

GENERAL: Parapet (railing), divan, serving table, bench, two stools.

MIRIAM: Bowl of fresh fruit.

TWO ROMAN SOLDIERS: Swords.

CAPTAIN: Sword.

Scene Two

GENERAL: Table and stool on small platform, table, chair and couch on larger platform (platforms optional), map on Quintus' table, helmet, sword and shield on couch.

FESTUS: Gavel, key ring, sword.

NORSEMAN: Sword.

WOUNDED ROMAN SOLDIER: Sword.

Scene Three

GENERAL: Several boxes covered with piece of gray ground cloth to represent rocks.

QUINTUS: Large ornate ring.

Scene Four

GENERAL: Table and two high-backed chairs, ottoman.

SIMONIDES: Two canes.

ESTHER: Tray with decanter of wine and several small wine goblets.

Scene Five

GENERAL: Ornate couch, serving table, desk and chair; on serving table: bowl of fresh fruit, decanter of wine and goblets, small bell; on desk: pen, writing materials, scroll.

SHEIK: Slip of paper, second piece of paper.

Scene Six

GENERAL: Section of tent and tent poles, platform (optional), cushions and stools inside tent, three stools and cushion outside tent, two lamps.

ARAB WOMAN: Light to light lamps, tray with decanter of wine and some goblets.

SIMONIDES: Scroll, paper, second paper.

Scene Seven

GENERAL: Parapet (same as used in Scene One), garlands of flowers, stools and benches.

SHEIK: Program.

IRMIN: Short iron bludgeon.

ESTHER: White ribbon pinned to her robe.

Scene Eight

GENERAL: Same as Scene One.

SIMONIDES: Papers.

AMRAH: Tray with decanter of wine, one of water, some cakes, goblets and a scroll.

IRAS: Scroll.

Scene Nine

GENERAL: Few large boulders or rocks (same as used in Scene Three), well with bucket attached to a rope, stones, fallen tree trunk (optional).

ANNA: Pitcher.

CHILD: Cup.

MARTHA: Bundles, with gourd in one of them.

MARY: Bundles.

Scene Ten

GENERAL: Same as Scene Eight.

Epilogue

GENERAL: Boulders (same as used in Scene Nine).

PROLOGUE

HOUSE LIGHTS DARKEN: *After appropriate music, the stage lights come up D R, in front of the curtain. The THREE WISE MEN, Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, enter D R, one by one. Each carries his gift. They pause and look toward D L stage, and up. Slowly, at D L stage, a dim light appears, growing steadily, revealing the Nativity group. JOSEPH and MARY kneel on either side of a manger in which a baby lies wrapped in swaddling clothes. Slowly, reverently, the THREE WISE MEN cross the stage. They approach the manger and the light there grows in brilliance. Each of the three Kings in turn kneels and holds out his gift to the Baby in the manger. The picture is held motionless as the stage lights dim slowly; the music swells until the stage is dark, then stops abruptly.]*

SCENE ONE

SCENE: *A section of a rooftop terrace of the Ben-Hur palace in Jerusalem. A waist-high parapet (railing) running from left to right, upstage, is the only requirement needed to suggest the setting; if practical, there can be a vista of blue sky and perhaps the cut-outs of the roofs of other buildings in the far distance. At R C a divan is placed at a slight angle. There is a serving table at L C stage. Upstage of it is a bench, and on either side are small stools. A few shrubs in earthen pots can be placed here and there to lend color and freshness. Entrance to the terrace is at R stage.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *The stage is deserted. From upstage and off comes the faint sound of blaring trumpets and the distant shouting and yelling of a crowd. This should continue throughout the scene. After a moment, TIRZAH BEN-HUR runs onto the terrace from R. She's excited and a little breathless as she moves to the parapet and peers off, straining to glimpse the source of the noise. She stands on tiptoes, leans out, bracing herself on the parapet. AMRAH, a middle-aged serving-woman, comes in R. She sees TIRZAH leaning over the parapet and moves swiftly to her.*]

AMRAH. Don't lean out so far, child! You'll fall. Half these roof tiles are loose. [*Pulls her back.*]

TIRZAH. Stop fussing, Amrah—and I'm not a "child" any more.

AMRAH [*with a humorous chuckle*]. Oh, aren't you?

TIRZAH. No. So I don't need a nurse. [*Moves down to C, as AMRAH follows.*]

AMRAH. I'll remember that next time you want me to tell you a story or sing you to sleep.

TIRZAH [*grimacing and giving AMRAH a playful hug, then looking back toward parapet as she says:*]. Judah says the parade will pass right below us. . . .

AMRAH. Himmmp! Parades! Excuses for a lot of lazy good-for-nothings to stop work and look at a flock of peacocks in armor. I've no time for parades. [*Turns to go out R again.*]

[*At that moment, MESSALA enters R. He moves toward TIRZAH, who is rather awed by him. AMRAH continues on out R.*]

MESSALA. So, here's the little sister. Did you need fresh air after listening to your brother and me?

[*JUDAH BEN-HUR and his mother, MIRIAM, have come in R, following MESSALA. At the moment, JUDAH is deeply disturbed, though trying to mask his feeling.*]

TIRZAH [*to MESSALA*]. I came up here because I don't want to miss seeing the new Procurator.

MESSALA [*nodding and moving a little back toward parapet*].

Your interest is commendable. Judea's needed a man like Gratus.

JUDAH [*pausing R C with MIRIAM*]. Someone to remind us we're Roman slaves? [*Though JUDAH speaks quietly, the bitterness is apparent. MIRIAM looks at him in quick concern.*

MESSALA turns to face him, a new shrewdness in his manner.

TIRZAH moves over next to MIRIAM.]

MESSALA. It's a fact your people seem to forget, Judah.

JUDAH. Gratus made a mistake, replacing our high priest Hannas with a man like Ishmael—

MESSALA [*moving D L C, enjoying this opportunity to bait JUDAH*]. Gently, my friend. You're forgetting a Roman procurator can't make a mistake. [*MIRIAM is well aware of growing tension between the two men. She turns to TIRZAH, who has been listening with interest to the exchange.*

MESSALA, meanwhile, sits on downstage end of serving table.]

MIRIAM. Tirzah—I need your help, . . . [*Takes TIRZAH'S arm and starts guiding her R. TIRZAH is reluctant to go.*]

TIRZAH. Mother—I don't want to miss the parade—

JUDAH. We'll call you. [*TIRZAH has to accept this. She and MIRIAM go out R. There is a little awkward silence as two men are left alone. MESSALA seems relaxed and at ease. He watches JUDAH, who paces away from him, upstage, toward parapet.*]

MESSALA [*after brief silence*]. Five years have changed you, Judah.

JUDAH [*turning to face MESSALA*]. They've changed us both. I wish you were the Messala who went to Rome.

MESSALA [*sbrugging*]. He was a boy. Boys don't see things as they are.

JUDAH. But now you see things so clearly that you make fun of your old friends?

MESSALA. I'm not laughing at you, Judah; just at your old-

fashioned ideas. It's not only me that's changed. It's the world. Mars is the ruler these days. That's the way for me—the life of a soldier. . . . What about you?

JUDAH [*coming c*]. I haven't finished school——

MESSALA [*mockingly*]. You'll go from college to the Synagogue and then maybe a seat in the Sanhedrin—another dull life with no opportunities. Not for me, thanks. Not while there's so much of the world left to be conquered.

JUDAH. And you want your share of it?

MESSALA [*nodding, rising, as his excitement grows*]. Think of it, Judah—a life filled with money, wine, women, games. [*Crosses to JUDAH.*] Tell you what: When I'm prefect, with all of Judea to command, I'll make you my high priest. [*Puts an arm about JUDAH'S shoulder. JUDAH turns angrily away from MESSALA and moves toward parapet. MESSALA laughs.*] You've gone sour on me, Judah. [*Moves D R.*] I used to be able to count on you to laugh——

JUDAH. You haven't given me any reason to laugh today, Messala. I looked forward to seeing an old friend and instead . . . [*Breaks off, staring at MESSALA with open disillusionment.*]

MESSALA. . . . instead you see a Roman. [*JUDAH doesn't answer. He looks out over parapet. MESSALA moves up to him.*] You're angry because you think I intend to get rich plundering your people——

JUDAH [*interrupting*]. Don't you?

MESSALA. Some Roman will. Why not Messala? And why shouldn't you have a share in it, too?

JUDAH [*moving below table L C*]. You want me to bend my knee to Rome instead of to the God of my father——

MESSALA. Rome is the world. You and everyone else are what Rome wants you to be. Let's enter the service of the new Procurator together.

JUDAH. Do you know Gratus?

MESSALA [*shaking his head, smiling confidently as he comes c*]. Not yet. But I'll find a way to show him Messala is a man he needs close to him. [*Moves quickly to JUDAH.*]

What do you say, Judah? Shall we start the climb together?
JUDAH [*shaking his head*]. Gratus is here to humiliate my people. Anyone who's in his service will have to carry out that humiliation.

MESSALA [*sbrugging*]. You're a narrow little provincial. You can't understand the new philosophy. . . .

JUDAH. I understand it well enough to hate it. . . .

MESSALA [*brief pause, looking at him strangely*]. Hate! That's a strong word, Judah. I came here to visit a friend. It seems I've found an enemy. [*For a moment, two men face each other. MESSALA'S face shows his contempt for JUDAH. JUDAH meets MESSALA'S eyes unwaveringly.*] So be it, Judah Ben-Hur. Live the slave you were born to be. [*Turns abruptly and starts swiftly away toward R stage. JUDAH takes a step after him.*]

JUDAH [*calling after MESSALA*]. The peace of the Lord go with you. [*MESSALA turns and answers JUDAH'S farewell with a laugh and a mock bow.*]

[*As MESSALA turns to continue on his way, he nearly collides with MIRIAM, who is bringing a bowl of fresh fruit. He quickly steps aside to let her pass and then strides out R. MIRIAM looks after him in surprise. Then she moves to JUDAH.*]

MIRIAM. Is something the matter, Judah?

JUDAH [*avoiding his mother's eyes*]. Messala and I won't be seeing each other again. [*MIRIAM moves with bowl of fruit to table and sets it down there.*] When we were boys, he enjoyed mocking strangers. Now he laughs at me and everything I believe. [*Sinks down moodily right of table. MIRIAM comes up behind him. She rests her hand on his shoulder.*]

MIRIAM. Judah—when a Roman looks down at us and laughs, he's doing what Egyptians, Assyrians and Macedonians did before. Since the laugh is against God, the end's sure to be the same.

JUDAH [*staring front*]. I've known how the Romans felt, but till now it didn't bother me——

MIRIAM. If your father had lived, he'd have showed you how to live as a Jew and still be respected by the Gentiles.

JUDAH. I want to be worthy of him.

MIRIAM. You will be.

JUDAH [*moodily, shaking his head*]. How? What am I going to be?

MIRIAM. Time enough to decide that.

JUDAH [*rising, pacing away from MIRIAM, D R C*]. Messala wanted me to enlist with him in the Procurator's guard.

MIRIAM. If you feel as you say you do, would you fight for Rome?

JUDAH [*facing his mother*]. I might fight for her to learn how to fight against her.

MIRIAM [*sitting on bench behind table*]. I hoped you'd carry on your father's work . . .

JUDAH [*moving to her, shaking his head as he looks down at her*]. I'm not sure yet how I'll serve Judea and you—but I don't think it'll be as a merchant.

MIRIAM [*taking a moment to accept this, then hiding her disappointment*]. The choice is yours, Judah. [*Looks up at him with a smile of confidence.*]

[TIRZAH enters R.]

TIRZAH [*moving up to parapet, looking down*]. Hasn't the parade started?

JUDAH. Not yet. [*MIRIAM rises and starts R. TIRZAH turns as she sees her mother leaving.*]

TIRZAH. Aren't you going to watch, Mother?

MIRIAM [*at R, shaking her head*]. I'll let you tell me about it later. [*Goes out R. TIRZAH checks street below. Satisfied that parade isn't yet in sight, she turns to JUDAH, who has sat on stool again, right of table, lost in his own thoughts.*]

TIRZAH. Will your friend be in the parade?

JUDAH [*only half listening*]. Friend?

TIRZAH. Messala . . .

JUDAH. I don't think so.

TIRZAH. He's very handsome—but not very polite. [*Comes toward him.*] He made you angry, didn't he?

JUDAH. Hmmmmmm?

TIRZAH. You're not listening to me at all! [*Moves R C, in front of divan.*] Nobody in this house ever listens to me.

JUDAH [*grinning, moving to her*]. Sorry—I was thinking—

TIRZAH [*turning away from him, not to be so easily appeased*].

About something terribly important, I'm sure—

JUDAH. I'll be going away soon.

TIRZAH [*caught off guard, turning to face him*]. Where?

JUDAH. To Rome, I think . . .

TIRZAH. Why?

JUDAH. To become a soldier.

TIRZAH. You'll be killed!

JUDAH [*moving to table, taking some fruit from bowl*]. Not all soldiers are killed—

TIRZAH [*following him*]. I don't want you to go away, Judah—

JUDAH. You'll be leaving soon—

TIRZAH. I won't! Not me!

JUDAH. Of course, you will. Some handsome young man will ride into our lives and take you away.

TIRZAH [*shaking her head*]. I wouldn't ride off with anybody—at least not for ages and ages. [*Suddenly grips her brother's arm.*] Judah—stay here! Let things go on just the way they are.

JUDAH [*looking down at her, seeing that she is genuinely upset, giving her a quick, affectionate hug*]. Now, now. I didn't mean to upset you— [*Sounds of trumpets, shouting crowd and clanking of marching men have grown louder. JUDAH seizes on this to distract TIRZAH.*] You're missing the parade! [*As TIRZAH dabs at her eyes, JUDAH guides her to parapet. Sounds of parade are increasingly louder.*]

TIRZAH. Oh, Judah—look at all of them! So many soldiers . . . [*JUDAH nods. He frowns as he stares down into street below.*]

JUDAH [*bitterly, remembering Messala's words*]. They're here to remind us we're only what Rome lets us be . . .

TIRZAH. They look so—so indifferent. . . . [*Mixed now with shouts of crowd are some unmistakable boos and jeers.*]

Which is the Procurator?

JUDAH [*pointing*]. He's the one sitting on the purple cloth—with the laurel vine on his head. [*Sound of boos is growing louder.*] The slaves aren't showing him proper respect. . . .

TIRZAH [*gripping JUDAH's arm in excitement*]. Oh, Judah! They're spitting at him—and look—that woman—she threw her sandal—

JUDAH [*leaning farther out over parapet, his hands on edge*]. Gratus doesn't look so indifferent. . . . [*TIRZAH has moved a little away from JUDAH, to get a better view. Her back is to him.*]

TIRZAH. He must know how the people feel about him. Why would he ride out like this?

JUDAH. He's a Roman. [*As he says this, JUDAH shifts his weight somewhat and apparently one of tiles on which he is leaning breaks loose and slips out from under him.*

JUDAH makes a futile attempt to catch it and then stares down in horror. Abruptly, all sounds stop from below.

JUDAH steps back from parapet, though still looking down.]

Tirzah— [*TIRZAH has been looking off in other direction and has not seen tile fall. She turns to her brother and sees his ashen face.*]

TIRZAH. What's the matter? [*JUDAH points down. TIRZAH looks and reacts in surprise.*] What's happened to the Procurator? [*Now, crowd sounds start again, but subdued at first.*]

JUDAH. I've killed him . . .

TIRZAH. No . . .

JUDAH [*gesturing*]. One of the tiles came loose. It hit him on the head— [*Crowd noises are growing in intensity.*]

TIRZAH. People are throwing other things down at the soldiers—

JUDAH. It was an accident . . .

TIRZAH. What will the soldiers do? [JUDAH suddenly leans farther forward in new excitement.]

JUDAH. He's not dead! They're helping him to his feet.

TIRZAH. Look at the blood on his face——

JUDAH [*reassuring himself as much as his sister*]. Don't be afraid, Tirzah. I'll explain to them how it happened. They'll remember our father—— [*From off R and below comes sound of splintering wood, followed by a woman's scream. Then there are yells of men. TIRZAH and JUDAH turn toward R. TIRZAH clings to her brother.*]

TIRZAH. They're breaking into the house—— [JUDAH pulls free of her and starts toward R. TIRZAH follows him, clinging to him.] Judah—don't leave me——

JUDAH [*trying to free himself*]. You stay here. I'm the one they want. . . .

TIRZAH. No . . .

JUDAH. You'll be safe up here—— [*From off R comes a stifled cry from MIRIAM.*]

TIRZAH. That's mother!

[*Both JUDAH and TIRZAH start out R, when their way is blocked by two ROMAN SOLDIERS. One of the SOLDIERS holds MIRIAM.*]

TIRZAH. Mother . . .

JUDAH [*moving toward SOLDIER holding MIRIAM*]. Let go of her—— [*SECOND SOLDIER makes a threatening move with his sword.*]

MIRIAM. I'm all right, Judah——

[*As JUDAH hesitates, a CAPTAIN enters, followed closely by MESSALA.*]

MESSALA. There he is, Captain! [*Points to JUDAH.*]

JUDAH. Messala—— [*MESSALA stands beside CAPTAIN, looking at JUDAH with an arrogant smile.*]

CAPTAIN. You mean *this* is the assassin? Why—he's hardly more than a boy. . . .

MESSALA [*to CAPTAIN*]. Do you think a man has to be old

before he can hate enough to kill? Not ten minutes ago, he stood on this terrace and bragged of his hate for Rome. . . .

CAPTAIN [*to JUDAH*]. Did you throw the tile?

JUDAH. It was an accident. It fell.

MESSALA [*moving c, turning*]. Let the Procurator decide that.

This is your man, Captain. These are his mother and sister.

JUDAH. Messala—help them—[*Indicates MIRIAM and TIRZAH.*]—for the friendship we had. . . .

MESSALA. No treacherous slave has any claim on my friendship. [*Turns to CAPTAIN.*] I'll tell the Procurator you have the assassin and his family under arrest. [*CAPTAIN nods, a little uncertainly. JUDAH steps in closer to CAPTAIN.*]

JUDAH. Sir—take me—but let my mother and sister go.

MESSALA [*as CAPTAIN hesitates*]. The Procurator will want to make an example of this Jew and his family. If other slaves are foolish enough to think of striking out at Rome, let them remember what happened to the house of Hur.

CAPTAIN [*nodding, relieved to have had his decision made for him; to SOLDIERS*]. Take the women to the tower. I'll bring him to the Procurator. [*Soldiers start to drag TIRZAH and MIRIAM away.*]

TIRZAH [*as she struggles*]. No—no—please! Judah—Judah—[*JUDAH moves as if to rescue TIRZAH but finds himself facing point of CAPTAIN'S sword. Helpless, TIRZAH and MIRIAM are taken out R by SOLDIERS. JUDAH faces MESSALA, who is still at c stage.*]

JUDAH. Pray to your gods the Procurator kills me, Messala, or some day you'll suffer for this.

MESSALA [*pointing at JUDAH*]. You hear that, Captain? Filled with hate.

CAPTAIN [*to JUDAH*]. Come along—

[*Before they can move out, AMRAH stumbles onto the stage from R. Her clothing is torn and dirty and there's a darkening bruise on her face. She half falls at JUDAH'S feet.*]

AMRAH [*sobbing*]. Master Judah—Master Judah—

JUDAH [*tenderly lifting weeping woman to her feet*]. God help you, Amrah. I can't. [CAPTAIN starts JUDAH out R. MESSALA follows them. AMRAH stumbles toward C stage. JUDAH calls back to AMRAH.] Live—for my mother and sister! [CAPTAIN pauses and looks over at AMRAH, hesitating.]

MESSALA. Let her go. When the house is sealed, she'll soon starve. [CAPTAIN, MESSALA and JUDAH go out R. After a moment, the weeping AMRAH slowly follows them.]

CURTAIN