

## Day 14

Caspar was in complete disgrace. He had accidentally posted the myrrh back to the East, and the other wise men were beside themselves.

“You knew the myrrh was a present! And you knew how important it was, you spent all that time on the first day explaining to Wayne the camel how doctrinally significant it was that we get it for the baby! How could you just forget all that and post it back to the East?” Balthazar had howled at him.

“It was in a gift box and everything!” joined in Melchior. “There are three of us, we can’t arrive to visit a new baby with only two presents! It will make us look mean and stingy”.

“You know, it doesn’t actually say anywhere in the Bible that there were *three* wise men...” started Caspar. He could tell the others were really angry with him, and wondered if the best thing might be to sneak off back to the East, and hope that by the time the other magi returned, they might have calmed down a little.

“And there’ll be no more of your superior little speeches, trying to show off how wise you are!” snapped Balthazar. “From now on, ride at the back and stay out of trouble. Leave me and Melchior to get the frankincense, and somehow find some replacement myrrh”.

“And you have to clean up all the camel dung for the rest of the journey!” called Melchior as he rode past to join Balthazar.

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Caspar was miserable. He had to do all the horrible jobs whenever the magi set up camp for the night, and he was just brimming with facts and wisdom that he wasn’t allowed to say out loud.

He was riding Gary, the least comfortable camel, a little way behind Melchior and Balthazar. They had found a small shop by the road, and were haggling over the price of a nice bag of frankincense. Caspar leaned forward and whispered in Gary’s ear-

“Frankincense is an aromatic resin, obtained from trees in the genus *Boswellia*. It is obtained by tapping the trees and allowing the resin to bleed out then harden. The hardened resins are called tears. The more opaque the resin, the better the quality...”

But Gary just spat at the ground, and ignored Caspar. He was a very lazy camel, and suspected that he would now have to do rather a lot more travelling to get the replacement myrrh.

Up ahead, Balthazar had just struck a deal with the shop-keeper.

“Done!” said the shop-keeper. “Do you want gift wrapping, for an extra silver coin?”

“Oh yes please”, replied Balthazar. “I don’t suppose you know of anyone round here who sells myrrh, do you?” he asked resignedly.

“As a matter of fact I do!” said the shop-keeper. “He’s a bit of an odd fellow though- those working in the myrrh-trade tend to be. He might make you do some puzzles or answers some riddles before he lets you buy any myrrh...”

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- 1 As used in the first paragraph of the passage, the phrase “beside themselves” means:
  - a Very excited
  - b Entirely uninterested
  - c Next to themselves
  - d Disengaged
  - e Extremely angry
- 2 Melchior doesn’t want to arrive with only two presents because:
  - a There are supposed to be three
  - b Two presents might look miserly
  - c He loves giving presents
  - d He is angry with Caspar
  - e It would be an insult to their hosts
- 3 Another word for “aromatic” is:
  - a Mythical
  - b Valuable
  - c Unusual
  - d Exotic
  - e Fragrant
- 4 More transparent frankincense resin would be:
  - a More aromatic
  - b Of poorer quality
  - c Of better quality
  - d More expensive
  - e Rarer
- 5 What did Melchior and Balthazar buy in the passage?
  - a Some frankincense
  - b Some gift wrapping
  - c A silver coin
  - d Frankincense and gift wrapping
  - e Frankincense and myrrh
- 6 The final character to speak in the passage is:
  - a Melchior
  - b Balthazar
  - c The myrrh seller
  - d The shop-keeper
  - e Gary

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