

Day 7

It took the magi and their camels rather a long time to reach the goldmine. While the three wise men were engaged in a particularly heated discussion of the revelation of divinity and the merits of colourful baubles, the camels had discussed the journey ahead.

Kevin and Gary, being the laziest of the three camels, had united and persuaded Wayne to keep up the pretence of having an injured foot. This way, they argued, the camels would be permitted to walk rather slower than they otherwise would have done, and take lots of little rest breaks in which they could sit down, spit and take a much-needed break from listening to the philosophical musings of the magi. And so it came to pass that Wayne spent the next few days indulging in dramatic limping and plaintive sighing, feigning loss of appetite unless offered the finest of camel treats, while Kevin and Gary ambled along behind him wearing slightly smug smiles.

This could only go on for so long, however- the wise men were indeed very wise, and all three of them had a working knowledge of veterinary medicine with particular regard to camels, donkeys, snakes and other biblical animals.

“I really don’t wish to sound unsympathetic,” said Balthazar one day, with a slightly suspicious air, “but I still can’t seem to find anything wrong. Perhaps Wayne has tummy ache from the excessive quantity of camel treats you’ve been giving him, Melchior?”

At this, the camels decided that it was time for them to return to their normal levels of efficiency, and within a few days, the magi and their camels reached the gold mine.

“I don’t know why we had to go all the way to a gold mine” moaned Caspar, who was once again feeling a little sore and travel sick- common side effects of traversing afar by camel. “According to hieroglyphs found as early as 2600BC, King Tushratta of the Mittanni says they have more gold in Egypt than they have dirt. Couldn’t we just go there with a bucket?” He had an excellent memory for abstract learning and facts from Wikipedia, but not a strong grasp of the concept of hyperbole.

“Did you know you can eat gold leaf?” piped up Melchior excitedly.

“I can tell I’m going to have to watch you around the gold once we’ve bought it” said Balthazar. “It is a present, remember! Strictly no nibbling the gold, Melchior. And you, Caspar- none of your weird experiments, trying to turn it into lead or marmalade or whatever else. Let’s find the mine-owner, get the gold and go. Caspar, you stay here and keep an eye on those malingering camels, Melchior you can come with me!”

Balthazar was the most sensible of the wise men, and within a few minutes he had spoken to the mine foreman, who helpfully set up a meeting straight away with the mine owner. The mine owner was, as you might expect from a man who owns a literal gold mine, fantastically cheerful.

“Ah, visitors to my mine. Excellent!” he boomed at them. “I just love visitors! Fantastic! Where are you visiting from?”

“We’ve come from the East, and we...” started Balthazar, but the mine owner interrupted- “I love the East!” he cried. “Such a wonderful place. Wonderful! I suppose you’ve come to buy some gold?”

“Yes,” said Melchior, “We’d like to buy some gold for...”

“Well that’s just spiffing, because I own a gold mine!” bellowed the mine owner. “Just ruddy MARVELLOUS”. Like many people who are very, very cheerful, he was also slightly frightening.

“We’ve come to buy some gold to give as a present to a baby” interjected Balthazar quickly, before he could be interrupted.

“Gosh, aren’t babies wonderful?” cried the mine owner. “With their toes and their chubby faces? Aren’t they just BRILLIANTLY CUTE?” he yelled, causing babies several miles away to wake up and start crying. “Well, as I LOVE VISITORS so much, and I LOVE BABIES so much, if you can solve this STUPENDOUSLY FUN puzzle, I will let you have some gold free of charge”.

“...could the puzzle be written down?” asked Melchior tentatively. He didn’t think his ear-drums could cope with a prolonged conversation with this man.

“Certainly!” roared the cheerful mine owner, and presented them with an inscribed tablet...

Find the hidden four letter word. There is at least one per question.

1- Hark! The herald angels sing: “Glory to the newborn King!

2- Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled.”

3- It came upon the midnight clear,

4- that glorious song of old

5- Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o’er all the earth:

6- O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant

7- O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!