


THE WISE MAN'S

Journal

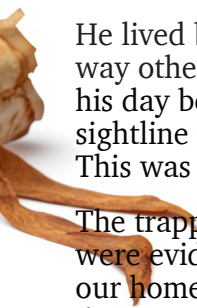
Catherine Boldeau

The background of the entire page is a celestial map. It features a dark, textured blue and black sky filled with numerous small, golden-yellow stars of varying sizes. Several constellations are depicted with thin, light-colored lines connecting the stars. A prominent constellation in the upper left has a central star with eight radiating lines. Another constellation in the lower left has a larger, more complex star with multiple points. A rolled-up scroll, bound in brown, worn leather or parchment, lies diagonally across the upper right portion of the image. The scroll is tied with a piece of light-colored string or ribbon. The overall aesthetic is that of an old, historical astronomical chart or a celestial atlas.

*‘Read the journal,
Setareh, read the
journal.’*

*The soft calfskin felt worn in
my hands as I unravelled
the unknown chronicles
trapped within its layers
of parchment.*

The scrolls spilled symbols and inked drawings, detailed and captioned, tiny sketches of many stars and constellations, beyond my sight and imagination. A comfortable setting with the prospect of the unentered worlds to be explored . . . I felt the pull of the unknown, an invitation to walk the path my father, Melchior, had charted by hand.



He lived by the heavens the way others live by the seasons; his day began and ended at the sightline where earth met sky. This was his golden routine.

The trappings of wealth that were evident in every orifice of our home were ignored. His devotion was to the slow, steady mathematics of the cosmos. From childhood, I had watched him trace arcs and shadows, and heard him speak of the gnomon as though it were a friend. After years watching from the threshold of his life, as ‘Daddy’s Star’, I could easily name the Pleiades, trace Cassiopeia’s chair, and point out Auriga’s pentagon. Yet I still kept to the borderlands of his knowledge.

The journal, I realised, might be the bridge. The heading that drew my eye was a single deliberate word:

‘Discovery’.

As I started reading, the aroma of pumice powder wafted through the room, and I remembered him smoothing the parchment before the reed pen wandered across the page as he meticulously documented each revelation. His penmanship was upright and statuesque, the last graceful echo of a body now turned to dust.

‘Read it aloud, Setareh. Slowly . . .’

~*~

Day 1

Today, I saw a new star in the heavens. Its brilliance is such that at times it shimmers even in daylight. I first sighted it through the mural quadrant, dismissing it as a shadow, perhaps a wandering comet. But when I turned the astrolabe, it glistened with the light of ten thousand stars.

Is this an astronomical rarity?
An astrological phenomenon? Or,
indeed, an augury?

Day 12

From an early age I have studied Persia's four star-guardians: Aldebaran, Regulus, Antares, Fomalhaut. These names govern reputation and fate in our Persian courts. Religion and honour braid themselves with stellar paths; a birth under Regulus promises glory, Antares warns of conflict . . .

And yet this new light trespassed beyond our charts. The researcher in me yields the way to a witness, sinking into reverent awe. There's no mistake in my calculation, only mystery!

Day 40

Perhaps it was the overindulgence in the nettle brew and the lashings of lavender honey my pregnant wife gave me, but I woke certain the star is linked to the Hebrews. Their 'Exodus' story has long occupied our Eastern curiosity: a people called out by an invisible God, lighting their

passage through history with faith rather than charts.

I'm no longer engaged in frantic calculation; there is only stillness, a gathered breath. A sense of majesty and anticipation settled, as if the starry sky itself paused to listen – this is a sign of our times.

Day 50

I found it! The legendary 'slave scroll' given to Pharnaces, our family's martial ancestor, by his footman, Arnica. The story is etched in our history: back in the lands by the Sea, Arnica threw himself before a lion to save his master, earning a crippled arm and a missing finger from the battle with that beast. To Pharnaces' astonishment, Arnica shared a simple yet luminous answer: 'The Torah commands that you shall love your neighbour as

yourself, and you are much more than my neighbour.' From that day, Arnica and Pharnaces were bound by faith, above the arms. On his deathbed, Arnica bestowed the elaborate Torah scroll upon his lord.

Now it was my turn to read it. My command of Aramaic flows, yet my grasp of Hebrew is hesitant. As a scientist, I was drawn first to the illustrations on the margins.

There, next to an inked drawing, was a passage marked:

'I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob.'

(Numbers 24:17, ESV)

Could this, finally, be the star?

Day 182

Tomorrow, we head out.

For many months now we have been consumed by our instruments:



gnomons casting shadows across the stone disc, water clocks measuring unhurried time, the astrolabe threading the sky's cold geometry through our hands. We have repeatedly searched our prophecies and delved through the Hebrew scrolls. We have poured over Balaam's oracles in the Torah, and Isaiah's proclamations in the Nevi'im, finally aligning the celestial motion with the resonance of those ancient voices.

As the Chief Astronomers and Wise Men of Persia – I, along with Balthazar and Gaspar – we are all accustomed to seeing meaning in the turning of the heavens. Our research is complete. We have dedicated ourselves to the celestial geometry; now, we must cast aside those calculations and focus on the immediate needs of what seems to be a long journey. The maps of the sky have done their work; now, we shall follow the ancient paths towards the west.

Day 183

We commit ourselves for the kingdom of Judah, the land of the Hebrews, in the great Roman Empire. Let the journey begin!

Note: The midwives say my wife is near term; the child may come while I am away. Should I rather . . . ?

Day 228

The journey has unrolled in a tapestry of hardship. We are deep into the second month on the backs of our camels, enduring scorching midland days and nights that bite us with frost. Our only constant comfort was the lodestar, illuminating the vast night sky.

Gaspar is struggling with his sinuses, and the rheum flares fiercely in our joints. Camels



have fallen prey to desert serpents. Balthazar scoured the maps in vain: waterholes lay empty where his careful scrolls had promised sustenance. Many wells were dry. And sleep, oh, sleep only came in jealous, stolen clutches. Still, the star persisted on the western sky, growing brighter and more precise with each night.

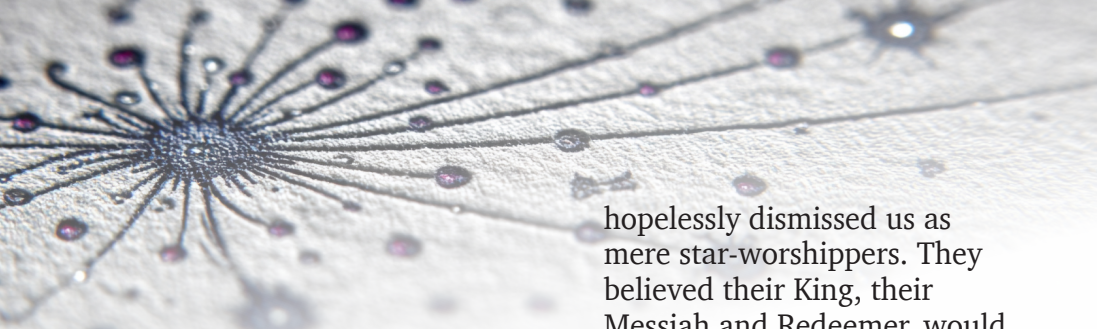
Finally, from the Mount of Olives, we beheld Jerusalem's stony silhouette.

The star we followed paused, holding its place for what seemed an eternity over the Temple Mount, and then, without a sound, it faded. It had signalled a place.

The prophecy is now fastened to the Earth.

Day 229

Today, we walked the drab and dusty streets of Jerusalem to the temple of the invisible God.



It was smaller than our imaginations, not as beautiful as we expected. The building perfectly fit the obstructive nature of the Jewish leaders.

The priests and scribes met our questions as if we were pests – a bunch of rich, unwelcome Gentiles searching for what was their Messiah. When we attempted to cite the prophecy, ‘As in the books of your prophets . . .’ they scoffed, and the Chief Priest’s brow folded like a closed map.

The Pharisees’ sharp silence drove us from the inner courts, their undertones of disbelief loud as a shout. They saw our robes, our astronomical tools, and our knowledge of the heavens and

hopelessly dismissed us as mere star-worshippers. They believed their King, their Messiah and Redeemer, would be born in their timeframe and place. What did we – foreigners guided by a star – know of such things?

Yet one of them, a younger man who kept to the edges of the court, touched my arm and introduced himself with a Greek name, Nicodemus. He whispered, ‘I suggest you go to King Herod! He might find out more.’

To the palace? It was already late in the evening. We exchanged glances, then decided: a dynasty should perhaps be linked to the palace, after all.

Day 230

Our simple questions shattered the pretence of peace in Jerusalem. The arrival caused a shockwave among the people and, more dangerously, with the leaders. Our host confirmed that the Chief Priest and the temple leaders had been summoned before Herod late last night. The monarch knew everything about our enquiry for a newborn King.

A secret missive from the king reached us as we were breaking our fast on figs and goat's cheese. It was formal, deliberate, as its ornate script announced: 'His Royal Highness, King Herod the Great, requests the pleasure of the Wise Men of Persia – Melchior, Chief Astronomer, Gaspar, Chief Treasurer, and Balthazar, Oracle Scribe.'

Veiled in urgency, the message was clear – we were to present

ourselves at the palace without delay.

Meeting him in the flesh was terrifyingly different from his inked reputation. His face was a mask of calculated civility. Beyond diplomacy, a single line betrayed his deep insecurity: 'Another dynasty? In my kingdom?' Composing himself, he seemed interested to discover more: 'I want to know the times,' he said, the words catching somewhere between a chilling curiosity and absolute alarm. We showed the maps, the times, our precise calculations.

Finally, with a patronising laugh he released it: 'I have already compelled the scholars to name the place. The ancient prophets point to Bethlehem. *I am authorising you* to go there. Find the royal offspring for me and then return with word of His whereabouts . . . so that I and my entire entourage may come and worship Him.'

The flattery was thick, yet we sensed a shrewd calculation behind his courtesy. Perhaps he was playing with the temple priests, who insist on worshipping in Jerusalem only.

Day 230, in the evening

We left through the city gates as the day light retired. The star we had seen when it rose went ahead of us towards the town of Bethlehem. What a joy! By now it's all clear – the light that had been a diagram in my studies was now a living lodestar; not a mere phenomenon to be parked in tables but prophecy unfolding under the patient hand of heaven. The cosmic order I've known all my life is gone. A new order is in the making:

*'A star shall come out of Jacob,
and a sceptre shall rise
out of Israel.'*

I know these words by heart now. And I feel the profound weight of the ancient prophetic texts being fulfilled right under our eyes . . .

Oh, and Bethlehem is so close. And so strange.

If Jerusalem bore the modesty of a worn garment, Bethlehem was a soiled rag. Streets were narrow, lodgings scarce; noise and the smell of animals stitched themselves into every corner. People narrowed their eyes at us – 'Foreigners!' 'Rich strangers.' Their suspicion hardened into diabolical laughter that rang through the crowded streets, and for a moment I feared for our safety. But in the distance I heard a sound, like the brushing of wings and celestial voices, that I am sure that I had previously heard in a dream. And then the streets seemed emptier. The mockers scoffed at us, shook their heads and walked away.

The star just stopped in the distance, its rays as a pillar of light. We continued towards it and came to a tiny old inn.



Is the newborn King welcoming pilgrims? Or perhaps He is a visitor too? Balthazar and Gaspar could feel it as well: we were only one knock away from the *Discovery*!

‘Foreigners! Go on!’ The voice was gruff and tired. ‘There’s no room here for the likes of you.’ We knocked again. ‘You really don’t . . .’ The man stopped in mid-sentence as he measured us up and down, his weary eyes taking in our rich robes and gold-laden baggage.

‘Is the newborn King here?’ Balthazar pushed it. The innkeeper pointed us in the direction of a small outhouse that appeared to be converted into a makeshift shelter.

I’m not sure what I was expecting after years of research, but certainly this scene wasn’t it. The stares from Gaspar and Balthazar clearly mirrored my thoughts. However, the star shone brightly overhead and I knew that it must be the place.

We were not to step on palace marble. We were to stoop.

Day 230, at night

Inside, the scene unspooled into a quiet, astonishing intimacy – a humble man, the father, guarded his family; a young woman, the mother, cradling a small child in her lap. The infant's face held a depth, a stillness, that instantly arrested us.

'For to us a child is born,' Gaspar whispered, trembling. ***'To us a son is given,'*** echoed the father, introducing himself as Joseph. I stepped forward, completing the ancient oracle:

'And the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called, Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

(Isaiah 9:6, NIV)

Mary, the young mother, only sighed. The child was so young, yet in His eyes we saw something as strange as the beginning and the end in One. He is indeed the King, the Desire of all ages. And we found Him!



The Hebrew scrolls were right, and our timing was perfect.

An atmosphere of holiness, purity, and goodness saturated the humble space. The moment demanded an act of worship: Gaspar retrieved the gold – twelve shining pieces pressed into a purple pouch embroidered with a star. Presenting it to Joseph, he



dedicated it: 'For the Star of Jacob!' Balthazar followed, lifting frankincense that smelled of distant temples, a luxury of Persia meant for divine sons. I placed myrrh into the small hands of the child's mother. They were so poor, I thought . . . a distracting moment that cheapened the entire scene.

That's when her eyes met mine: '*He is Emmanuel – God with us,*' was her only reply. The words felt like a gentle rebuke. I had been obsessed with their earthly poverty when the heavenly treasure stood right before me. How could I have missed that name in the prophets?

The stillness and purity of this hut made Herod's palace feel like a place of falsehood. We realised the truth about the family: they are not poor; they are rich beyond measure. It is Herod who is poor, impoverished by his pride and jealousy, fearing conspiracies behind his back.

We must go back to the king tomorrow, to honour our word, and to share with him the true treasure.

Day 231

I barely slept last night. Surely, I'm over-tired from being away from home. But I believe there's something more, a somewhat new experience. We are the heralds of a new era!

When I finally collapsed into sleep in the early hours, a voice, clearer than a waking thought, commanded me: 'Go home now. Do not return to Herod.' I woke instantly, the vision of the king's false smile and shifty eyes searing my memory.

When I shared the warning with my companions, they did not hesitate. Gaspar's affirmation was immediate: 'The star led us to find the new King. The people of these lands have the Scriptures; let them find Him by their own writings.'

'Prophecy over policy,' decided Balthazar with a deep voice. 'The prophecy has led us thus far. Let the divine guidance continue. Our mission here is complete.'

Day 232

We headed home, taking a different route. This decision was less about escaping Herod and more about affirming the vision. A new journey of discovery lies ahead of us. We'll be searching more about the star.

Day 297

We have been home seven weeks now. The journey's torment has softened into a distant memory, helped by the joyous chaos of my return – my wife brought our daughter into the world just a few days after I arrived.

I reflect on our experience every so often. What happened with Joseph, and Mary, and to the Infant? Did Herod go to Bethlehem to worship? Maybe the king has given them a proper house by now. And those scribes, the Pharisees, the priests . . . did they find their Messiah too? I guess I'll never know – we took a different route.

My journal ends here, as I look at my own infant, this tiny little girl. My wife asked whether I had thought of a name for her. 'Setareh, my dear,' I said. 'Her name shall be Setareh.'




~*~

I placed the journal back in the wooden box and sighed with a sense of profound reassurance.

Grief still pinched beneath my ribs like a cold stone; I missed his wind-etched, patient face, and the way he had taught me to read the arcs of things. But my grief was not a weight – it was a ribbon tied to wonder, binding memory to meaning. And meaning to purpose. And purpose to a new life . . .

My father, Melchior, had followed a map of stars and numbers until it transformed into a revelation of truth. The gold and frankincense and myrrh they carried to Bethlehem were nothing in comparison to the treasure they came back with – the truth of Emmanuel. And that different route they took became a true prophecy, charting a new course for our whole house.

‘Discovery!’ my father’s journal seemed to whisper.



After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying,

‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’

(Matthew 2:1,2 NKJV)

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