

TOWNELEY CYCLE II: Gifts of the Magi

Draft 2

HEROD: Peace, I bid, both far and near!
I warn you, leave this noisy cheer.
Who makes a sound while I am here,
I say, shall die!
Of all this world, both far and near, 5
The lord am I!

Lord am I of every land,
Of tower and town, of sea and sand.
Against me dare no man stand
That now bears life. 10
All earthly things bow to my hand,
Both man and wife.

Man and wife,
That in this world are living now,
To Mahound and me they all shall bow 15
Both day and night.
All shall believe in him, I vow,
Without respite.

Without respite it shall be so:
Lord over all, where'er I go 20
Who denies this, shall be laid low
Wherever he dwell.
The fiend, if he were my foe
I should him fell.

To fell those false ones to the ground 25
And to destroy each hateful hound
That will not worship Saint Mahound
Our god so sweet!
To tread those traitors I am bound,
Under my feet. 30

Under my feet shall they break and bleed,
Those lads that will not my laws lead.
I am the mightiest, take good heed,
You ever saw.
Superbly shaped, I am indeed 35
Without a flaw.

My strength, I say, surpasses thought.
All who resist shall soon be taught
For I shall ding them down to nought,
A deadly blow. 40
Their folly shall be dearly bought
Ere I go.

And therefore will I send and see
In all this land now, hastily,
To find if any dwelling be 45
In tower or town
That will not trust truly in me
And in Mahound.

If any be found that trust not so,
I shall them slay with bitter blow! 50
My messenger!

MESSSENGER: Lord?

HEROD: Quickly now go
Through each country,
In all this land, both to and fro
I command thee.

And speak to all, so that thou spy 55
In every place that thou come by,
Who worships not Mahound most high,
Our god so free.
And quickly shall thou bring them nigh
Then unto me. 60

And red and raw I shall them flay
Who from our laws shall fall away.
Therefore, boy, now I thee pray
That fast thou speed.

MESSSENGER: It shall be done lord, if I may, 65
With haste indeed.

And truly, if I may any find
I shall not leave one of them behind.

HEROD: No, but boldly do them bind 70
And with thee lead.
Mahound, that wields both water and wind
Give thee good speed!

MESSSENGER: All peace, my lords, and hold you still,
Till I have spoken all my fill,
Now pay good heed, as with great skill 75
To you I bring
This message, with the words and will
Of Herod the King.

He commands you, everyone 80
To hold no king but him alone
And other gods to worship none
But Mahound so free;
Or else to death ye shall be done
Thus told he me.

Then the first king comes riding, and, looking at the star, says:

KING i: Lord, from whom this light is lent, 85
And unto me this sight has sent,
I pray to thee, with good intent,
From shame me shield;
So that by no harms I am rent
By fen or field. 90

Also I pray thee specially
Grant me the grace of company,

That succour may be here nearby

In my travail.

And whether I after live or die,
I shall not fail.

95

Till in some country I have been
To know what this bright star may mean,
That has me led, with silver sheen
From my own kind.
Now wend I will, with courage keen
The truth to find.

100

KING 2: Ah, Lord, that is without an end
Whence does this wondrous light descend
That kindly has led me as I wend
Out of my land;
Showing me whither my steps to bend;
Guiding my hand?

105

Sure, I saw never none so bright!
I shall never rest, by day nor night
Till I know whence may come this light,
And from what place.
May he that sent it to my sight
Grant me that grace.

110

KING 1: Ah sir, whither are ye away?
Tell me, good sir, I you pray.

115

KING 2: Truly, I trust; the truth to say
None knows but I:
For I have followed from Araby
That star so high.

120

For I am king of that country
And Melchior there men call me.

KING 1: And king, sir, of my land so free
Was I at home,
In Tarsus' town and city. 125
Jaspar is my name.

The light of yon star saw I thither.

KING 2: That Lord be loved that sent it hither
For it will truly teach us whither
We now should wend. 130
We ought to love him, both together
That it to us would send.

KING 3: A Lord in land, what may this mean?
Such splendid sight was never seen.
A star with such bright shining sheen 135
Saw I never none.
It gives light to both rich and mean
By Him alone.

What it may mean, that know I not,
But yonder are two, it seems, in thought. 140
I thank Him that them hither has brought
Thus unto me.
I shall ask them if they know what
This star may be.

My lords, that are beloved and dear, 145
I pray you, tell me, with good cheer
Whither ye wend; what brought ye here,
And where that ye have been,
And of this star that shines thus clear:
What it may mean? 150

KING 1: Sir, I tell you truthfully
From Tarsus has yon star drawn me.

KING 2: To seek yon light from Araby
My steps I bent.

KING 3: Now thank I Him most heartily 155
That has it sent.

KING 1: Good sir, from whence took you your way?

KING 3: This light has led me from Sabay,
And Balthasar my name, I say,
The truth to tell. 160

KING 2: And Kings have we been many a day
Where we do dwell.

KING 3: Now since we are assembled so,
I counsel we together go
Until for good or ill we know 165
Here by some means.
What signifies this star so clear
That on us gleams.

KING 1: Ah, good my lords, behold this light
Of yon star with its beams so bright. 170
Surely I never saw such sight
Not far nor near:
A star like this, about midnight
Shining so clear!

It gives more light itself alone 175
Than any star that ever shone
Or moon, when it takes from the sun
Its light so clean.
Such wondrous sight have I seen none
Whatsoever it mean. 180

KING 2: Behold how swiftly now it glides,
 And see how near the earth it rides.
 It is a token that betides
 Some wond'rous thing.
 This is a marvel that provides 185
 True tokening.

For such a star was never seen
 Through all the world where we have been,
 For blazing beams of shining sheen
 From it are sent! 190
 I marvel much what it may mean,
 And its intent.

KING 3: Truly sirs, if now I may
 Tell truth, I shall your patience pray.
 The meaning of this star, I say, 195
 That shines on us,
 It has been said for many a day
 Should be known thus:

Yon star tokens, it seems to me,
 The birth of a prince, sirs, certainly, 200
 That shall prove well the prophecy
 That this shall be -
 Or else the rules of astronomy
 All deceive me.

KING 1: Truly, Balaam speaks of this thing: 205
 That of Jacob a star shall spring
 That shall overcome kaiser and king
 Without a blow.
 All folks shall their obedience bring
 That here on earth go. 210

Now know I well this is the one!
 In every place shall be his home.
 All shall bow, that to him come
 From each country.

Who trusts this not shall be undone 215
Whoever he be.

KING 2: Surely, my lords, now trust you me,
Fulfilled is now the prophecy:
He that shall conquer utterly
Kings of the earth - 220
This star bears witness, certainly,
Of his birth.

KING 3: Now is fulfilled, here in this land,
What Balaam said, I understand.
Now is he born, that sea and sand 225
Shall wield at will!
This bright star burning like a brand
Shows us with skill.

KING 1: Lords, I counsel we go, all three,
To worship now that bless'd baby 230
In token that he king shall be
Of every thing.
This gold now will I bear with me
As offering.

KING 2: Go we fast, sirs, I you pray, 235
To worship him if that we may.
I bring incense, the truth to say
Here in my hand,
In token of his deity
Without an end. 240

KING 3: Sirs, as ye say, so counsel I.
Haste we quickly by and by
To worship him as king most high
With our offering.
In tokening that he shall die 245
This myrrh I bring.

HEROD: Seeking a babe? But for what thing? X
Told they any new tiding?

MESSENGER: Yea, Lord, they said he should be king.
Of town and tower. 280

To honour him with their offering
They went that hour.

HEROD: King? The devil! But of what empire?
Of what land should that lad be sire?
Nay, that traitor shall feel my ire, 285
Soon shall he rue?

MESSENGER: Lord, by a star as bright as fire
This king they knew.

It led them out of their country.

HEROD: Ah! Fie, fie! the devil on them, all three. 290
He never shall compare to me
That new born lad.
Who trusts these stars of prophecy,
I hold them mad!

Those louts, they know not what they say - 295
They make my head ache fearfully.
No tidings have, for many a day
Caused me such woe!
For woe my wits are all away:
What shall I do? 300

Why, what the devil is in their mind
When all this in the stars they find?
This news makes me my teeth to grind!
And of this thing
To know the truth of every kind 305
Of this new king.

King? Why, there is no king but I!
Fie on the devil! Fie, fie, fie!
Dearly that boy his boast shall buy;
Death shall him fright! 310
Shall he be king thus hastily?
Who dubbed him knight?

Alas, for shame, this is a scorn!
Why should he lead them night and morn?
Should that braggart, so lately born 315
Be most of main?
Nay, had the devil of hell so sworn,
He should be slain.

Alas, alas, for weary woe!
That now such sorrows I should know. 320
For if this thing be truly so,
I am undone.
Now, of wise clerks the truth to know
I shall send soon.

But firstly, I shall send to see 325
The answer of those villains three.
Messenger, on your way be,
Quickly, once more!
Go, bid those kings come talk with me,
You spoke of before. 330

Say a great message I shall them tell.
MESSENGER: It shall be done, Lord, at your will.
Your bidding shall I soon fulfill
In each country.

HEROD: Mahound thee shield from every ill, 335
Most powerfully!

MESENTER: Mahound you save, sir kings three:
A privy message I bring ye
From Herod, king of this country
That is our chief. 340
And sirs, if ye believe not me,
Read ye this brief.

KING 1: Welcome be thou, bel ami!
What is his will? Tell us quickly!

MESENTER: I know not sir, believe you me, 345
But thus to me spoke he:
That ye should come most hastily
To him, all three.

Of urgent need, he told me so.

KING 2: Messenger, before us go 350
And say that we shall not be slow
His will to do.
Both I and my fellows also
Shall come him to.

MESENTER: Mahound you save, my lord so dear! 355

HEROD: Welcome be thou, messenger.
How have you fared since you were here?
Quickly tell me.

MESENTER: Lord, I have travelled far and near
Unceasingly, 360

And done your errand sir, truly,
For three kings have I brought with me
From Saba, Tarsus, and Araby
Who long have sought.

HEROD: For this, rewarded you shall be, 365
By him that me bought!

For surely, that is only fair.
Your welcome, sirs, I shall not spare.

KING 3: Lord, we await thy bidding here
Most eagerly. 370

HEROD: For thy good will, much thanks and cheer
I give to thee!

For greatly coveted have I
To speak with you - and now hear why:
Tell- for of this great need have I 375
Over everything -
What tokening saw ye in the sky
Of this new king?

KING 1: We saw his star rise in the east
That shall be king of man and beast 380
And therefore, lord, we have not ceased
Since that we knew,
These gifts most rich to him most blessed
To bring unto.

KING 2: Lord, when that star rose in the sky 385
We knew that child was born, thereby.

HEROD: Out, alas! Forlorn am I
In deep despair!
To pieces now I would be torn
For grief and care! 390

Alas, alas, I am in woe! -
Sir kings, sit down and rest you so.
By scripture, sirs, now what say you?
With no mistake,
What ye can say thereto? 395
Your answer make!

These kings would have me understand
That newly born is, in this land,
A king that shall rule sea and sand:
They tell me so. 400
And therefore, sirs, I you command,
To your books go,

And look in haste for anything
That you may find, of such a king.

WISE MAN 1: It shall be done at your bidding 405
By him that me bought,
And soon we shall you tidings bring
If we find aught.

WISE MAN 2: In our scriptures, lord, we soon shall say
If aught is written in this way. 410

HEROD: Now masters, in this, I you pray
Make every endeavour.

WISE MAN 1: Come forth, let us assay
Our books together.

WISE MAN 2: Lo sir, here I find certainly 415
Well written in a prophecy
How Isaiah, the prophet, he
That never beguiled,
Tells that a maiden of her body
Shall bear a child. 420

WISE MAN 1: And also, sir, to you I tell
The most strange thing that e'er befell:
Her maidenhead with her shall dwell
Just as before;
The child be called "Emmanuel" 425
When he is bore.

WISE MAN 2: Lord, this is truth - it is no lie -
Witness the prophet Isai.

HEROD: Out, alas! For grief I die
Before my day! 430
Shall he have power more than I?

Oh, welaway!

Alas, alas, I am forlorn!
I wish I were in pieces torn!
But look again, as you have sworn, 435
For love of me,
And tell me where that boy is born.
Quickly, now see!

WISE MAN 1: With mind and might, lord, now by gad!

HEROD: Have done in haste, e'er I run mad! 440
And it were better that that lad
Had grieved me nought!
That wretch's blood shall make me glad,
By him that has me bought!

WISE MAN 2: Micah the prophet, none may gainsay, 445
How that he speaks now shall I say:
In Bethlehem, in the land Juday
This truth shall ring:
Out of it like flower on spray,
A duke shall spring. 450

WISE MAN 1: Sir, thus we find in prophecy.
Therefore we tell you certainly
In Bethlehem, we tell you truly,
Born is that king.

HEROD: The devil hang you on a tree 455
For this tiding!

You surely lie: it may not be!

WISE MAN 2: Lord, we witness it truly:

Here the truth yourself may see -

If ye can read.

460

HEROD: Ah, welaway, now woe is me!

The devil you speed!

WISE MAN 1: Lord, it is truth, all that we say.

Our scriptures tell it in this way.

HEROD: Go hence, in the devil's name - away!

Fast, look alive!

Mighty Mahound, as he well may,

Let you never thrive!

465

Alas, why do I wear a crown?

Why am I called "of great renown"?

I am the most foully struck-down

Man on this earth!

And by a vile rapscaillon

Who is nothing worth!

470

Alas, that ever I should be knight,

Or held a man of such great might,

If a lad should wrench from me my right

And lay me low!

I would, ere suffering this blight

Kill myself so!

475

480

Ye noble kings, hear what I say:

Ye have safe conduct on your way.

But come again, sirs, I you pray,

And time here spend.

If you do so, you will find me ay

Your faithful friend.

485

- If it be true, this new tiding,
Some worship would I do that king.
Therefore, I pray you that ye bring
Me tidings soon. 490
- KING 1: Speedily, lord, at your bidding,
It shall be done.
- KING 2: Alas, alas! how have we sped?
Where is the light that has us led?
Behind some cloud that star has fled 495
From us away.
In danger deep are we, I dread.
What may we say?
- KING 3: Woe be to Herod, that cursed knight!
Woe to that tyrant, day and night! 500
For through him have we lost that sight,
And through his guile,
That shone for us with beams so bright
For many a mile.
- Here the kings alight from their horses
- KING 1: Lords, I advise we pray all three 505
To that Lord, whose nativity
That star betokened which we did see
All at his will.
To show us that star now pray we
Of his goodwill. 510
- Here kneel all the three kings down
- KING 2: Thou child, whose might no tongue can tell,
As thou art Lord of heaven and hell,
Thy noble star, Emmanuel,
Send us with speed
That we may know, by firth and fell, 515
How to proceed.

KING 3: Ah, to that child be honour bright
That thus has helped us here this night
And to our aid has lent us light
As all may see. 520
We love thee, Lord of king and knight,
Wholly, all three.

Here rise they all up

KING 1: We ought to love him over all thing
That thus has sent us our asking. 525
Behold, yon star has risen, shining,
Sirs, surely.
Of this child shall we have knowing
I hope, quickly.

KING 2: My lords most dear, we need dread nought. 530
Our great journey to end is brought.
Yon is the place that we have sought
From far country.
Yon is the child that all has wrought:
Behold and see!

KING 3: I advise we offer now, all three, 535
Unto this child of great degree,
And worship him with gifts costly
That we have brought.
Cure for our ills will he ever be.
Well have we sought! 540

KING 1: Hail to thee, maker of everything
That cure of our ills may bring!
In token that thou art our king
And shall be aye,
Receive this gold as mine offering 545
Prince, I thee pray.

KING 2: Hail, overcomer of king and of knight,
That formed both fish and fowl in flight!
Since thou art God's son most of might
And all-ruling 550
I bring thee incense, as is right
As mine offering.

KING 3: Hail, courteous king on mother's knee!
Hail, one fold God in persons three!
In token that thou dead shall be 555
As all men will,
For thy burial, take myrrh of me
Of thy goodwill.

MARY: Sir kings, take comfort you between
And marvel now what it may mean: 560
This child, that of me born has been
Can cure all ill.
I am his mother and, free from sin,
A maiden still.

Therefore, my lords, from shore to shore 565
Boldly tell the whole world o'er
How from my body I him bore,
The world's fair flower,
And maiden clean, just as before,
Through his great power. 570

And truly, sirs, make this your vow:
No other Lord shall you hold now.
Both man and beast to him shall bow
In field and tower.
My blessing, sirs, be with you now 575
And every hour.

KING 1: Ah, lords so dear, the truth to tell
We have made our journey well!
We love this Lord that ever shall
Endure for aye. 580
He is our shield where'er we dwell
Both night and day.

KING 2: My lords, long have we travelled so,
And rested little, well you know.
Therefore this counsel I bestow: 585
That we should try
To take some sleep before we go:
Thus counsel I.

Through troubles great our way has led
Lo, here for us a litter spread! 590

KING 3: I love my Lord! We have well sped
Such rest to win.
My lords, since we shall go to bed
Ye shall begin.

ANGEL: Sir courteous kings, to me take heed, 595
And turn in time from fearful end.
From God himself I come with speed
To warn you, as your faithful friend,
How Herod's hatred now doth breed,
And your destruction doth intend. 600
To save you from his deadly deed
By other ways God wills you wend
Into your own country.
And if you ask for any boon
He shall, for this deed ye have done, 605
Your shield forever be.

KING 3: This is the way that I must wend.
 Now God to us his comfort send
 And he that is without an end:
 Both day and night,
 Save us from temptings of the fiend
 By His great might.