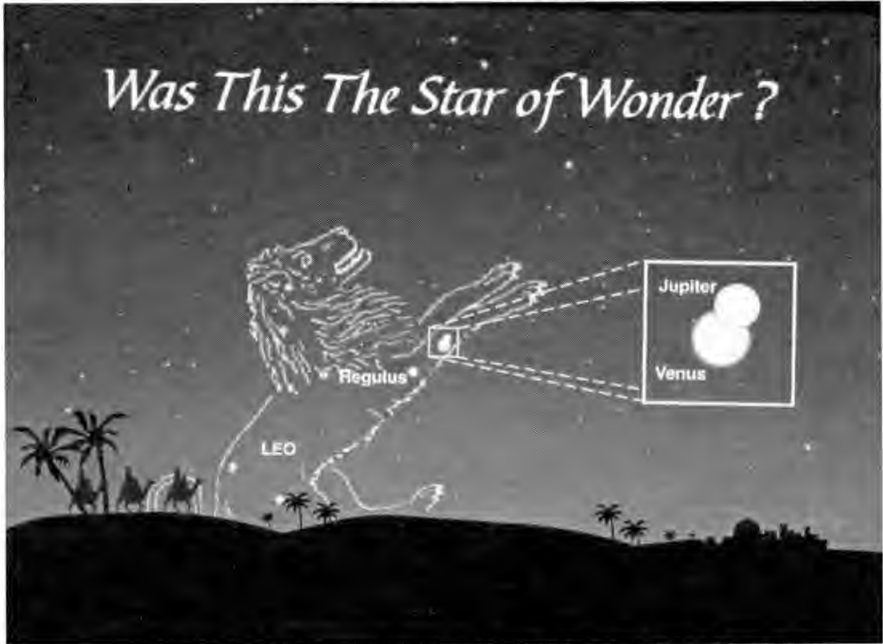


The Star of Wonder



The visit of the Magi is associated with the birth of Jesus, Matthew's mention of their star has become the single most famous astronomical account of ancient times.

Ancient peoples studied the sky with great care. They believed that the sky was made of closed concentric crystal spheres, located not far above, rotating around a central earth, and carrying the stars and the planets. These ancients believed that the sky had some kind of influence over earth's affairs. That "belief or knowledge" structured everything they did and thought, because it told them the truth.

They created names for the planets and bright stars, and divided the sky into their own fanciful constellations. Studying the seasonal changes of the stars, they used the sky as a calendar ... or planting crops ... and for holding festivals. Just a side note most of the constellations have Geek names and the individual stars have Arabic names because the Greeks named the constellations and neglected to name the individual stars, while the Arab's were the first to name the individual stars.

Matthew 2:1-23 The Visit of the Wise Men

1 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, **wise men** from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, "Where is

the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 6 And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Mic 5:2 The Ruler from Bethlehem

2 But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. NRSV

7 Then Herod secretly called for the **wise men** and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." 9 When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Escape to Egypt

13 Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." 14 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, 15 and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Out of Egypt I have called my son."

Hos 11:1 God's Compassion Despite Israel's Ingratitude

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. NRSV



Jesus' Early Travels

- 1 – Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea
- 2 – Wise men from the East came to Jerusalem
- 2 – 1- Wise men travel from Jerusalem to Bethlehem
- 1 – 3 -The Escape to Egypt
- 3 – 4 - Return route from Egypt to Nazareth
- 4 – 5- Route to Jerusalem when Jesus was 12 yrs old
- 4 – 6- Route to Jordan River for baptism

Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. 5 He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. 7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

The Shepherds and the Angels

8 In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: 11 to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. (Mic 5:2) 12 This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." 16 So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. 17 When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. 19 But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Jesus Is Named

21 After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. NRSV

Lk 2:1-21 The Birth of Jesus

1 In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. 2 This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 All went to their own towns to be registered. 4 Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was

The Massacre of the Infants

16 When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the **wise men**, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the **wise men**. 17 Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."

Jer 31:15 The Joyful Return of the Exiles

15 Thus says the LORD:

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel is weeping for her children;

she refuses to be comforted for her children,

because they are no more. NRSV

The Return from Egypt

19 When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 20 "Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead." 21 Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. 23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazorean." NRSV

Isa 11:1 The Peaceful Kingdom

*I A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch shall grow out of his roots. NRSV*

3480 Nazarene, an inhabitant of Nazareth. Spoken of Jesus (Mt 26:71; Mk 10:47; Lk 18:37; 24:19; Jn 18:5,7; Ac 3:6; 4:10; 6:14); in the inscription on the cross (Jn 19:19); by Peter (Ac 2:22); by Paul (Ac 26:9); by our Lord Himself (Ac 22:8). In Mt 2:23, we find the expression "He shall be called a Nazarene," i.e., according to the meaning of the Hebr. word *netser* (5342), "he shall be called a shoot" or branch. This is in allusion to such passages as Isa 11:1; 53:2; Zec 3:8; 6:12, but here also it implies reproach from the contempt in which Nazareth was held. Used once of Christians held in contempt as the followers of Jesus of Nazareth (Ac 24:5).

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In ancient times when two planets moving very close to each other in the sky, as if meeting to combine their "influence" in a special way. Such meetings were called "conjunctions."

Mesopotamia was part of the great Parthian Empire, east of the Roman Empire. The Parthian Emperor was advised by priests of the Zoroastrian religion. These priests were also leading astronomers of their day; and they observed the planets from atop immense temple platforms called Ziggurats, they also kept records of planet movements on clay tablets. These astronomer-priests were known in the West as the "magoi." NT:3097 magos, magou, ho a magus; the name given by the Babylonians (Chaldaeans), Medes, Persians, and others, to the wise men, teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, seers, interpreters of dreams, augurs, soothsayers, sorcerers etc. The oriental wise men Mt 2:1,7,16

The Old Testament, there is nowhere any mention of the possible influence of heavenly bodies. The Israelites were forbidden to worship stars (Dt 9:14), this being seen as an offshoot of astrological speculation. Several centuries later, the influence of Mesopotamian star gazing was being experienced in Israel, causing Amos to condemn the northern kingdom's worship of Saturn (*Am 5:25, 26, 27 25 Did you bring to me sacrifices and offerings the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 26 You shall take up Sakkuth your king, and Kaiwan your star-god, your images, which you made for yourselves; 27 therefore I will take you into exile beyond Damascus, says the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts. NRSV*). Jeremiah also referred to the pagan worship of Ishtar or Venus (Jer 7:18; 44:17-19) (Jer 7:16-20) Daniel seems to have been familiar with astrologers (Dan 2:27; 4:7) and with their inability to interpret the king's dreams.

The brightest star in Leo is called Regulus; and, through various prophecies in the Hebrew Books of Genesis and Numbers, this star was symbolic of ruler ship. The planet Jupiter at that time had also come to symbolize kingship. It is possible that the Wise Men were familiar with this Jewish symbolism.

Slowly Jupiter, the planet symbolizing kingship, moved toward the bright star Regulus, also symbolic of kingship. By September, Jupiter met Regulus in the morning sky in the east. As the days passed, Jupiter moved beyond Regulus. Then Jupiter slowly began to back up. Today we know this backward motion is just an effect of our own Earth's motion as it overtakes and passes Jupiter every thirteen months.