

Velikovskian notions would have to concede that *the Bible would be wrong for a start*. The chronological revision proposed by Velikovsky, or its many mutations, strongly depends on Jerusalem being the object of the Queen of Sheba's journey. Thus in trying to equate Hatshepsut with the Sabaeen queen, Velikovsky makes this an essential pillar of the revision. If this equation fails, then Thutmose III cannot be Shishak. Of course it makes a difference, and I think Down probably knows this. Suddenly, according to him, it is a side issue after 38 pages from Velikovsky, and eight pages in Down's *Unwrapping the Pharaohs*. This argument is no sideshow; if arguments for her identity collapse, it sets off a chain-reaction pulling the revision down.

I can read Egyptian well and thus I can read the Punt text for myself, so I know what the passage says. The writer may think that the Punt known to Egyptian scholars was some obscure territory in Africa, but the scholarly evidence for its existence is there. Pharaohs were sending trading expeditions to the 'obscure territory' from at least the 6th Dynasty.

Others cite the Hymn to Hathor as proof of the northern location of Punt. This poem demonstrates that Velikovsky did not understand the way Egyptian poetry works, as future articles will show, if this journal chooses to publish the others mentioned.

Down's final statement highlights one of the main problems of the Velikovsky Inspired Chronology (VIC). VIC supporters started 'reading' this 'whodunit' in the middle of the story. The Exodus is not the beginning of the story; to understand the true course of history it is necessary to start at the beginning. The articles to come on the other pillars of the VIC will serve to strengthen the case against it still further; in the meantime I can only urge readers to stick to the Bible, rather than to these particular manmade constructions. David Down's passion to defend the

Word of God is commendable, and I share it. But unless we do so with a high regard for truth and scholarship, we risk discrediting the very thing we seek to uphold.

Patrick Clarke
Éréac, Bretagne
FRANCE

References

1. Cooper, B., *After the Flood*, New Wine Press, 1997.
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3. Schott, S., *Les chants d'amour de l'Égypte Ancienne*, p. 97, 1956.

Gospel in the stars

The response by Jonathan F. Henry to Ross S. Olson's letter about his article on the Gospel in the Stars (*J. Creation* 23(3):50, 2009) brought back to mind something about the star and Magi I had thought about a few years ago. As a physics teacher the movements of the star of Bethlehem had often bothered me. It wasn't that I didn't believe that God could do absolutely anything he wanted to with a star, because I did. What bothered me was the almost casual manner such a large mass 'bobbed' about the universe without any apparent effect on the earth and how it achieved what it was meant to without some very strange tricks of perspective or violating scientific laws, though this is always possible for God of course. A previous article¹ considers three possibilities for the star: a comet, planet or supernova. I don't believe any of these were involved because of how the star behaved. Arnold Fruchtenbaum also suggests that the star may have been the Shekinah Glory.² I suggest a third alternative.

What did the star do?

The four mentions of the star are all in Matthew; they are

- (i) "We have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him" (Matt. 2:2),

- (ii) "Herod ... determined from them what time the star appeared" (Matt. 2:7),

- (iii) "When they heard the king, they departed; and behold the star which they had seen in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy" (Matt. 2:9-10).

So we have some explaining to do if this is really a star doing these things. Why does it matter what the star did? It does because although God can do anything he wants, there are practical problems with a star here.

The problems

I had accepted, like many people, that God moved a star about in the sky as indeed he could do. But this raises certain problems. The first is how did the kings know the appearance of a star meant anything? I had assumed that being Magi, they used some form of astrology in order to know the star was different from any other and had some significance. I also knew that astrologers in the east had access to Jewish scripture and prophecy but would they recognise the birth of a major 'king' and decide to visit him based on this? How did they know they should do this? I have not heard anything to really convince me that this was the case. So how did the kings get the information to go and follow a star? This was a major undertaking of trust for such a big journey and one seemingly so clearly specified to them. Lots of deities existed and were worshipped, why would this new one be so different and so important that they have to go and worship? Henry touches on this in saying "They would recognise his star as a special or unique object". This I agree with—maybe it was an angel.

There is the problem of following a star; how did the kings do it until it was overhead as in verse 9? Stars are normally so far away that it is impossible to follow one to a fixed point on the earth unless it moves in the process. This is because for the

star to be able to be followed to that point, it must end up being overhead. Before that though, it would be in front of you and therefore unable to move to be overhead without changing its own position in space at a very high speed. Once you reach the point which you are being lead to, the star can no longer be ahead of you but has to be above you. How could it make such a high speed move? There is an explanation, which is that the star was very close to the earth. This would have serious consequences because it would have to be so close that if it was at all a fairly normal star of normal star mass it would be closer than the sun and would be seen by all, would light up the sky possibly as brightly as the sun and would exert a large gravitational effect on us. God could manage all these things easily of course. It does seem to ask a lot of extraordinary convoluting of the laws of physics, though.

The solution?

A few years ago I was thinking about this problem and musing to the Lord that it seemed somehow unsatisfactory to have to be manipulating so many variables to make it work that it seemed incongruous. Suddenly in one of those amazing moments a thought crossed my mind—what if the star was an angel? It would neatly meet all the criteria without the drawbacks.

How could it work?

The angel could have been simply noticed by the wise men and aroused their curiosity or even announced to them the coming event to give them the idea to go to Jerusalem, which was a well-known city anyway. In this respect they had seen the ‘star’ while in the east. The wise men then would have referred to their scrolls or knowledge of the Jewish prophecies to ascertain that indeed the event was prophesied in Jewish scripture. This would explain the implied lack of surprise when the angel possibly reappeared to them in a dream to warn them in verse 12. Preparations and a journey from the east of several months then followed.

Verse 9 is where the angel takes the lead again but high enough up to look like a pinpoint of starlight for them to follow. However, being an angel it can move easily to a position low enough to be clearly over the exact location. It is also now recognisable to them as the angel, hence “When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.” This could mean they had not seen the angel for a while but were now pleased to be following him visibly again. An angel would not be accompanied by any gravitational effects and so could move about in the sky without affecting the earth in any way, yet having the appearance of a star. It is interesting to reread the verses and substitute the word star with angel. It may be that what I have said seems to go against a literal view of Scripture. I think there are enough precedents and allusions in Scripture to help bear out the angel idea, though.

Support from Scripture

Angelic appearances surround the birth of Jesus. Angels appeared to Zacharias, Mary, Joseph and the shepherds. Why not the Magi too? There is a connection between stars and spirits in the sky, the clearest being Rev. 12:4, often taken as meaning Satan, taking angels as demons to Earth with him as he was cast down. Perhaps most conclusive are the verses in Revelation directly linking stars with angels. Examples occur in chapters 1–3, but Rev. 1:20 is very clear, “The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches”. Angels can be seen or not depending on who is meant to see them. This is demonstrated in 2 Kings 6:17 to Elisha’s servant. It also explains why the kings could see the star and others couldn’t when it was low enough to be recognised as an angel. In the New Testament the word ‘aster’ is used for star and simply means luminous or bright object in the sky. This is an apt description for an angel reflecting God’s glory and light. We might ask why the star is only mentioned in Matthew. Matthew was written very much from a Jewish perspective where appearances of

angels were not unexpected, e.g. Acts 12:15 and Matthew 4:11 and 18:10.

Why does it matter?

Ultimately I can accept fully that if it was a star, God could have used it as described in the Bible. All we really know is that the Star must have been miraculous and non-natural. However, I am an inquisitive seeker of the truth in the spirit of Proverbs 25:2. I know this suggestion is a little unusual, but it seems to be a possible way of accounting for the phenomena described in the Bible.

Derek Marvin

Leicestershire

UNITED KINGDOM

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2. Fruchtenbaum, A., How Did the Wise Men Know? Or is Astrology Valid?, www.ariel.org/ffruit.htm, 4 January 2010.

The search for earth-like planets

I would like to comment on the intriguing and excellent report by Wayne Spencer (The search for Earth-like planets, *J. Creation* 24(1):72–76, 2010) concerning exoplanets. While it may appear that exoplanet research is trending towards lower mass bodies that could be Earth-like, I would caveat this issue for creationists. A question needs to be asked concerning the current population of exoplanets claimed. My database is tracking 443 exoplanets as of this letter to the editors and the URL provides a list of 442 exoplanets at ‘exoplanet.eu/catalog.php’ as of this letter.

My question—how do creationists and evolutionists explain the obvious lack of mass in our solar system when compared to the exoplanets documented? Our ecliptic should contain far more mass than it presently