

Three Key Constellations: Virgo: Prophecy of the Promised Seed: The Virgin & the Branch, Isa 4:2; Jer 23:5; 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12; the Heresy of Berenice's Hair; Pisces: The Redeemed Blessed though Bound: the Constellation of Israel Is to Multiply as Fishes, Gen 48:16

2. Three Key Constellations

a. Virgo: Prophecy of the Promised Seed of the Woman

Virgo (The Virgin). This constellation is depicted as a woman holding a branch in her left hand with ears of corn in her right.

The name assigned is Virgo, the Latin for *virgin*. The Hebrew word is **בְּתוּלָה** ***bethulah*** which means the same thing.¹ The sign is demonstrative of the woman in Genesis 3:15 as the virgin who will provide the biological life for the Branch, a title of Jesus Christ in Scripture (Isaiah 4:2; 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12).

The Hebrew word for *Branch* is **פְּתִיחַ** ***Semech*** and is the word assigned by the Israelites to the brightest star in Virgo. The star appears in the branch the virgin holds in her left hand and is presently called Spica \spī¹-ca\, Latin for *an ear of corn*.

Each constellation has a dominant star, its brightness determined by a mathematical system that measures its “visual magnitude.” Spica is the sixteenth brightest star observable from earth with a VM of 0.97 and whose official name is Alpha Virginis. The new name hides the truth revealed by the Hebrew *Semech*. This word appears in five passages of Scripture and each time it makes reference to the Messiah.

1. In Isaiah 4:2, the “Branch of the Lord” represents the deity of Christ, or Immanuel, “God with us”:

Isaiah 4:2 - In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and adornment of the survivors of Israel.

2. In Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15, the “Branch of David” speaks of the humanity of Christ or Messiah:

Jeremiah 23:5 - “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord, “When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and he will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land.”

Jeremiah 33:15 - “In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.”

3. In Zechariah 3:8, “My servant, the Branch” is assigned to Jesus’ submission to the salvation plan of God all the way through His substitutionary spiritual death on the cross:

Zechariah 3:8 - “Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you—indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.”

¹ “Hebrew *‘almah*, a young woman of marriageable age; a virgin, Isaiah 7:14. Although the primary idea of this word is not unspotted virginity, for which the Hebrews had a special word, *bethulah*, ‘virgin’ is, nevertheless, the proper rendering in Isaiah 7:14 of *‘almah*, which may not only take this meaning (Genesis 24:43), but in light of Matthew 1:23 [παρθένης (*parthenos*)] *must* take this meaning” (Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 3d ed. [Chicago: Moody Press, 1966], 1159).

4. In Zechariah 6:12, the phrase “the man who is the Branch” refers to Lord as the Ruler over all the earth, the dominion lost by Adam is granted to Jesus:

Zechariah 6:12 - “Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord.’”

These titles are treated in different ways as well by the writers of the four Gospels: (1) Matthew presents Jesus as the Branch of David, (2) Mark as the Servant of God, (3) Luke as the Man, and (4) John as the Branch of the Lord.

Semech’s meaning of branch has to do with the First Advent of Messiah which is represented in the constellation Virgo where the virgin holds the branch that contains the first magnitude star all of which forecasts the Lord’s virgin birth.

In addition to this we have to mention one of the secondary constellations in Virgo known as Coma Berenices \kō'-ma-ber-a-nī'-sēz\, which literally translated means Berenice’s hair. The original name of this constellation was **הַמְּצָה *kamah***: “to long for; to yearn.” It is related to the noun **הַמְּדָה *chemdah***: “to desire,” found in:

Isaiah 53:2 - He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted [**הַמְּדָה *chemdah*: desire**] to Him.

Abu Mashar \a-bū-mash'-ar\ (787–886), an Arabian astronomer whose works were widely distributed in Europe in Latin translations wrote, “There arises in the first *decan* [i.e., the constellation Virgo], as the Persians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians ... teach, a *young woman*, whose Persian name denotes a pure virgin, sitting on a throne, *nourishing an infant boy*, having a Hebrew name, by some nations called IHESU, which in Greek is called CHRISTOS.”²

Commenting on the modern elimination of this image from the Carousel’s lexicon, Bullinger writes,

This picture is not found in any of the *modern* maps of the stars. There we find today a woman’s wig! It appears that Berenice, the wife of Ptolemy III, king of Egypt in the third century B.C., when her husband once went on a dangerous expedition, vowed to consecrate her fine head of hair to Venus if he returned to safety.

Her hair, which was hung up in the Temple of Venus, was subsequently stolen, and to comfort Berenice, Conon \kō-nān\, as astronomer of Alexandria (B.C. 283–222), gave it out that Jupiter had taken it and made it a constellation!

The Hebrew name was Coma (desired). But the Greeks had a word for hair, *co-me* [κόμη (*komē*)]. This again is transferred to the Latin *coma*, and thus “*Coma Berenice*” (the hair of Berenice) comes down to us today as the name of this constellation, and gives us a woman’s wig instead of that Blessed One.³

Two other secondary constellations are associated with Virgo. Centaurus \sen'-tor-as\ represents the despised sin offering. The Hebrew word for this constellation is **הַבְּזָה *bazah***: to hold in contempt or to despise. It is found in:

² Bullinger, *The Witness of the Stars*, 34–35.

³ *Ibid.*, 35.

Isaiah 53:3 - He was despised [בָּזָה *bazah*] and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised [בָּזָה *bazah*], and we did not esteem Him.

The other of the two is Boötes \bō-ō'-tēz\, the Greek designation from the Hebrew root בָּוָא *bo'*: “to come” and is found, for example, in:

Psalm 96:13 - He is coming [בָּוָא *bo'*], for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness.

b. Pisces: The Redeemed Blessed though Bound

Pisces (\pī'-sēz\; L.: *piscis*: Fishes). The sign of this constellation is that of two fishes. One is pointing toward the North Star while the other is parallel to the ecliptic.⁴ The two are separated but bound together by a Band which is also attached to the neck of the constellation Cetus \sē'-tas\, called the Sea Monster.

In the fish shooting upward is pictured the heavenly calling of Israel, and her functioning as His Kingdom, fulfilling its spiritual requirements. The other, keeping on the horizontal, answers to the fact that the Kingdom is established upon the earth and is inheritor not only of the spiritual blessings but of the material blessings and promises made to Abraham and his seed.

Being two in number expresses the potential of multitudes, as we find in:

Genesis 48:16 - “The angel [refers to Jesus Christ] Who has redeemed me [Jacob] from all evil, bless the lads [Ephraim & Manasseh, the sons of Joseph]; and may my name live on in them, and the names of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac; and may they grow [Qal imperfect⁵ plural of בָּנָה *dagah*: “like fishes”] into a multitude [רֹב *rov*:] in the midst of the earth.”

This was a continuance of God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 22:17-18).⁶

⁴ “The sun's apparent annual path through the fixed stars; also the orbit of the earth if it could be seen in the sky. The 13 astronomical constellations that the ecliptic passes through are the astronomical constellations of the zodiac” (John Mosley, *Starry Night Companion: Your Guide to Understanding the Night Sky*, eds. Mike Parkes and Pedro Braganca [Toronto: Imaginova Corp., 2004], 178-79).

⁵ “The Imperfect conjugation is used to express *incomplete action*. The action of the verb occurs either at the time of speaking or after the time of speaking. The Imperfect aspect designates a verbal action for which, in the mind of the speaker or writer, the conclusion is not in view” (Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001], 165).

⁶ E. Raymond Capt, *The Glory of the Stars: A Study of the Zodiac* (Muskogee, OK: Artisan Publishers, 1978), 83.