

The Starry Testimony of 3–2 B.C.; Virgin Pregnancy: Jupiter the King Planet Conjuncts Regulus, the King Star at Passover, Sept. 3 B.C.; Rosh Ha-Shanah & Yom Kippur; Magi Capitalize on Daniel's Legacy, Dan 2:28; Jupiter Completes Triple Conjunction with Regulus, Feb 20 & May 12, 2 B.C.; Venus, the Virgin Enters Leo the King on May 30 & Conjuncts Regulus on June 11 then Jupiter June 17: the "Star of Bethlehem" or the "Sign" of the Virgin Birth; Visual Magnitude of This Union Brightest Possible Nighttime Phenomenon; Magi Plan Trip to Jerusalem

The planet Jupiter was named by the Romans in honor of the chief god of their pantheon. However, the ancients had long regarded the solar system's largest planet as king of the planets.

If Jupiter is to qualify as "His star" then it must become involved in a number of events in association with other celestial objects that convince the Magi that the Messiah is about to enter human history.

Such a sequence of events began to occur during the time of the Jewish New Year, Ro'sh ha-Shanah (רֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה). It falls on the first and second days of the month Tishri which begins the Days of Penitence, and ends on Tishri 10 with the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur (יוֹם כִּפּוּר).

This equates on the Gentile calendar to September 3–13, 3 B.C. At that time Jupiter began to move toward the star Regulus and a conjunction in the constellation of Leo. Whereas Jesus is biblically described as the "Lion of the Tribe of Judah," Leo is the "sign" of the King of Israel. Jupiter, because of its size, is considered to be the "king planet." Regulus, Leo's dominant star with a visual magnitude of 1.35, is ranked as the twenty-first brightest star viewed from earth. Because of this, Regulus is considered by some to be the "king star."

I have not been able to document from any source that the *Jews* considered Jupiter the "king planet," or Regulus the "king star." Larson gives no attribution for these claims. This does not mean they are not true, but until I can locate two corroborating sources these assertions by Larson weaken his argument.

Nevertheless, Larson suggests that this September 3, 3 B.C. conjunction would have alerted the Magi to something significant on the horizon. Adding to their interest is that this event occurred during the period of the Jewish celebration of New Year and the Day of Atonement.

Rosh Hashanah occurs on the first and second days of Tishri. In Hebrew, Rosh Hashanah means, literally, "head of the year" or "first of the year." Rosh Hashanah is commonly known as the Jewish New Year.

The name "Rosh Hashanah" is not used in the Bible to discuss this holiday. The Bible refers to the holiday as Yom Ha-Zikaron [יּוֹם הַזִּכְרוֹן] (the day of remembrance) or Yom Teruah (the day of the sounding of the shofar). The holiday is instituted in Leviticus 23:24-25.

The shofar is a ram's horn which is blown somewhat like a trumpet. One of the most important observances of this holiday is hearing the sounding of the shofar in the synagogue. A total of 100 notes are sounded each day.

You may notice that the Bible speaks of Rosh Hashanah as occurring on the first day of the seventh month. The first month of the Jewish calendar is Nissan, occurring in March and April. Judaism has several different "new years." In Judaism, Nissan 1 is the new year for the purpose of counting the reign of kings and months on the calendar. Tishri 1 (Rosh Hashanah) is the new year for years.^{1, 2}

Ten days later is the Day of Atonement:

Yom Kippur is probably the most important holiday of the Jewish year. Yom Kippur occurs on the 10th day of Tishri. The holiday is instituted at Leviticus 23:26 et seq.

The name "Yom Kippur" means "Day of Atonement," a day set aside to atone for the sins of the past year. Yom Kippur atones only for sins between man and God, not for sins against another person. To atone for sins against another person, you must first seek reconciliation with that person, righting the wrongs you committed against them if possible. That must all be done before Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is a complete Sabbath; no work can be performed on that day. Most of the holiday is spent in the synagogue, in prayer. In Orthodox synagogues, services begin early in the morning (8 or 9 AM) and continue until about 3 PM. People then usually go home for an afternoon nap and return around 5 or 6 PM for the afternoon and evening services, which continue until nightfall. The services end at nightfall, with the blowing of the *tekiah gedolah*, a long blast on the shofar.³

It will be shown later in this study that there is a sequence of "signs" following a schedule associated with the virgin pregnancy and the virgin birth. And the "star" of this procession is not really a star but the planet Jupiter. Jupiter's retrogradation in the coming months will further capture the attention of the Magi. The optical illusion of its back and forth motion in conjunction with Regulus will occur with the Creator's impeccable timing.

Through images accessed from Starry Night Pro we are able to reconstruct the "signs" observed by the Magi. The conjunctions of Jupiter and Regulus in the constellation Leo can be reproduced in a sequential slide show to demonstrate the retrogradation of Jupiter and its three passes over Regulus.

All planets rise in the east, as was stipulated by the Magi to Herod. This is referred to in astronomy as direct, or prograde, motion. They wander across the sky eastward, but since the orbit of Earth is much faster than those of the superior or outer planets, this causes periodic retrogradation. For example, Earth advances on Jupiter, draws even with it, and then passes it. This causes an optical illusion that makes Jupiter appear to stop and then retrogress back eastward, and then, after a time, resume its westward journey.

Three such phenomena are rare enough but for them to occur over Regulus in the constellation Leo while precisely timed with Jewish feast days is incredible.

¹ "Nisan: 7th month of the civil year or the 1st month of the ecclesiastical year. Tishri: the 1st month of the civil year or the 7th month of the ecclesiastical year" *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: "Nisan" and Tishri."

² © 5756–5769 (1995–2008) by Tracey R. Rich. All rights reserved. www.jewfaq.org/holiday2.htm.

³ Ibid., www.jewfaq.org/holiday4.htm.

The Magi class had gained its expertise in the field of astronomy over centuries of knowledge passed down from those who preceded them among whom were Jews of three major Diasporas including quite possibly none other than the prophet Daniel:

Daniel 2:28 - The king [**Nebushadnezzar**] promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts, and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief prefect [**שֵׁגָן segan: CEO**] over all the wise men [**חַכְכִּים chakkim: mantic**] of Babylon.

With regard to Daniel's response to Nebuchadnezzar's promotions, R. B. Thieme, Jr. has this comment:

The Scripture is silent on Daniel's response to the king's effusive reaction and opulent rewards. However, from our study of verse 30 we know that Daniel took no credit to himself. What wisdom he had was purely God's grace provision. It is safe to assume that he exploited this opportunity to further proclaim the power and might of Jesus Christ.⁴

The word **חַכְכִּים** (*chakkim*) is an Aramaic term that refers to the court astrologers of Babylon, however, its application to Daniel in this passage needs further clarification.

In Daniel (1–2), Daniel appears as the archetypal Jewish mantic,⁵ who, like Joseph, outdoes his pagan colleagues and competitors in their own field; thus he is introduced (2:48) as chief of the foreign occultists. These latter are called “the wise men of Babylon,” in 2:28. Their function is reduced to a formula in 2:27 in the expression “make known the mystery.” Daniel, however, is able not only to “give interpretations,” and “solve problems,” but also to “interpret dreams” and “explain riddles” (5:12). The exposition of chapter 1 ... combines the idea of such mantic wisdom with that of court education. Unlike Joseph, Daniel and his friends are cultivated in both, as is proper for aristocrats at the pagan court.

According to Daniel 2:19, however, because Nebuchadnezzar wants to have his apocalyptic dream not only interpreted but also guessed, Daniel receives a night vision that reveals the secret to him. Thus he becomes the prototype of the apocalyptic seer.⁶

The entire book of Daniel demonstrates Daniel's loyalty and fidelity to the God of Israel as he put his life on the line on several occasions in His defense. Often the court astrologers and soothsayers were asked by various kings to interpret their dreams, a branch of the occult known as oneiromancy. Theirs was demonically managed while Daniel's abilities in this area were divinely imputed

In light of Daniel's demonstrated integrity and the position of influence granted to him as CEO over the Babylonian *chakkim* and the evidence of legitimate observation of the heavenly “signs” by subsequent astronomers, it is logical to conclude that the Magi of Parthia were the beneficiaries of the training Daniel gave the mantics of Babylon.

⁴ R. B. Thieme, Jr., *Daniel: Chapters One through Six*, 3d ed., (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1996), 62.

⁵ “Mantis” is an adjective relating to the faculty of divination. It comes from the Greek μάντις (mantis) which means “diviner, seer, prophet.”

⁶ H.-P. Müller, “**חַכְכִּים chakkim**,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 4:377.

The Magi were experts in the field of astronomy and the history of divine astronomy goes back to Adam, Seth, and Enoch. When one has knowledge of both the science of astronomy and the interpretation of the signs, then he who has eyes to see, is able to see the message found in the stars.

And so the extremely unusual performance of Jupiter's triple conjunction with Regulus in the constellation of Leo was one that caused the Magi to sit up and take notice.

The sequence began in early September when Jupiter, going from west to east, passed by Regulus forming a conjunction that almost united the two objects on the fourteenth: king planet merges with the king star in the king constellation.

In early February, Jupiter entered retrogradation and began a loop that would conjunct with Regulus twice more, February 13, 2 B.C. during retrograde and then, after coming to a stop and resuming prograde, it conjuncted with Regulus a third time on May 15, 2 B.C. completing the triple bypass.

Hot on the heels of this stellar phenomenon, Venus joined the light show two weeks later when it entered the constellation of Leo. It streaked across the sky in a twenty-day dart, conjuncting with Regulus on June 11 and then moving on to conjunct Jupiter on June 17.

The visual magnitudes of Jupiter, -2.70, and Venus, -4.40 is the brightest celestial event possible excepting the Sun (-26.8).⁷ By comparison the brightest star is Sirius with a visual magnitude of -1.46; Regulus is number twenty-one at +1.36.⁸

When the Magi added this event to the charts they began the previous September, they were able to calculate that the original conjunction of September 14, 3 B.C. of Jupiter with Regulus followed by Venus in Vergo who was clothed by the Sun with the Moon at her feet, indicated the virgin pregnancy

Added to this was Jupiter's second conjunction of Regulus on February 20, 2 B.C. followed by a third conjunction on May 12, 2 B.C. Once done Venus made its sprint across Leo to conjunct with Jupiter on June 17 announcing the virgin birth with the night sky's brightest possible flare of light.

Seeing this and considering all the silent speech poured forth over the past nine months, the Magi concluded this was Messiah's star and began making plans to travel to Jerusalem.

⁷ <http://www.go-astronomy.com/planets.htm>

⁸ <http://www.atlasoftheuniverse.com/stars.html>