

HIS STAR IN THE EAST

The wise men came from the East to worship the King of the Jews. They were led by a most unique phenomenon, which they referred to as “His star.”

Matthew 2:2 (NKJV)

2 saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

“**Saying**” is in the present tense, indicating they were continually asking with the idea they were asking anyone and everyone in Jerusalem, “**Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?**” And then they indicate the cause of their searching, saying, “**For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.**”

There has been no end of discussion and surmising about what this star was and on what basis these wise men came to discern that it had something to do with the birth of the King of the Jews.

Many believe that very possibly these wise men were wise to (pun intended) OT prophecy concerning the coming Messiah of Israel. They point to Daniel’s influential prophetic ministry in Babylon and the fact that there were still Jews living in Babylon. Perhaps as students of the OT, they were familiar with Balaam’s prophecy in Num. 24:17.

Numbers 24:17 (NKJV)

17 “I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; **A Star shall come out of Jacob; A Scepter shall rise out of Israel,** And batter the brow of Moab, And destroy all the sons of tumult.

“The star and the scepter go together. This is the only place I know where they are put together in prophecy in the Old Testament.” -**J. Vernon McGee**

In this prophetic revelation, Balaam saw a “STAR” and a “SCEPTER” come out of Jacob. Kings, back in those days, were often known by the designation “STAR”. Scepter denotes royal authority.

Balaam was from Mesopotamia in the East (cf. 23:7). This is very possibly where the wise men in Matthew 2 came from. They may have deciphered from the Numbers 24:17 text that a special Star would be connected to the arrival of this special KING.

Balaam (although a false prophet that God had His way with) was such a respected prophet in this region that his writings were revered for many centuries, even after his death.

Then, too, the prophet Daniel lived in this area when he was taken captive in Babylon. He was the wisest of the wise men in Babylon, and so, undoubtedly, his writings, too, were preserved in that context. Using Daniel 9, the wise men may have been able to estimate the approximate time of the Messiah's arrival (cf. Dan. 9:25-26). That, in conjunction with the "Star" phenomenon, may have led them to Jerusalem, etc. (cf. Matt. 2; Mic. 5:2).

However, as seen in verse 12, God may have communicated with them in some more direct way, such as through a dream. Specifically, how they knew about this King of the Jews being born, we are not told – other than they connected it with this special STAR-like phenomenon.

What exactly was this star? It has been identified as a comet, a supernova, a planetary conjunction, or a supernatural phenomenon.

God may have providentially used some type of natural phenomenon, but most scholars believe this was purely a supernatural event unique to this occasion. Note the wise men specifically called this "**His star**" (Mt. 2:2), meaning a unique star that related to the birth of the King of the Jews.

"That this star appeared (2:7) suggests it had not been documented previously, and 2:9 implies that this star moved around, supporting a supernatural origin, and may parallel the pillar of fire that led the Hebrews in the wilderness [called the Shekinah Glory – cf. Ex. 13:21]."

– ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

How God specifically did it and the means He used to communicate the significance of it is not spelled out in detail, but the point is these Gentiles got the message that the King of the Jews had been born, and appropriately, they had come to worship Him.