

Ancient Israel, the Zodiac, and the Sun God

By Thomas Horn

Biblical Archaeology Review asks the question: Did ancient Jews observe the Zodiac and worship Helios, the Greek sun god? Raiders News Update believes 2 Kings 23: 11 and similar verses may prove this to be true.

RNU.com – (Raiders News Update) - Archaeologist Zeev Weiss describes a mosaic recently uncovered in an ancient Jewish synagogue in Sepphoris in which a zodiac surrounds a striking portrayal of the Greek sun god Helios. Evidently similar artwork has been discovered in synagogues at Tiberias, Khirbet Susiya, Na'aran, Husifa, Yafia, Beit Alpha and Sephoris.

Lucille Roussin, writing for the March-April edition of BAR believes she knows why the mosaics were made, and her explanation might bother some people.

"The Babylonian Talmud (*Shabbat* 156b) records a debate about the validity of astrology for Jews," she says. "Rabbi Hanina, a Babylonian who came to Palestine to study with the great Judah ha Nasi, compiler of the Mishna, said, 'The planetary influence gives wisdom, the planetary influence gives wealth and Israel stands under planetary influence.' In contrast, Rabbi Yohanan, who lived in about 250 C.E., declared, 'There are no constellations for Israel.'"

According to Roussin the rest of *Shabbat* 156b "is devoted to arguments in support of Rabbi Yohanan's position against planetary influence." Roussin points out that this very argument proves that some Jews did indeed believe "that Israel stood under planetary influence" and that Helios was probably a related minor deity to whom they offered prayer.

Either way, Roussin cannot help but ask, "What in the world is a Greek god doing in a synagogue?" The same questions provided fodder in the RNU book, [The Gods Who Walk Among Us \(get it free!\)](#).

While Roussin's assumptions are correct in that "Synagogue mosaics from the late Roman and early Byzantine periods in Palestine offer evidence that Jews did indeed believe that Israel stood under planetary influence," she fails to address the bigger issues of 1) where did the ancient Hebrews derive such a notion; 2) did similar religious concepts exist in divergent cultures simultaneously around the world; and 3) does this weaken or support the fundamentalist biblical view of a single Creator.



"What in the world is a Greek god doing in a synagogue?"

Can zodiacs and dedications to a Greek god in an ancient Jewish synagogue actually provide support for the notion that Yahweh is the one true God and Creator? Probably, and the somewhat unorthodox conclusion begins with a simple idea called Original Revelation.

The basic premise is that a perfect revelation existed between God and man "in the beginning." The first man Adam was one with God and perceived divine knowledge

from the mind of God. The human was "in tune" with the mental processes of God, and understood, therefore, what God knew about science, astronomy, cosmology, eschatology, and so on.

After the fall, Adam was "detached" from the mind of God, but retained an imperfect memory of the Original Revelation including a knowledge of God's plan of redemption. This point of view seems reasonable when one considers that the earliest historical and archeological records from civilizations around the world consistently point back to and repeat portions of a similar Creation story.

Two things began to occur in the decades after the Fall: 1) information from the original revelation became distant and distorted as it was dispersed among the nations and as it was passed from generation to generation; and 2) (for those who believe in a real Devil) the realm of Satan seized upon this opportunity to receive worship, and to turn people away from Yahweh, by distorting and counterfeiting the original revelation with pagan ideas and "gods". Instead of viewing the galaxy and stars as a heavenly map laid out by God, men began celebrating the stars and worshipping the 'deities' believed represented by them. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God..." (Rom. 1:22-23).

In his book, *The Real Meaning Of The Zodiac*, Dr. James Kennedy echoes such ideas, pointing out that the ancient signs of the Zodiac record a singular and original revelation—a kind of Gospel in the stars—and that the message of the stars, although converted into astrology after the fall of man, originally recorded the Gospel of God. He writes:

There exists in the writings of virtually all civilized nations a description of the major stars in the heavens—something which might be called their "Constellations of the Zodiac" or the "Signs of the Zodiac," of which there are twelve. If you go back in time to Rome, or beyond that to Greece, or before that to Egypt, Persia, Assyria, or Babylonia—regardless of how far back you go, there is a remarkable phenomenon: Nearly all nations had the same twelve signs, representing the same twelve things, placed in the same order.... The book of Job, which is thought by many to be the oldest book of the Bible, goes back to approximately 2150 B.C., which is 650 years before Moses came upon the scene to write the Pentateuch; over 1,100 years before Homer wrote the *Odyssey* and the *Illiad*; and 1,500 years before Thales, the first of the philosophers, was born. In chapter 38, God finally breaks in and speaks to Job and to his false comforters. As He is questioning Job, showing him and his companions their ignorance, God says to them: "Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?" (Job 38:31,32).

We see here reference to the constellations of Orion and Pleiades, and the star Arcturus. Also in the book of Job there is reference to *Cetus*, the *Sea Monster*, and to *Draco*, the *Great Dragon*. I would call your attention to Job 38:32a:

"Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?"

Mazzaroth is a Hebrew word which means "The Constellations of the Zodiac." In what may be the oldest book in all of human history, we find that the constellations of the zodiac were already clearly known and understood....Having made it clear that the Bible expressly, explicitly, and repeatedly condemns what is now known as astrology, the fact remains that there was a God-given Gospel [universally acknowledged original revelation] in the stars which lays beyond and behind that which has now been corrupted.

In his book Dr. Kennedy strongly condemns the practice of astrology, while asserting his view that the constellations of the zodiac were likely given by God to the first man as "record-keepers" of the original revelation of God.

The original prophetic significance of the zodiac is summarized by Kennedy thus:

VIRGO:

Seed of the Woman, Desire of nations, Man of humiliation, becomes exalted Shepherd and Harvester.

LIBRA:

The scales demand a price to be paid, Cross to endure, the Victim slain, a Crown purchased.

SCORPIO:

A Conflict, Serpent's coils, Struggle with the Enemy, the Evil Vanquisher.

SAGITTARIUS:

The double-natured One triumphs as a Warrior, Pleases the Heavens, Builds fires of punishment, Casts down the Dragon.

CAPRICORNUS:

Life comes from death, He's the Arrow of God, Pierced, Springs up again in abundant life.

AQUARIUS:

Life-waters from on High, Drinking the heavenly river, Delivering the Good News, Carrying the Cross over the earth.

PISCES:

The Redeemer's People multiplied, Supported and led by the Lamb, The Bride is exposed on earth, the Bridegroom is exalted.

ARIES:

The Lamb is found worthy, the Bride is made ready, Satan is bound, the Breaker triumphs.

TAURUS:

The conquering Ruler comes, the sublime Vanquisher, the great Judgment, the ruling Shepherd.

GEMINI:

The Marriage of the Lamb, the Enemy is trodden down, the Prince comes in great Glory.

CANCER:

The great Bride, the Church and Israel, are brought safely into the kingdom.

LEO:

The Lion King is aroused for rending, the Serpent flees, the Bowl of Wrath is upon him, his Carcass is devoured.

Whatever one makes of Kennedy and other people's zodiac conclusions, one cannot help but be amazed by the Gospel similarities.

If similar assumptions made in [The Gods Who Walk Among Us \(get it free!\)](#) can be accepted—that an original revelation was corrupted after the fall of man and subsequently degenerated into the mythologies of the pagan gods—one would expect to find numerous examples of such corruption from as far back as the beginning of history and within various civilizations around the world. Since the myths behind the gods would thus be "borrowed" ideas, the corrupted texts would be similar to the original truth, and, in that sense, evidence of a particular and original revelation.

In this case a representation of the Greek sun god Helios in an ancient Jewish synagogue might be perceived as pointing back in time to an Original Revelation that was distorted as a result of the Fall of man.



Furthermore, If the distortions of the original revelation were in fact energized by an evil supernaturalism, the goal of the alterations would have been to draw people away from the worship of Yahweh through a close but distorted association with an original truth. According to researchers like Kennedy and Horn we thus find a zodiac in an ancient Jewish synagogue.

Article by Thomas Horn

In [Spiritual Warfare—The Invisible Invasion \(get it free!\)](#) a similar example of original revelation plagiarized by Satan in order to draw men away from the worship of Yahweh is given. Concerning Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, we read:

[At the base of Pergamums hill stood the shrine of Asclepius, equipped with its own library, theater, sleeping](#)

chambers used in healing rituals, and long underground tunnels joining various other shrines to which pagans journeyed to receive the healing powers of Apollo's favorite son. The Christian Church considered these mystical powers as demonic, for the worship of Asclepius focused on the image of a serpent, sometimes called Glycon, a figure some historians see as the origin for the modern symbol of healing—a serpent winding about a pole. Asclepius carried the lofty title, *the hero god of healing*.

In Numbers 21, Moses designed the brazen serpent on a pole that was used of God as an oracle of healing. 743 years later, in 2 Kings 18:4, we find that Israel had begun to worship the brazen serpent with offerings and incense. From here the image was adopted into Greek mythology where it became the symbol of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing.

Asclepius was reported to have cured untold numbers from every conceivable disease—even raising a man from the dead. This caused Apollo through his Oracle at Delphi to declare, "Oh Asclepius!, thou who art born a great joy to all mortals, whom lovely Coronis bare to me, the child of love, at rocky Epidaurus." Such a healer was he reported to be, that Pluto, god of Hades, complained to Zeus that hardly anyone was dying anymore, and so Zeus destroyed Asclepius with a thunderbolt. Afterward, Apollo pleaded with Zeus to restore his son and this intercession so moved Zeus that he not only brought Asclepius back to life, but immortalized him as the god of medicine. First at Thessaly, and finally throughout the Greek and Roman world, Asclepius was worshiped as the saviour god of healing.

Greek mythology stated that Asclepius had the power to heal the sick and to bring the dead back to life by drawing blood out from the side of the goddess of justice. Asclepius was symbolized by a serpent winding about a pole, and he was called the great "Physician." The obvious intention of the serpent on a pole in Numbers 21 was to focus mankind on the coming Messiah, the true Great Physician, who would hang upon a pole and would deliver His followers from sickness and from death by the blood that ran out from His side.

Thus we find glaring examples of God's "revelations" plagiarized for demonic purposes. RNU's research eventually uncovered dozens of such examples and summarized them in [The Gods Who Walk Among Us \(get it free!\)](#) .

The worship of the Greek god Helios by ancient Jews refers back to a time when Original Revelation was splintered and truth was fractured and men "changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Rom. 1:25).

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