

THE BIBLE'S ASTRONOMY

PETER J. POPOFF

THE prophet Isaiah in chapter ix, 22, said: "It is he (God) that sitteth upon the *circle of the earth* and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."

"The circle of the earth" is equivalent to the globe of the earth—a clear astronomical conception.

In the book of Job, chapter xxvi, 7, we read: "He (God) stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and *hangeth the earth upon nothing.*"

The circle of the earth hanging upon nothing—this is an astronomical truth of great importance, which thrilled the astronomers of the middle ages, Copernicus (1743-1543), Kepler (1571-1630) and Newton (1642-1727), and which apparently was known at least to some Hebrew prophets eight centuries before our era.

The prophet Amos in chapter v, 8, said:

"Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night. The Lord is his name."

"The seven stars" are the Pleiades.

In the book of Job, we read: "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?" (38, 31-32.)

And again: "Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south?" (Job ix, 9.)

"Mazzaroth" is Zodiac.

In the French, German and Russian Bibles, instead of Arcturus, there appears "the Great Bear."

Whence came into the Bible the names of the Pleiades, Orion, Arcturus and Zodiac?

A little research is necessary. In the Iliad we read, when Achilles, fully armed, hastened to Troy:

"Him, as he blazing shot across the field,

The careful eyes of Priam first beheld.

Not half so dreadful rises to the sight,
 Through the thick gloom of some tempestuous night,
 Orion's dog (the year when autumn weighs),
 And over the feebler stars exerts his rays:
 Terrific glory; for his burning breath
 Taints the red air with fevers, plagues, and death."
 (Book XII, p. 437).

"Orion's dog" is Sirius.

In another place there is described the shield Vulcan was making for Achilles:

"There shone the image of the master-mind:
 There earth, there heaven, there ocean he designed:
 The unwearied sun, the moon completely round:
 The starry lights that heaven's high convex crown'd:
 The Pleiades, Hyads, with the northern team:
 And great Orion's more refulgent beam:
 To which around the axle of the sky,
 The Bear, revolving, points his golden eye,
 Still shines exalted on the ethereal plain.
 Nor bathes his blazing forehead in the main."
 (Book XVIII, p. 389.)

Thus the Bible mentions Orion, the Pleiades, Arcturus, and Zodiac. And the Iliad, Orion, the Pleiades, the Hyades, the Bear and Sirius. These names of the constellations and the myths connected with them are Greek. But the Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions prove that their origin belongs to the Babylonians who studied the stars long before the Greeks. Seleucus of Babylon discovered, about 250 B. C., that the Sun is in the center of the planets which, together with the earth, are revolving around it.

Through the Phoenician navigators both the Greeks and the Hebrews adopted the Babylonian constellations. Thus we find that Amos and Job speak of the same constellations as does Homer in his Iliad.

Astronomical conceptions of Babylon as well as the laws of Babylon (those of Hammurabi) were introduced into the Bible.

The ancient signs of Zodiac and of constellations found in Babylon, Egypt (Denderah) and India, were adopted (with some changes) by the modern world.

Thus the enigma of the Bible's astronomy becomes clear and comprehensible.