

**THE STARS.**

**How Amos Interpreted the Constellations of the Heavens.**

**God's Displeasure Has Been Frequently Manifested by Them—Astrology May Have Been More Than a Brilliant Heathenism.**

In his latest Washington sermon Dr. Talmage tells the story of Amos of Tekoa, an ancient farmer, and draws from it some useful lessons. His text was Amos 5: 8: "Seek Him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

A country farmer wrote this text—Amos of Tekoa. He plowed the earth and thrashed the grain by a new threshing machine just invented, as formerly the cattle trod out the grain. He gathered the fruit of the sycamore tree, and scarified it with an iron comb just before it was getting ripe, as it was necessary and customary in that way to take from it the bitterness. He was the son of a poor shepherd, and stammered; but before the stammering rustic the Philistines, and Syrians, and Phoenicians, and Moabites, and Ammonites, and Edomites, and Israelites trembled.

Moses was a law-giver, Daniel was a prince, Isaiah a courtier, and David a king; but Amos, the author of my text, was a peasant, and, as might be supposed, nearly all his parallelisms are pastoral, his prophecy full of the odor of new mown hay, and the rattle of locusts, and the rumble of carts with sheaves, and the roar of wild beasts devouring the flock while the shepherd came out in their defense. He watched the herds by day, and by night inhabited a booth made out of bushes, so that through these branches he could see the stars all night long, and was more familiar with them than we who have tight roofs to our houses, and hardly ever see the stars except among the tall brick chimneys of the great towns. But at seasons of the year when the herds were in special danger, he would stay out in the open field all through the darkness, his only shelter the curtain of the night-heaven, with the stellar embroideries and silvered tassels of lunar light.

What a life of solitude, all alone with his herds! Poor Amos! And at 12 o'clock at night, hark to the wolf's bark, and the lion's roar, and the bear's growl, and the owl's te-whit te-who, and the serpent's hiss, as he unwittingly steps too near while moving through the thickest! So Amos, like other herdsmen, got the habit of studying the map of the heavens because it was so much of the time spread out before him. He noticed some stars advancing and others receding. He associated their dawn and setting with certain seasons of the year. He had a poetic nature, and he read night by night, and month by month, and year by year, the poem of the constellations, divinely rhythmic. But two rosettes of stars especially attracted his attention while seated on the ground, or lying on his back under the open scroll of the midnight heaven—the Pleiades, or Seven Stars and Orion.

The former group this rustic prophet associated with the spring, as it rises about the first of May. The latter he associated with winter, as it comes to the meridian in January. The Pleiades, or Seven Stars, connected with all sweetness and joy; Orion, the herald of the tempest. The ancients were the more apt to study the physiognomy and juxtaposition of the heavenly bodies, because they thought they had a special influence upon the earth; and perhaps they were right. If the moon every few hours lifts and lets down the tides of the Atlantic Ocean, and the electric storms in the sun, by all scientific admission, affected the earth, why not the stars have proportionate effect?

And there are some things which make me think that it may not have been all superstition which connected the movements and appearance of the heavenly bodies with great moral events on earth. Did not a meteor run on evangelistic errand on the first Christmas night, and designate the rough cradle of our Lord? Did not the stars in their course fight against Sise-raw? Was it merely accidental, that before the destruction of Jerusalem the moon was hidden for twelve consecutive nights? Did it merely happen so that a new star appeared in constellation Cassiopeia, and then disappeared just before Charles IX., of France, who was responsible for St. Bartholomew massacre, died? Was it without significance that in the days of the Roman Emperor Justinian war and famine were preceded by the dimness of the sun, which for nearly a year gave no more light than the moon, although there were no clouds to obscure it?

Astrology, after all, may have been something more than a brilliant heathenism. No wonder that Amos of the text, having heard these two anthems of the stars, put down the stout rough staff of the herdsmen and took into his brown hand cut and knotted fingers the pen of a prophet, and advised the recreant people of his time to return to God, saying: "Seek Him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion." This command, which Amos gave 785 years before Christ, is just as appropriate for us in 1897 A. D.

In the first place, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made the Pleiades and Orion must be the God of order. It was not so much a star here and a star there that impressed the inspired herdsmen, but seven in one group, and seven in the other group. He saw that night after night and season after season and decade after decade they had kept step of light, each one in its own place, a sisterhood never clashing and never contesting precedence. From the time Hesiod called the Pleiades the "Seven Daughters of Atlas" and Virgil wrote in his Aeneid of "Stormy Orion" until now, they have observed the order established for their coming and going; order not written in manuscript that may be pigeonholed, but with the hand of the Almighty on the dome of the sky, so that all nations may read it.

Order. Persistent order. Sublime order. Omnipotent order.

What a sedative to you and me, to whom communities and nations sometimes seem going pell-mell, and the world ruled by some fiend at hap-hazard, and in all directions malmaladministration! The God who keeps seven worlds in right circuit for 6,000 years can certainly keep all the affairs of individuals and nations and continents in adjustment. We had not better fret much, for the peasant's argument of the text was right. If God can take care of the seven worlds of the Pleiades and the four chief worlds of Orion, He can probably take care of the one world we inhabit.

In your occupation, your mission, your sphere, do the best you can, and then trust to God; and if things are all mixed and disquieting, and your brain is hot and your heart sick, get some one to go out with you into the star-light and point out to you the Pleiades, or, better than that, get into some observatory, and through the telescope see further than Amos with the naked eye could—namely, 200 stars in the Pleiades, and that in what is called the sword of Orion there is a nebula computed to be two trillion, two hundred thousand billions of times larger than the sun. Oh, be at peace with the God who made that and controls all that—the wheel of the constellations turning in the wheel of galaxies for thousands of years without the breaking of a cog or the slipping of a band or the snap of an axle. For your placidity and comfort through the Lord Jesus Christ I charge you, "Seek Him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

Again, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made these two groups of the text was the God of light. Amos saw that God was not satisfied with making one star, or two or three stars, but He makes seven; and having finished that group of worlds, makes another group—group after group. To the Pleiades He adds Orion. It seems that God likes light so well that He keeps making it. Only one being in the universe knows the statistics of solar, lunar, stellar, meteoric creations, and that is the Creator himself. And they have all been lovingly christened, each one a name as distinct as the names of your children. "He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names." The seven Pleiades had names given to them, and they are Alcione, Merope, Celeno, Electra, Sterope, Taygete and Maia.

But think of the billions and trillions of daughters of stary light that God calls by name as they sweep by Him with beaming brow and lustrous robe! So fond is God of light—natural light, moral light, spiritual light. Again and again is light harnessed for symbolization—Christ, the bright and morning star; evangelization, the daybreak; the redemption of nations, Son of righteousness, rising with healing in His wings. Oh, men and women, with so many sorrows and sins and perplexities, if you want light of comfort, light of pardon, light of goodness, in earnest prayer through Christ "Seek Him that maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

Again, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made these two archipelagoes of stars must be an unchanging God. There had been no change in the stellar appearance in this herdsman's lifetime, and his father, a shepherd, reported to him that there had been no change in his lifetime. And these two clusters hang over the celestial arbor just as they were the first night that they shone on the Edenic bowers, the same as when the Egyptians built the Pyramids from the top of which to watch them, the same as when the Chaldeans calculated the eclipses, the same as when Elihu, according to the Book of Job, went out to study the aurora borealis, the same under Ptolemaic system and Copernican system, the same from Calisthenes to Pythagoras, and from Pythagoras to Herschel. Surely, a changeless God must have fashioned the Pleiades and Orion! Oh, what an anodyne amid the ups and downs of life, and the flux and reflux of the tides of prosperity, to know that we have a changeless God, "the same yesterday, to-day and forever."

Again, Amos saw, as we must see, that the God who made these two beams of the oriental night sky, must be a God of love and kindly warning. The Pleiades rising in mid-sky said to all the herdsmen and shepherds and husbands: "Come out and enjoy the mild weather, and cultivate your gardens and fields." Orion, coming in winter, warned them to prepare for tempest. All navigation was regulated by these two constellations. The one said to shipmaster and crew: "Hoist sail for the sea, and gather merchandise from other land." But Orion was the storm signal, and said: "Reef sail, make things snug, or put into harbor, for the hurricanes are getting their wings out." As the Pleiades were the sweet evangel of the spring, Orion was the warning prophet of the winter.

Oh, now I get the best view of God I ever had! There are two sermons I never want to preach—the one that presents God so kind, so indulgent, so lenient, so imbecile that men may do what they will against Him, and fracture His every law, and put the pry of their impertinence and rebellion under His throne, and while they are splitting in His face and stabbing at His heart, He takes them up in His arms and kisses their infuriated brow and cheek, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven." The other kind of sermon I never want to preach is the one that represents God as all fire and torture and thunder-cloud, and with red-hot pitchfork tossing the human race into pyroxyms of infinite agony.

You must remember that the winter is just as important as the spring. Let one winter pass without frost to kill vegetation and ice to bind the rivers and snow to enrich our fields, and then you will have to enlarge your hospitals and your cemeteries. "A green Christmas makes a fat graveyard," was the old proverb. Storms to purify the air, Thermometer at three degrees below zero to tone up the system. December

and January just as important as May and June. I tell you we need the storms of life as much as we do the sunshine. There are more men ruined by prosperity than by adversity. If we had our own way in life, before this we would have been impersonations of selfishness and worldliness and disgusting sin, and puffed up until we would have been like Julius Caesar, who was made by sycophants to believe that he was divine, and the freckles on his face were said to be as the stars of the firmament.

One of the swiftest trans-Atlantic voyages made one summer by the Etruria was because she had a stormy wind abaft, chasing her from New York to Liverpool. But to those going in the opposite direction the storm was a buffeting and a hindrance. It is a bad thing to have a storm ahead, pushing us back; but if we be God's children and aiming toward Heaven, the storms of life will only chase us the sooner into the harbor. I am so glad to believe that the monsoons, typhoons and mistralis and siroccos of the land and sea are not unchained maniacs let loose upon the earth, but are under divine supervision! I am so glad that the God of the Seven Stars is also the God of Orion! It was out of Dante's suffering came the sublime Divina Commedia, and out of John Milton's blindness came Paradise Lost, and out of miserable infidel attack came the Bridge-water Treatise in favor of Christianity, and out of David's exile came the songs of consolation, and out of the suffering of Christ came the possibility of the world's redemption, and out of your bereavement, your persecution, your privations, your misfortunes, may yet come an eternal Heaven.

Oh, what a mercy it is that in the text and all up and down the Bible God induces us to look out toward other worlds! Bible astronomy in Genesis. In Joshua, in Job, in the Psalms, in the prophets, major and minor, in St. John's Apocalypse, practically saying: "Worlds! worlds! worlds! Get ready for them!" We have a nice little world here that we stick to, as though losing that we lose all. We are afraid of falling off this little raft of a world. We are afraid that some meteoric iconoclast will some night smash it, and we want everything to revolve around it, and are disappointed when we find that it revolves around the sun instead of the sun revolving around it.

When I read, "In my Father's house are many mansions," I do not know but that each world is a room, and as many rooms as there are worlds, stellar stairs, stellar galleries, stellar hallways, stellar windows, stellar domes. How our departed friends must pity us shut up in these cramped apartments, tired if we walk 15 miles, when they some morning, by one stroke of wing, can make circuit of the whole stellar system and be back in time for matins! Perhaps yonder twinkling constellation is the residence of the martyrs; that group of 12 luminaries may be the celestial home of the apostles. Perhaps that steep of light is the dwelling place of angels cherubic, seraphic, archangelic. A mansion with as many rooms as worlds, and all their windows illuminated for festivity.

Oh, how this widens and lifts and stimulates our expectation! How little it makes the present, and how stupendous it makes the future! How it consoles us about our pious dead, that instead of being boxed up and under the ground have the range of as many rooms as there are worlds, and welcome everywhere, for it is "the Father's house, in which there are many mansions! Oh, Lord God of the Seven Stars and Orion, how can I endure the transport, the ecstasy, of such a vision. I must obey my text and seek Him. I will seek Him. I seek Him now, for I call to mind that it is not the material universe that is most valuable, but the spiritual, and that each of us has a soul worth more than all the worlds, which the inspired herdsmen saw from his booth on the hills of Tekoa.

I had studied it before, but the cathedral of Cologne, Germany, never impressed me as it did one summer. It is admittedly the grandest Gothic structure in the world, its foundation laid in 1248, only a few years ago completed. More than 600 years in building. All Europe taxed for its construction. Its chapel of the Magi with precious stones enough to purchase a kingdom. Its chapel of St. Agnes with masterpieces of painting. Its spire springing 511 feet into the heavens. Its stained glass the chorus of all rich colors. Statues encircling the pillars and encircling all. Statues above statues, until sculpture can do no more, but faints and falls back against carved stalls and down on pavements over which the kings and queens of the earth have walked to confession. Nave and aisles and transepts, and portals combining the splendors of sunrise and sunset. Interlaced, interfoliated, intercoloured grandeur. As I stood outside, looking at the double range of flying buttresses and the forest of pinnacles, higher and higher and higher, until I almost reeled from dizziness, I exclaimed: "Great doxology in stone! Frozen prayer of many nations."

But while standing there I saw a poor man enter and put down his pack and kneel beside his burden on the hard floor of that cathedral. And tears of deep emotion came into my eyes, as I said to myself: "There is a soul worth more than all the material surroundings. That man will live after the last pinnacle has fallen, and not one stone of all that cathedral glory shall remain uncrumbled. He is now a Lazarus in rags and poverty and weariness, but immortal, and a son of the Lord God Almighty; and the prayer he now offers, though amid many superstitions, I believe God will hear; and among the apostles whose sculptured forms stand in the surrounding niches he will at last be lifted, and into the presence of that Christ whose sufferings are represented by the crucifix before which he bows; and be raised in due time out of all his privations into the glorious home built for us by Him who maketh the Seven Stars and Orion."

**TAME OCEAN FISHES.**

**WHALES AND PORPOISES ARE SOMETIMES PAINFULLY SOCIABLE.**

Good Natured Bob, an Acquaintance on the Florida Coast—Some Interesting Experiences With Whales in the Pacific Ocean.

Travelers up and down the coast of Florida will remember a certain porpoise that for years, and up to 1881 in the remembrance of the writer, paraded up and down a quarter section of the Florida peninsula. He was known as Bob, and though he rarely answered to his name he was well known to all sailors in those parts. Bob was recognized by a peculiar cut in his dorsal fin, giving it the appearance of having a window in it. Some thoughtless passenger, wishing to practice on all animate nature with his revolver, had inflicted this injury, and the porpoise apparently was very proud of it. In any event, it was exhibited at every opportunity to the occupants of passing vessels. It would come near the vessel, follow it at times or gambol about the bow or stern, but its chief position was about 100 yards away, within good rifle shot, where it would swim along parallel with the course of the vessel, a tempting target to marksmen. So in the course of time Bob's back became seared and scarred, and if current report was valued at anything he carried in his blubber not a few ounces of lead—forceful reminders that porpoises as well as alligators have no rights that are respected on the Florida coast.

In the Pacific some whales are very friendly, especially off the coast of Los Angeles county, Cal., where on more than one occasion they have astonished if not alarmed sailing parties who have been becalmed. These whales, it should be said, are perfectly harmless, and their attentions are merely from curiosity, but to have several of these huge creatures from 40 to 60 feet long floating about in close proximity is not altogether pleasant. What is supposed to be the same whale has earned a reputation for friendliness, and during the summer months it frequently seems to meet a large steamer that plies off shore, and either follows it along or spouts about, entertaining the passengers by spouting. On one trip the whale placed itself ahead of the steamer and swam with it so deliberately that the captain was obliged to slow down and finally stop, fearing to run into the huge creature.

Perhaps the most remarkable instance of friendliness on the part of whales was experienced by the owner of a yacht that sailed from one of the southern California ports. She became becalmed the second day out, and suddenly four or five large whales came alongside and for several hours amused themselves at the expense of the crew, who were a good deal frightened. They rubbed their backs against the bottom of the yacht and blew and spouted so that the drops fell upon the decks. If the yachtmen had thrown over some oil or other disagreeable fluid, they would soon have gotten rid of these companions, which only left them when a breeze sprang up and they got under way.

Fishermen on the Atlantic coast are occasionally troubled with inquisitive whales. One boat or dory was followed for miles, the whale once gently lifting it and rising beneath it, terrorizing the fisherman, who pulled for the shore as fast as he could, the whale following until the water began to shoal.

Why whales should follow vessels might seem a mystery, but the solution is that in all probability they consider the vessel a companion, another whale of some kind. This was well illustrated on the California coast by a whale which evidently took the ship Plymouth for one of its kind. This whale was a sulphur bottom, about 90 feet in length, and it joined the ship off the Golden Gate as it left San Francisco and remained by it through the entire voyage to Realajo, South America. The big fish soon became a nuisance. It swam alongside in such close proximity that its breath discolored the paint of the ship. Then it would rise gently beneath the keel, which would cut and tear it. At other times it would swim along directly in front of and keep the crew in constant fear of a collision that might under certain circumstances dismast the ship. The men tried almost every device they could think of to drive the whale away. They shot at it with rifles and pistols, struck it with pieces of wood and bombarded it with bottles and hot coals as it came up, but all to no purpose. It went on "keeping company" until the ship finally entered such shoal water that it was obliged to sheer off.

The sociability of dolphins and porpoises is well known, their graceful gambols about the prow of vessels being a very common sight. No matter how rapid the pace, these attractive creatures so time their motions that they pass and re-pass the flying cutwater with the greatest ease.

The close proximity of such large animals to vessels might suggest a possible danger, yet fatalities are rare and few are known where the whale has not been attacked. The terrible incident of the Essex is perhaps the only one. Here the whale was run down by the ship, the shock from the contact being so severe as to throw the crew to the deck and almost dismast the vessel. The whale swam off and a few moments later the lookout cried out that it was coming for them on the surface. The animal was inspired by revenge, and at full speed struck the ship in the bow so powerful a blow that the bow was crushed in, and the vessel went to the bottom ten minutes later, leaving the men in boats 700 miles from the coast of South America. A survivor of the accident still lives in the little town of Santa Monica, Cal.—Cor. New York Post.

Paris and London Letter Boxes.

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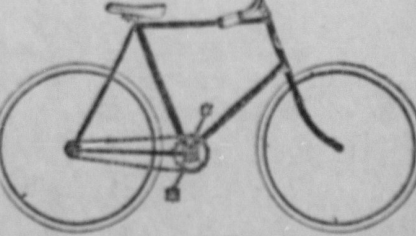
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