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THE CONSTELLATIONS OF JOB: INSIGHTS INTO THE SUPERIORITY OF GOD OVER THE GODS OF SUMERIA

Mark Perkins, MDiv

INTRODUCTION

Both Job 9:9 and Job 38:31-32 describe God as the Creator of the constellations. Yet a closer examination shows several distinctions between the two as to the speaker, the names of the constellations, and even purpose for the description. The similarities between the two passages seem to indicate that they are related, while their differences may indicate why. In this study we will examine the two in the broader context of the book of Job and ancient Sumerian astronomy and religion. Along the way we will observe the difference between the general and special revelation of God, and ultimately be encouraged to greater worship of our Creator from both passages.

THE PURPOSE FOR THE LIGHTS

Before examining the passages on constellations, it will be useful to review Scriptural knowledge on the stars. The first mention of the stars and other heavenly bodies is found in Genesis 1:14–15 "14 Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; 15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so.” We see that the writer of Genesis gives three reasons for the creation of the lights in the

heavens: First, to separate day and night; second, to mark the passage of time and the repetition of seasons; and third, they are there to give light itself on the earth. From the rhythms of daily life to the span of generations, the heavenly lights regulate and enable our function on God's earth. However, in the future Day of the Lord, God will withdraw the stars and their constellations to discipline mankind:

> Isaiah 13:9–11: 9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. 10 For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine. 11 I will punish the world for its evil, And the wicked for their iniquity; I will halt the arrogance of the proud, And will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

There is a fourth great purpose for the stars given in the Psalms: the lights in the heavens reveal His majestic power and awesome beauty. Psalm 19:1 testifies to this, "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands." Viewing the stars in the night sky can indeed be compelling evidence for the existence of the awesome God of the Bible. Simple observation is enough to call our Creator's work glorious. When at night we look to the heavens, we see the sun, the moon, innumerable stars, planets, nebulae, clusters of stars loose and globular, and even whole galaxies. They are on display, fashioned in shapes, sizes, colors, movements, and even pulsations of intensity and luminescence, all purposeful, all from His genius and power, and all telling us

of His greatness. Modern advances in astronomy have given us an ever-growing sense of the vastness and beauty of the universe that is our home.

Within this purpose the Scriptures relate three facts about God and the stars that stagger the imagination and give an even greater reason for reverent worship: First, He knows the exact number of stars in our universe, Psalm 147:4a, and as if that were not incredible enough, He calls them all by name, Psalm 147:4b (see also Isaiah 40:26). But then, perhaps the greatest of all is that God made it all by merely speaking, Genesis 1:3. Consider how great is our God, who made stars by speaking, stars uncountable by us, and He knows each one by name.

BUT WHAT ABOUT CONSTELLATIONS?

Constellations are "A grouping of stars on the celestial sphere perceived as a figure or design, especially one of the 88 recognized groups named after characters from classical Greek and Roman mythology as well as various common animals and objects."[1] The Bible is specific about the purpose of stars and other lights in the sky, and even acknowledges God as the Creator of constellations, Amos 5:8: "He made the Pleiades and Orion; He turns the shadow of death into morning And makes the day dark as night; He calls for the waters of the sea And pours them out on the face of the earth; The LORD is His name." Still, no specific purpose is given for them.

[1] The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 5th Edition.

From ancient writings we see the constellations employed as a kind of crude agricultural calendar. Hesiod, in the second book of his Works and Days writes,

> Orion and the Dog, each other nigh,
> Together mounted to the midnight sky,
> When in the rosy morn Arcturus shines,
> Then pluck the clusters from the parent vines.
> Next in the round do not to plough forget
> When the Seven Virgins and Orion set.[2]

Indeed, twice the Bible records the use of the constellations in a negative sense, but this hardly establishes a divine purpose. If anything, it is an anti-purpose.

2 Kings 23:5 gives the record of the use of constellations as idols in King Josiah's day: "Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven." The writer of Kings indicates the constellations with the Hebrew *mazzaloth,* a loan word from Akkadian.[3] The Rabbinic writers used this word of the planets and constellations in connection with the concept of fortune.[4] As idolatry, the constellations replace God as ruler of the universe and guide to life.

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[2] E. Walter Maunder, The Astronomy of the Bible, p.152.
[3] G. Lloyd Carr, "1173 מַזָּלוֹת," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 498.
[4] Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud and Midrashic Literature by Marcus Jastrow (1926), New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, p.755.

Furthermore, Isaiah employs the plural of *kesil*, "fool" to describe the constellations. Isaiah 13:10: "For the stars of heaven and their constellations ("fools") Will not give their light; The sun will be darkened in its going forth, And the moon will not cause its light to shine." Isaiah may well call them fools because of what fools tend to with constellations – make them into objects of worship. What God intended with constellations remains to be seen in our study, but there is an answer to be found.

A COMPLICATED CHOREOGRAPHY

Pertinent to our study of Job 38, it will also be fruitful to examine the way that stars and constellations seem to move against the background of the night sky. The earth is not a stationary viewing platform. Similar to one's observation of other moving objects from a car, stars and planets can seem to move in strange ways. Many heavenly objects only seem to move because our planet is moving along its own wobbly path. Astronomers note three kinds of the *apparent* motion of stars.

First, stars seem to move because of the rotation of the earth on its axis. Night after night they move in faithful relative position to one another, east to the west thanks to the rotation of our planet. It is not the stars moving in their nightly show, but the earth on its axis. God did this to divide the day and the night, and to regulate our daily lives.

The second kind of apparent stellar motion is that of the sun's movement against the background of the stars along its path: what most people call the Zodiac. This is not the Zodiac of the horoscope, but the careful observation of the apparent movement of the sun against the backdrop of certain

constellations as the earth orbits the sun. Each day, the earth moves 1/365th of the way around the sun, giving earthbound viewers a slightly different nighttime background as they view the sky away from the sun. From earliest recorded history, observers have divided up this view into periods of time and regions of stars. During Job's time and where he lived, there were seven periods of the zodiac. It was not until more than a thousand years later that ancient astronomers wrote about twelve regions for constellations of the zodiac. The orbital passage of the earth around the sun regulates the times and seasons for mankind.

The third kind of stellar motion is even more intriguing: A very fine apparent movement is due to the tottering of the earth on its axis, like a top losing its rotational speed. For our planet, this tottering works on about a 12,000 year cycle, which causes an exceptionally slight annual shift in where the sun rises on the horizon at the same moment each year, usually measured at the summer solstice. In essence, this shift is 1/4.38 millionth of a day's worth of movement. This is called the precession of the equinoxes and cannot relate to a single generation. There is no biblical purpose expressed for this kind of apparent motion, but there has been one third of a precession since Job's time. The constellations do not mark the same seasons as they did in 2000 B.C.

Despite all the relative movement generated by our rotating, orbiting, wobbling planet stars do indeed move on their own. Each has movement and velocity in three-dimensional space. Some move faster, others more slowly; they move up, down, back, forward, left, and right, and every variation in between. Only recently have astronomers come to detect these movements through the advent of the telescope. Over thousands

of years, the shape of constellations changes ever so slightly because not all the stars which are close to each other in our field of vision are in reality close to or related to each other in the vastness of space. They may each have their own direction and speed! Indeed, what we see now in our night sky is a little different than what was seen four thousand years ago at the time of Job.

THE NATURE AND CORRUPTION OF GENERAL REVELATION

Mankind's observation of creation is theologically termed *general revelation*, The Moody Handbook of Theology has this definition: "General revelation, which is preliminary to salvation, reveals aspects about God and His nature to all mankind so that all humanity has an awareness of God's existence." General revelation is what mankind can ascertain through the use of his senses and rational and moral mind because God set it there in the universe and even the moral conscience of man.

The planet we live on is surely meant as a platform to observe what God has done. God placed stars near and far from our solar system. His creation was intentional. He put in our nature the inclination to make sense of the patterns, willing those shapes exactly as they are, knowing that they would be names and used to tell tales. Much like Adam's naming of the animals, it was only human for earth's early humans to observe familiar patterns and name what they saw, and to even make stories about them. The familiarity of the Big Dipper or Orion draws us to tell stories from their shapes, and so from the beginning of history we have been telling tales with great relish.

Yet the sinful corruption of man led many to tell their own empty and evil explanations of the origins of men and the gods. They assigned the names of their pagan deities, to the constellations. When Job speaks to his friends of the constellations, he not only uses the familiar names used in their culture, he changes them to reflect his faith in the One God, the Creator of the universe. Though the heavens declare the glory of God, at the same time they represent a temptation to distort and deceive.

Job, a man who lived nearly four thousand years before our time, was no different from many of us in his curiosity about the stars and their patterns in the sky. Indeed, in his time there was no light pollution. How brilliantly the heavens and their objects must have shined! Already by his time, not all that many centuries after Noah's great flood, great civilizations had risen and formed their religions based on the starry figures in the great black deeps of the night.

PART ONE: THE STRUGGLE OF JOB AND HIS KNOWLEDGE OF CREATION

Job, a righteous, wealthy, and famous man of antiquity (Job 1:1-5), a contemporary of Abraham, found himself in the spotlight of the angelic conflict. Satan, the chief of fallen angels, called into question before God the integrity of Job's faith (Job 1:6-12). God permitted Satan to test Job, first with the loss of his family and wealth (Job 1:13-19), and second with the loss of his health (Job 2:4-8). Although after the first horrific round of suffering Job remains completely faithful to God, continuing in his worship of Him (Job 1:20-22 "Blessed be the name of the Lord."), after the second round his wife turns against him and the corruption of his mental attitude commences (Job 2:9-10).

His friends come but stand aloof and without a word for an entire week (Job 2:11-13).

Job 3 records the agonized raving of Job against God. He wishes he had never been born or even conceived. Whatever righteous thinking Job possessed previously, he has now become embittered toward God.

The first friend of Job to speak is Eliphaz (Job 4-5). He equates God's perfect justice with all that transpires in the lives of men, correlating Job's initial suffering with his sinfulness, and disregarding his righteousness in former times. All the while Eliphaz remains blind to the possibility of undeserved suffering as a test of faith and opportunity to worship. Ultimately, he lays the blame for Job's suffering firmly with Job himself. The ideas of love and grace remain out of view.

Job responds to Eliphaz by glamorizing his suffering and challenging his friends to find fault with him (Job 6). He continues by recounting the plight of man in life, and challenging God to find fault or forgive him. In either case, he demands relief (Job 7).

Job's second friend, Bildad, then speaks forth. He accuses Job of falsehood and calls upon him to repent before God. He leaves him with a message of hope for a future where his relationship with God is restored and his blessings are returned (Job 8).

Job first offers some agreement with Bildad (Job 9:2) but then goes on to demonstrate that there is no possibility of winning an argument with almighty, omniscient God. He eloquently describes God's many virtues and powers, concluding that the only hope for man is with a mediator (Job 9:32-33). Here are the first points of an outline of Job's argument to this end, the context of our first passage on the constellations:

1. Job describes the impossibility of disputing with God, vv.1-3: "1 Then Job answered, 2 “In truth I know that this is so; But how can a man be in the right before God? 3 “If one wished to dispute with Him, He could not answer Him once in a thousand times."
2. He also describes the greatness of God’s omniscience and omnipotence as proof of His indisputability, 4 “Wise in heart and mighty in strength, Who has defied Him without harm?
3. He then relates five works of God as demonstration of His omniscience and omnipotence, vv.5-9:
   a) The work of moving mountains, 5 “It is God who removes the mountains, they know not how, When He overturns them in His anger;
   b) The work of quaking the earth, 6 Who shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars tremble;
   c) The work of eclipses of sun and stars, 7 Who commands the sun not to shine, And sets a seal upon the stars;
   d) The work of creation, of heavens and seas, 8 Who alone stretches out the heavens And tramples down the waves of the sea;
   e) The work of making the constellations, 9 Who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south;
4. Job concludes this section by noting the innumerability of the great works of God, 10 Who does great things, unfathomable, And wondrous works without number.

In context, then, Job uses God’s making of constellations as proof of His omniscience and omnipotence, which in turn he

employs to demonstrate the irrefutability of God. Let us now examine the four constellations Job mentions as God-made.

Anu, the Supreme god of the Sumerians

Job first beckons Bildad to look at the Hyades asterism, the face and horns of the bull in the constellation we call Taurus, but which he calls in his own language, *`ysh*. A big misunderstanding has occurred with regard to *`ysh.* It is commonly translated "bear," a reference to our Ursa Major, also known as the Big Dipper.[5] Since only here and in Job 38:32 is *`ysh [ayish]* mentioned in the Bible, there is no real foundation for establishing its meaning from within the biblical text. Association with Ursa Major is an assumption based on mistaken writings more than two thousand years after the fact. This misunderstanding began in the fourth century, A.D. Latin Vulgate, when Jerome its author mistranslated *`ash* as Arcturus of the constellation Bootes. "Qui facit Arcturum…" This was miscarried without verification from the original into the 1611 King James Bible "Which maketh Arcturus…," and then incorrectly construed again in 1885 in the Revised version, "who made the Bear…". Most if not all modern versions follow the idea of the Bear, aka, Ursa Major. However, studies in Akkadian bright a clearer light onto the translation. In Akkadian, a cognate language to archaic Hebrew it is "bulls jaw" [i.e.,] constellation Hyades.[6] In the opinion of an archaeologist and linguist, "It seems like either we have an abbreviation of *ish lê* to *ish/ysh* or actually we have *ish le* (Akkadian) rendered as (*`ysh `l*) in the Hebrew text. The latter seems a better

[5] John N. Oswalt, "1617 עִישׁ," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, Theological

[6] Black, Concise Dictionary of Akkadian. P.132.

transliteration scenario to me, rather than abbreviation.)"[7] The Hyades are an asterism, a grouping of stars within a constellation, in this case Taurus. Added to this lexical observation are the conclusions of 19th century Jewish scholars who followed the work of 11th century rabbis. "Kohut ("Aruch Completum," s.v.) derives it, as Stern and others before him, from the Greek Ὑάδες, and explains it as a cluster of seven stars in the head of Taurus."[8]

There is another sound reason for taking *`ysh* as the Hyades: together with Orion and the Pleiades, it occupies the same sector of the sky, so that, as they are all three mentioned in a single sentence, so also they can be seen with a single glance. The narrator Job never indicates a shift in view from North to South or East to West or any other direction. There is no need. It is readily apparent they are all right there.

The people in Job's time in Mesopotamia associated this cluster with the god An, the god of the sky and their ultimate ancestor. By using the common name for a well-known star cluster, Job does not necessarily approve of the local mythology. It was merely the common name of the cluster in his time. We do much the same today when we refer to Orion or Perseus or Hercules in our modern night sky. Neither do we believe in Greek mythology! However, to set the stage for what is to come, let's summarize the Sumerian legend of Anu. Anu was one of three main Sumerian deities, all related to the universe. Anu was the god of the sky and had ultimate authority over the other gods, while Enlil's realm was the air and earth, and Enki ruled

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[7] Dr. Titus M. Kennedy, email to author.
[8] Jewish Encyclopedia v.4 p.245 (accessed 12/26/2019 in the Jewish Encyclopedia Online, http://jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4626-constellations)

the abyss. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, his daughter Ishtar convinces him to give her the Great Bull of Heaven whom she sends to attack Gilgamesh in revenge for rejecting her advances. Instead, Ishtar murders his friend Enkidu who dies after the bull is slain by the two.[9] From this came the beginning of worship of the sacred bull.[10] The people of ancient Erech (the Ur of the Bible) recorded their astrology on 77 tablets, associating their deities with the stars, and the stars with events in their own lives, even as modern astrology does. These tablets have references to Anu, although it seems Enlil and Enki were more active in the affairs of mankind.[11] Even today, we refer to the great V shape of the Hyades as Taurus, the bull.

In the TWOT, John N. Oswalt points out a distinction between the pagan creation myth Enuma Elish and the Bible (italics mine):

> The particular contexts of both chapters 9 and 38 suggest overtones of both the Mesopotamian and the biblical creation accounts. In both of these the deity fixes the times and seasons. Furthermore, in the Enuma Elish, Marduk fixes the places of the gods in the heavens—rather patent references to the sun, moon and stars. *In the biblical account God also fixes these, but not as gods, simply as created objects, the work of his hands.*[12]

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[9] The Epic of Gilgamesh.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] John N. Oswalt, "1617 עִשׂ," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 665.

By directing his friends' attention to the star cluster of Anu, and declaring God as its Creator, Job indicates the infinite greatness of God, even related to contemporary local mythology. But if he is making this point, the implication may have relevance to his friends. Are they really believers in the Yahweh of the Bible, or possibly followers of the religion of their place and time? In reality, other possibilities exist for Job's use of pagan vocabulary in his description of God as the Creator of the stars. Before we enumerate these, let us continue to the asterism, the Hunter in the sky.

Nimrod aka Marduk aka Orion aka Kesil

Second, Job points to *kesil*, the "Fool." Orion is a southern constellation, below and to the left of the Hyades. The form of Orion in our night sky is perhaps the most recognizably human of the constellations. Feet, shoulders, three-starred belt, glittering, glowing sword; and bow aimed at Hyades. Longfellow describes him thus:

> Begirt with many a blazing star,
> Stood the great giant, Algebar,
> Orion, hunter of the beast!
> His sword hung gleaming by his side,
> And, on his arm, the lion's hide
> Scattered across the midnight air
> The golden radiance of its hair.[13]

The well-known British scholar, E. Walter Maunder describes the history of the naming of the constellation:

[13] Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Occultation of Orion."

> In accord with the form naturally suggested by the grouping of the stars, the Syrians have called the constellation Gabbārā; and the Arabs, Al Jabbār; and the Jews, Gibbōr. The brightest star of the constellation, the one in the left knee, now generally known as Rigel, is still occasionally called Algebar, a corruption of Al Jabbār, though one of the fainter stars near it now bears that name. The meaning in each case is "the giant," "the mighty one," "the great warrior," and no doubt from the first formation of the constellations, this, the most brilliant of all, was understood to set forth a warrior armed for the battle.[14]

These observations seem to accord with Genesis 6:4, which designates the Nephilim, the "fallen ones," as the mighty men, renowned men of old, "4 The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men (Hebrew *gibborim*) who were of old, men of renown."

After the flood and its eradication of that mighty race, there was Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, who was also designated a mighty man (Hebrew *gibbor*) and established many cities, including Babel, Nineveh, and Erech, Genesis 10:8–12:

> 8 Now Cush became the father of Nimrod; he became a mighty one on the earth. 9 He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the LORD." 10 The beginning of his

[14] Maunder, p. 234.

> kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. 11 From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh and Rehoboth-Ir and Calah, 12 and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city.

But how in the heavens can we connect such diverse names as Nimrod, Marduk, and Orion to one ancient person, and then to *kesil*, the "fool" in the night sky? Maunder helps us again by connecting them.

> There was at one time surprise felt, that, deeply as the name of Nimrod had impressed itself upon Eastern tradition, his name, as such, was "nowhere found in the extensive literature which has come down to us" from Babylon. It is now considered that the word, Nimrod, is simply a Hebrew variant of Merodach, "the well-known head of the Babylonian pantheon.[15]

The ISBE writes regarding Marduk, "Chief god of the Babylonian pantheon… …Upon the political ascendancy of Hammurabi of Babylon (ca 1750 B.C.), Marduk the god of Babylon became supreme among the older Sumerian gods as creator and ruler."[16] This equivalency is established by comparing the Cuneiform records in Babylon with Genesis 10: As we have noted, Genesis states that Nimrod founded Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, while in the cuneiform records of

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[15] Ibid, p.235.
[16] P. W. Gaebelein Jr., "Marduk," ed. Geoffrey W Bromiley, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 244.

ancient Babel, Merodach built Babel and Erech and Niffer, (probably Calneh). E. Walter Maunder also guides us as to the etymological journey from Merodach to Nimrod, (from Maunder)

> The Hebrew scribes would seem to have altered the name of Merodach in two particulars: they dropped the last syllable, thus suggesting that the name was derived from Marad, "the rebellious one"; and they prefixed the syllable "Ni," just as "Nisroch" was written for "Assur." "From a linguistic point of view, therefore, the identification of Nimrod as a changed form of Merodach is fully justified.[17]

The English name Orion comes from the Greek which goes back to around 800 B.C. and the early writings of Homer and Hesiod. As the ancient classics rose to preeminence and were eventually translated into English, the name Orion stuck, and even became the common designation for the constellation we know today. But how did this person come to be known to Job as *kesil*, "the fool?"

Emil G. Hirsch in the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia guides us to the designation of this god as the fool of the heavens:

> Orion is undoubtedly designated by the Hebrew "Kesil" ("Fool"; see below) in Job ix. 9, xxxviii. 31; Amos v. 8; Isa. xiii. 10. Of the ancient versions, the LXX. has "Orion" in Job and Isaiah, while Targum and Peshiṭta render by "Giant." In this there is a reminiscence of an ancient,

[17]Maunder, p.235.

> perhaps pre-Semitic, myth—also current in variants among the Greeks—concerning a giant bound to the sky, whom the Hebrews, with characteristic reflection upon his presumption to resist and defy heavenly power, labeled "Fool." Nimrod was associated with this "Fool" by later folk-lore.[18]

At least in North America, Nimrod can be used as a synonym for "a very stupid person."[19]

Thus, it seems likely that Job has pointed to the Orion constellation (as we know it), and identified him as *kesil*, "the fool." *Kesil* appears often in the Old Testament, 69 times. "Fools hate knowledge," Proverbs 1:22; and, "A fool does not delight in understanding, But only in revealing his own mind," Proverbs 18:2. But Job does more than call Marduk a fool. He designates God as its maker, giving even greater emphasis to the superiority of the God of the universe. The greatest god of the Babylonians was only a famous, ancient fool, and the stars that make his image in the sky were made by God. Truly, God is great!

The Heap

Third, Job turns to *kemah*, the "heap," which we know as the Pleiades, found in the constellation Taurus. Job is still looking in the same direction as he speaks, toward the Hyades and Orion, but a bit to the right and higher. The path of the sun, the ecliptic, divides evenly between the Hyades and the Pleiades. The Pleiades intrigues the naked eye with their seven

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[18]The Jewish Encyclopedia, V.4, p.245, Accessed online 12/26/2019, http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4626-constellations.
[19]https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nimrod

heavenly gleams. Through a modern telescope the seven and others nearby dazzle, reflecting blue light on a nebula local to them all. In nights of the ancient world unpolluted by light and smog they must have made an astounding show.

During the time of Job and Abraham in ancient Babylon this heap of seven stars represented two sets of seven gods, seven each for heaven and the underworld[20]. The Heap also carried practical significance according to the season, as the rising of the Pleiades meant it was time to plow in preparation for planting.[21]

The seven great gods of heaven are found in the writings of the Babylonian astronomers in Job's day.

> Among these heptads, "…the Pleiades are identified in first instance with the seven major gods of the pantheon, namely the three main gods An, Enlil, Enki/Ea, and the three astral gods (moon, sun, Venus), plus a seventh god, often the mother goddess Ninhursaĝa or the Netherworld goddess Ereškigal. These are referred to in the expression 'the seven great gods' identifying the Pleiades in several references among others in the Astrolabe B and the MUL.APIN…[22]

The ancient Sumerians also associated the seven stars of the Pleiades with seven demons, offspring of gods and men, who are in opposition to the seven gods of the heavens and plot to

[20] Lorenzo Verderame, "Pleiades in Ancient Mesopotamia" Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry, Vol. 16, No 4, (2016),p.110.
[21] Ibid, p.113.
[22] Ibid, p.110.

overthrow them. In these myths, the Pleiades are equated with the planet Mars: "No surprise thus that the Pleiades are equated with the Seven demons and are often associated with the Netherworld god astral form, the planet Mars, and its different names and aspects (Reynolds, 1998).[23]

Therefore, the Greek and Roman pantheons had twelve gods each, but the Sumerian pantheon had seven. Job tells us that God made this "heap" of stars, the symbol of *all* the great Babylonian gods who also influence human affairs. That Job designates the Seven as a heap is significant in itself. The Oxford Dictionary defines a *heap* as "An untidy collection of objects placed haphazardly on top of each other."[24] Like his designation of Merodach as a fool, it points to the silliness of the Sumerian pantheon of his time. The gods are meddling, feuding, capricious and chaotic, causing grief in the lives of men without righteous cause. They are truly a "heap," ripe for derision and condemnation, and, present an opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of the Creator and Savior of mankind. If God put the Pleiades in the heavens by His mighty power, no symbol of other gods can be superior to Him.

The Stars Unseen

Lastly, Job reminds his listeners of "the Chambers of the South." A *Heder* is "a "compartment" or "room" (within a building) which affords privacy."[25] As Job looked South from Mesopotamia, there were areas of the sky hidden partially or

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[23] Ibid, p.112.
[24]Oxford Dictionary Online
[25] Carl Philip Weber, "612 חֶדֶר," ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 265.

wholly from his view due to the curvature of the earth. There are many constellations hidden from northern observers even as there are in the North to those looking from the South. From modern Basrah, Iraq, near where Job observed in his time, everything south of the Southern Cross is mostly hidden from view, and the Cross itself is partially obscured.[26] The UBS Handbook on Job affirms,

> Pope suggests that, since "chamber" is the source of the tempest in 37:9, the reference may be to the place from which the south winds blow. TEV and others understand it to be a general term for southern stars. In many languages it will be best to translate chambers of the south as in TEV, "stars of the south," or "stars in the southern skies.[27]

Regarding the idea that the Chambers of the South may refer to the zodiacal constellations, a popular notion since the Renaissance, one struggles to find ancient citations. Indeed, as already mentioned, the Sumerian pantheon had seven gods, not twelve.[28] It would be a long time, until the time of Babylon in the first half of the first millennium B.C. (ca. 800 B.C.), that the twelve constellations of the zodiac would first be mentioned by ancient observers of the night sky.[29] Job had no precedent in his day, and would not have reasonably imagined such an

[26] Observation of author, using Pocket Universe app.
[27] William David Reyburn, A Handbook on the Book of Job, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1992), 183."
[28] Verderame, p.110.
[29] Ibid.

arrangement. This text is sufficiently clear without need to impute an idea from a millennium in the future.

Job mentions the Chambers of the South in sweeping fashion, pushing the remaining stars of the south into the realm of mystery, into many hidden rooms. But these obscured areas have one thing in common with the rest: God made them just the same. This too is powerful. God made all the stars and constellations we cannot see. And consider further that beyond the imagination of Job lay the stars now revealed by the instrumentation of the age of the telescope. The Hubble Space Telescope and other earth-bound instruments reveal galaxies and stars innumerable, impossible to see at Job's time, and yet all these were made by the all-powerful Creator. The deep sky is our modern Chambers of the South, and many, many more objects remain undiscovered. Psalm 19:1 still rings true: the heavens declare the glory of God.

Job's Great Gesture to His Friends: A Summary

Job, eager to demonstrate the indisputability of God because of His omniscience and omnipotence, turns to the stars. In a grand gesture he mentions three well-known constellations by the names given in their time, and then adds that all the unknown ones are made by God as well. The names that Job employs refer to the gods of ancient Sumer, and he is quite demeaning in his description. All along, he works within the framework of general revelation, the observable universe and experience of man's own senses. He speaks of what he sees and of what he has learned from the "scientists" of the day.

Job 9:9–10: "9 Who makes Hyades, the Fool, and the Heap, and the chambers of the south; 10 Who does great things, unfathomable, And wondrous works without number."

Does Job's great description of the heavens, using pagan names for constellations and asterisms imply that his friends accept that worldview? Not necessarily. He uses the commonly held terminology of his day even as most Christians do today as we gesture to Orion, the Pleiades, and Taurus, and wonder about undiscovered heavenly objects. Might those friends be affected by the world around them, and the worldview of their times? They most certainly were, as the visit of the evil spirit to Eliphaz in chapter 4 surely affected him. Regardless, Job's words remind us of the majesty of God and refresh us even today.

And yet, as we will see in Job 38, even Job falls short of the Creator's knowledge of His Creation, and by this ignorance God will humble Job.

PART TWO: THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE CREATOR OF THE CONSTELLATIONS

The dispute between Job and his friends wore on, as recorded in our Bibles, for another 29 chapters. They debated knowledge and theology without much love between them. Job remained indignant at his friends while his friends continued in suspicion of his sin, according to them the source of his travails. One friend, the youngest, brought in a late voice of reason, and he alone did not provoke the wrath of God (Job 42:7-8).

God looked upon Job, a believer in the coming Redeemer of mankind (Job 19:25-27), desiring his restoration. Before that could take place, before grace, must come humility in the heart

of Job. He must repent of his theological pride before he can enjoy the blessings of restoration. And to accomplish this, God decides to demonstrate His superior knowledge and power to Job. Job 38:1–3: "1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, 2 “Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge? 3 “Now gird up your loins like a man, And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!" God goes on to detail His creation of planet earth (vv.4-11), the God-given power of the light of dawn over the wicked (vv.12-15), His knowledge of places impossibly hidden to mankind (vv.16-18), and He also declares His knowledge about the source of light and darkness, winds and weather and hydrology, (vv.19-30).

And then God turns to the stars and constellations, the very ones that Job has mentioned in chapter 9. Since God's purpose is to show His superior knowledge, to set forth matters to Job so that he will fully submit to Him as Creator and God, He must reveal information that only He can know, and that has not been revealed or understood by the observation of ancient men. He speaks thus to Job, Job 38:31-33, "31 “Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades, Or loose the cords of the Fool? 32 “Can you lead forth a constellation in its season, And guide the Hyades with her satellites? 33 “Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, Or fix their rule over the earth?"

This is special revelation: Again, the Moody Handbook of Theology provides a definition: “Special revelation usually has a target audience in mind, and a special mode of conveyance: the prophet, the written word, a miracle, by God Himself, and most of all Jesus Christ, God in the flesh.”[30] God reveals directly to Job His understanding as Creator of the constellations. These

[30] Moody Handbook of Theology

details were impossible for Job to know, and indeed impossible for anyone in his time to know through general revelation. They simply were not observable by the unaided human eye. In God's great plan, and because of modern instrumentality, we now know exactly what God revealed to Job in a special revelation and for a holy purpose.

It is easy to compare the statements of Job and God. This comparison of the constellation names in the two chapters shows changes in order and even in names.

Job, in Job 9:9 says that God made:
1. The Hyades (*aysh*)
2. The Fool
3. The Heap
4. The chambers of the south

But God, in Job 38:31-32 relates that He (changes underlined):
1. (3) Bound the chains of the Heap;
2. (2) Loosed the cords of the Fool;
3. (4) Leads forth the constellations in their season;
4. (1) Guides the Hyades (*ayish*) upon her sons.

God placed the Heap and the Fool first and second in order, recounting the work He did on them. He then placed the constellations and the Hyades third and fourth and relates how He set their motions in the skies. He notes that all the constellations follow a seasonal pattern in the sky, while He guides the Hyades and her sons in the same relative positions to one another.

"Can You Bind the Chains of the Heap?"

God begins with the Heap, the asterism we call the Pleiades, *kemah* in the Hebrew. These seven visible stars were to the ancient Sumerians analogous to two sets of seven great deities, one seven in heaven, and one seven in the underworld. As such, the stars represent the Sumerian pantheon.[31] According to Job, God, the Maker of these stars, is superior to the Sumerian gods because He even made the Heap. But God responds by including details that only He could know. He says, "Can you bind…" *qashar* describes a physical binding of one thing to another. The words of God's law are to be bound to the forehead (Deuteronomy 6:6-8), while it is foolish to attempt to bind a wild ox with ropes (Job 39:10). *Ma'adannoth* is a bond or fetter. God asks Job if he can bind the Heap with bonds, as He has done. Every night those stars remain in the same place relative one to another and will do so for tens of millions of years to come. Astronomers classify the stars of the Pleiades as an open cluster, currently bound to one another by gravity, heading in the same direction.[32] Although this will not always be the case, from their creation until the present day they are bound to one another, occupying a space about seven light years across. God has bound them there, and for the span of human history, there they will stay.

All the visible stars in the Pleaides are B-spectrum stars, very close to one another in light blue color. They are much larger, brighter, and much, much hotter than our own sun[33]. During the current time, the stars are passing through an emission nebula, and so give the gas cloud a light blue sheen,

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[31] Verderame, p.110.
[32] Robert Burnham Jr., Burnham's Celestial Handbook, (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1978), 1879-1880).
[33] Burnham, p.1876.

which can be visible with binoculars and which clearly indicates their mutual proximity. Knowing that the stars have a single Creator makes their common color and place more significant. Their color, their grouping in the night sky, their nebula, all point to a Creator Who wanted to make them significant.

In all this, God has given Job details about the creation of the Heap which Job could never know by himself, and which have not been uncovered until the advent of modern astronomy. By binoculars, or a wide-field telescope, we can now see the God-revealed details of this glorious asterism and remember its God-given significance to Job. It is not just what God did, but what He knew.

"Can You Loosen the Cords of the Fool?"

Second, in contrast to the binding of the Heap, God asks of Job, "Can you loosen the cords of The Fool?" The constellation we know as Orion is vast, reaching across our night sky in stars, nebulae, and clusters we struggle to perceive in its scope, variety, beauty, and detail. With binoculars or a telescope, we would not tire of the discoveries for a season, for years, and even a lifetime. Perhaps the most striking feature of Orion is his three-starred belt, angling across his mid-section. It seems clear that this is God's point of reference, that in some way He has set loose what was formerly fixed.

When God created *Kesil,* He set cords on him, so that like a belt with our clothing the rest may stay together. Later, yet still before the time of Job, He released this harness. Similar to the Heap, these three stars were formed at roughly the same

time. They also share the same characteristics of color and temperature[34].

Yet the belt is not as it seems (see illustrations). From our modern viewpoint the three stars form an almost-straight line. This is an optical illusion, for the three are each moving in different directions, at different speeds, and are at different distances from us, according to their true and not apparent motion. The star to our left is moving up and to our right at about a 60 degree azimuth (heading ENE if on a compass), at 18.5 km/second. The middle is moving star down and to the right at 25.9 km/s at a 135 degree azimuth (heading ESE). Meanwhile, the right hand star is again moving at 18.5 km/s and around the same azimuth as the middle, 135 degrees (ESE). All three are also moving away from us. Furthermore, the middle star is twice as far from us as the other, outer stars! The stars to the left and right are about 1200 light years from our planet, but the middle star is 2000 light years away! The meaning of this is clear: with the most recent data available, the harness, or belt of the Fool has indeed been loosed. There is no gravitational relationship between the "belt" stars of Orion. Created at the same time, made similar in color, given different brightness, the three form the belt of the Fool.

There is something perhaps even more astounding. Moving these three stars back in time along their current paths and velocities does not put them in proximity with each other. God must have moved them across many light years to take them from their points of origin to where they are now and where they are going.

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[34] https://www.constellation-guide.com/orions-belt/ (accessed February 17, 2022).

What evidence from astronomy do we have of this? Looking closely at the region of Orion's Belt, even with the naked eye, hazy, luminescent nebulae abound. Truly, The Great Nebula of Orion is one of the most remarkable of all sights in the night sky.

And what caused this Great Nebula and the other clouds nearby? Although astronomers will not admit to a divinely-caused source, the possibility remains that the power of moving stars from their places through clouds of Hydrogen gas would leave the record of nebulae.[35] In fact, astronomers do admit that the nebulae of the region were the "star-nursery" of Orion's belt.

God declared to Job that He had at some point loosened the cords of Orion, three stars (and perhaps others) which were formerly bound together. Through modern astronomy we observe that these stars are indeed in a loosened state. It staggers the imagination to consider how those stars may have looked before God set them loose. As Tennyson wrote in his Palace of Art,

> *…regions of lucid matter taking form,*
> *Brushes of fire, hazy gleams,*
> *Clusters and beds of worlds, and bee-like swarms,*
> *Of suns and starry streams…*

This perhaps gives us something astounding in addition to original creation: the activity of God in the physical universe post-creation, changing the courses of comets, moons, planets, asteroids, stars, and even galaxies! Why? We have no other

[35] Kroupa, P., Aarseth, S.J., Hurley, J. 2001, MNRAS, 321, 699, "The formation of a bound star cluster: from the Orion nebula cluster to the Pleiades"

answer than His desire to demonstrate to mankind that He could. He is truly the Lord of creation.

"Can You Make the Mazzaroth Go Forth in Season?"

Third, God asks Job whether he can lead forth the Mazzaroth in season. This word parallels "the chambers of the south" in Job 9:9, which is a reference to the unseen portions of the sky below the Southern horizons and all they contain. Since God does indeed know what stars and constellations reside in those hidden chambers, and He desires to leave no question in Job's mind regarding His superior knowledge and ability, He teaches Job on His own role in the constellations.

The verbal picture painted by God is of Himself, the Creator, leading the Mazzaroth out of those hidden rooms. Therefore, the Mazzaroth, a plural noun, are the occupants hidden in the chambers of the south, whom God leads out in their season. God is constantly performing wonders hidden to the human eye. Indeed, the constellations of the Southern Hemisphere are wondrous in every way, breathtaking for us to behold. Like all the stars in the sky, they have seasons, times when they are visible and other times when they are invisible; times when they are in the eastern sky at midnight, then overhead, then in the west. God did that. He does that even now.

There is a long and checkered history of interpretation concerning the word *mazzaroth.* By the dawn of the 20th century, Jewish scholarship had only come to an unsettled place of many ideas. Emil G. Hirsch in the 1906 Jewish Encyclopedia summarizes:

> What "Mazzarot" (Job xxxviii. 32) may be is still unsettled. Perhaps it is identical with "Mazzalot" (II Kings xxiii. 5). If so, it might designate Saturn or the seven planets. Stern (l.c.) would have this strange expression denote the Hyades. Ewald, for the passage in Job, claims the reference to be to the Northern and Southern Crowns, corresponding to the "chambers of the South" ("Teman") in Job ix. 9. Others have suggested the constellation of the Southern Ship, characterized in an Arabic translation as the "heart of the South"; others again suggest Sirius. Friedrich Delitzsch leaves the problem open, simply transliterating the Hebrew (see his "Hiob," p. 169, note to verses 31 et seq.). It has also been held to designate the Zodiac.[36]

Almost a hundred years later, Christian lexicography seems to have settled on the idea of constellations, but without any explanation on how they arrived at the conclusion:

> מַזָּלוֹת (mazzālôt) constellations. (ASV “planets,” RSV similar.) “Appears in II Kgs 23:5 and Job 38:32. The Akkadian cognate refers to the phases of the moon, but the usage of the term in Judaic writings indicates that zodiac constellations are being referred to in Hebrew.[37]

Even the Oxford Dictionary Online testifies to the varied nature of modern interpretation of *mazzaroth* as an English

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[36] http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/4626-constellations

[37] G. Lloyd Carr, “1173 מַזָּלוֹת,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 498.

word: "(A) Treated as plural. The twelve signs of the zodiac. (b) With singular concord. The star Sirius; (also) the constellation Canis Major (which contains Sirius). Also (occasionally) applied to other individual stars or constellations. Now rare."[38]

Perhaps a chronological survey will help reconstruct the meaning of *mazzaroth* from the ancient writings:

1. Job 38:32, written around 2000 B.C., "Can you lead forth *mazzaroth* in its season?";
2. The Enuma Elish, considered to be written anywhere from 1600-900 B.C. (Translation from E.A. Speiser);

> He constructed stations for the great gods,
> Fixing their astral likenesses as *mazzaroth*.
> He determined the year by designating the zones:
> He set up three constellations for each of the twelve

3. Around the 6th century B.C. there is 2 Kings 23:5. We are not sure that *mazzaloth and mazzaroth* are the same word, but here it is: "He did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the surrounding area of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the *mazzaloth* and to all the host of heaven."

Three times over the course of almost 1500 years in two languages we have the word *mazzaroth* or its possible variant.

[38] https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/mazzaroth (accessed 9/17/19)

That is hardly enough! Can we even project a meaning for *mazzaroth* backward to Job from Enuma Elish or 2 Kings?

Some have done so: "Another Sumerian word may be concealed in the word for the constellation Mazzaroth (39:32 and "north" in 37:9 AV). It is possible that the "r" reflects the "l" of the Sumerian word for stars which still appears in the Jewish greeting "Mazal tov"—good luck!"[39]

But this is absolute folly! *Mazzaroth* cannot be a miswriting of a word that appears 1500 years later! But perhaps we can start with Job and the Hebrew language and make significant progress in the other direction to understand this rare and mysterious word. Let us begin with *mazzaroth,* which has an unclear meaning, and go forward a few or many centuries to the Enuma Elish, where it clearly means "constellations," the fixing of the likenesses of gods in the heavens Even without any other clues, it seems reasonable to include constellations as the most likely meaning.

As we have seen, this tendency of man to see gods and heroes in the sky is a corruption from his sinful nature, and this is confirmed by a normal understanding of 2 Kings 23:5, which judges the ascription of the constellations as gods to be idolatry. In all three cases, "constellations" works well.

But what is the basic, the intrinsic meaning of *mazzaroth*? One suggestion is "scatterings," from the Hebrew verb *zera'.* Hebrew words have a consistent pattern of formation. Hebrew has dozens of prefixes and suffixes, and reasons that words are modified simply to make them sound better. Also, Hebrew words are usually formed with three consonants. Thus, a student of Hebrew may perform a dissection, paring away

[39] "The Book of Job and Its Doctrine of God" R. Laird Harris, Grace Journal 13, no. 2 (1972): 48.

prefixes and suffixes and getting at the root word. Let us take our paring knife to *mazzaroth* to see what may be there. The first letter is an M, an extremely common prefix which tells the reader that the word is a participle. Let us remove the 'M' to get at the root. Also the last three letters form an easily recognized and very common suffix. OTH simply denotes that this participle is the feminine plural. Let us remove these letters also. This leaves us with *azzar*. However, we may now drop the initial A, since it is only there to aid in the pronunciation of the M prefix. Furthermore, since we are looking for three consonants, we can drop the second A, which is there for pronunciation reasons as well. That leaves us with *zzr*, but there is no Hebrew root word with those three consonants. However, we are not done with our paring. One more cut and a surprising addition must occur before we find our root. The *zz* is actually the form of *z* with a dot next to the letter, called a *daghesh forte*, which effectively doubles a letter. That little dot in a consonant is a signal to the reader that another letter has disappeared. If we do this, we may conjecture that the disappeared letter from the doubling is an ayin, this could well be *zr`*. There is a Hebrew verb, zr`, "to sow," or "to scatter", especially with reference to seed. One can easily imagine God scattering the stars like so much seed from His hand. With this in mind, let's apply the picture to our passage. God asks Job, "Can you make scatterings [of stars] go in their seasons?"

The *mazzaroth* work well as the sprinklings or scatterings of stars below Job's horizon in ancient Babylon, the contents of the "Chambers of the South." Almighty God causes them to go forth faithfully in their season, year after year, from time immemorial until the stars in their courses shall cease. By them we can measure our lives a season at a time, knowing when

to plant, and when to harvest. As God said to Noah, Genesis 8:22: "While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease."

Which Brings us Back to Ayish, the Hyades

God now finishes his tour of the heavens by returning to the Hyades asterism, the face and horns of the heavenly bull whom we know as Taurus, but whom they worshipped as ANU. Ayish, like *aysh* in Job 9, is a feminine noun. God asks, "Do you lead Ayish upon her sons?" The addition of the yodh (English 'y') is probably by a scribe in order to help with pronunciation, but it may also exist as a correction in pronunciation from God Himself.

Like the previous teachings, God adds details to Job's citation in chapter 9. God leads this constellation, "and her sons." Who are the sons of the Hyades in the heavens? The full sentence is "lead the Hyades above her sons." Close observation of the moving night sky shows that as the hyades sets, the twin asterism of Gemini follows, heading straight down at the western horizon. In Sumerian mythology, Anu had two sons, Enlil and Enki, and these were represented by the Gemini twins in the sky.[40] Now our picture includes not one, but two constellations (see below).

Job did not mention the sons of the Hyades in his description in Chapter 9, but here God expands the sky greatly for Job to realize that even other portions of the constellations were His to name and guide. God seems to designate our modern Gemini as a part of the Hyades cluster, namely, "her sons."

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[40] Burnham's Celestial Handbook, vol.2, p.915.

God's final statement to Job builds upon Job's observation of Aysh in Job 9, connecting two constellations together in their movement. But the essence of this is that the all the constellations have constant positions, never shifting in the slightest. James seems to echo this idea when he writes, James 1:17: "Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."

Inspired nearly 4,000 years ago, long before the advent of modern astronomy with its advance instrumentation and mathematical calculations, God reveals to Job the fixed state of the constellations in the sky. He leads them faithfully year upon year. Of course, so it seems from the observer's viewpoint. In reality, we know the earth as a sphere that hangs in the emptiness of space, rotating on its axis, and revolving around the sun in its annual course. It is not the constellations which move, but the earth which rotates and revolves that causes this apparent motion to the earthbound observer.

Elsewhere Job indicates his knowledge of the earth in space, Job 26:7: "He stretches out the north over empty space And hangs the earth on nothing." He also knew of the terminator line, which is the demarcation of light and darkness on the face of the earth. Job 26:10: "He has inscribed a circle on the surface of the waters At the boundary of light and darkness." Surely he had a rudimentary understanding of the earth as a sphere, rotating on its axis. In our very context, God completes His discourse on the making of the heavens with, Job 38:33: "Do you know the ordinances of the heavens, Or fix their rule over the earth?"

The most modern of astronomers and astrophysicists will say the exact same thing. The constellations move through the

night sky. No one is stating an error. This is simply the fact from an observer's relative position on the face of a spinning sphere. One could hardly say that Job is ignorant of the heavens as God made them, and as we have seen, God states to Job things that have barely been uncovered in the past century, a golden age of science and extremely sophisticated telescopes.

But God's point remains: He is the One who leads the constellations in their fixed courses in the night sky. He has put the earth on a course around the sun, tottering on its axis and revealing all the constellations in their seasons. He alone is the Creator of it all, and it all remains faithful to His purpose. Job may observe, but God created.

Why Does God Rearrange Job's Order?

Finally, we cannot help but notice that there is a difference in the order of the starry figures mentioned by Job and later by God. As we observed previously:

Job, in Job 9:9 says that God made:
1. The Hyades
2. The Fool
3. The Heap
4. The chambers of the south

But God, in Job 38:31-32 relates that He:
1. Bound the chains of the Heap;
2. Loosed the cords of the Fool;
3. Leads forth the constellations in their season;
4. Guides the Hyades upon her sons.

Modern astronomy "science" gives relative ages to stars. In order, their ages are given as follows: The Hyades, about 165 million years old, Pleiades 100 million years of age, and Orion's Belt a very young 4 million years. This is in contrast to the order given both by Job and by God, and based on the assumptions of 20th and 21st century observation and calculation. More recent work by Bible-believing astronomers well-support a young universe in line with the biblical account.[41] It is good to reflect that God created the heavens in a moment of His spoken word, (Genesis 1:14). In essence, there was no chronology in the creation of the heavens, just an instantaneous and simultaneous creation of all. If God's order is *not* chronological, why then did He change the order from Job's arrangement?

First, it is good to consider what each event represents. Binding the chains of the heap does indeed represent their original creation. Also, as we noted the final two are not chronological. The first is about what happens in every season, while the second regards the whole picture of connected constellations, not when they were created. For those two, no chronological inconsistency is here. They simply observe the perpetual. There is perhaps a precise *logical* order to the account of God of His creation, reasons for mentioning these events in the order He does, binding of the Heap first, then loosing the cords of the Fool second, and *then* mentioning the movement of the constellations. This is in fact very logical: first is the creation of the physical bodies of the stars (and other heavenly objects), while second is the launching of the movement of those bodies.

The order given by God is reasonable and further emphasizes His power and wisdom in the creation of the

[41] See The Created Cosmos and The Expanse of the Heavens by Danny Faulkner for great discussions on astronomy and the Bible.

heavens. He made the Pleiades with their special gravitational relationship and at the same time the Fool in its unbound yet recognizable form. Having set them in the heavens, He set them in motion. The constellations in their seasonal parade due to the annual movement of the earth around the sun, and in their nightly display retaining their order as they move from their rising to their setting. All is in order, all in glory, and all testify to His infinite power, wisdom, and glory.

The Power of Special Revelation

Job observed the constellations and even praised God as the One who made regions of stars that they could not observe. His observations reveal attention to detail, but also may convey a certain mockery of the Babylonian idolatry of the stars. The constellations to him were the Heap, the Fool, and Anu, a Babylonian god. In all, he recognizes not only God as Creator of the known and unknown heavens, but as superior to the foolish idols and ways of understanding the universe in his time. He does so to illustrate the indisputability of God, Job 9:2–3: "2 "In truth I know that this is so; But how can a man be in the right before God? 3 "If one wished to dispute with Him, He could not answer Him once in a thousand times." Job designs this effort before his skeptical and accusing friends to defend his innocence in connection with his personal tragedies.

Truly, "The universal disclosure of God penetrates deeply into all man's confidences and doubts."[42] But how much greater must special revelation be? By speaking at last from the whirlwind, revealing the impossible to obtain knowledge of the heavens, God goes from indisputable to irrefutable. He shows

[42] Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 151.

himself to be infinitely greater than what Job was able to observe, and with His grace, infinitely better than what he imagined. He reveals things about those same constellations mentioned by Job that he could never know as an earthbound observer of his day. Special revelation does this. "God's revelation has been conveniently classified in two main types: general revelation, or the disclosure of God's eternal power and glory through nature and history; and special revelation, or the disclosure of God's redemptive purpose and work."[43] In our modern era of astronomy we can at last describe in scientific terms the binding of the Pleiades and the loosening of Orion. What a powerful testimony to the veracity and durability of God's Word!

When God revealed His work in the heavens, His intent was the reconciliation to Him of His beloved creature, the great man Job. As Job repented, Job 42:6: "Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes." God restored, Job 42:10: "The LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold."

Thus may we also remember that God has done far beyond what we can perceive, measure, calculate, or imagine. Best of all He desires us all to be saved and to be reconciled to Him. As Job declared so long ago:

Job 19:25–27, "25 For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; 26 And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, 27 Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

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[43] Carl F. H. Henry, God, Revelation, and Authority, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 223