

STUDIES IN THE
OLD TESTAMENT

Adult Bible Equipping Class
Anchorage Grace Church
2014

by Nathan R. Schneider, Th.M.

**SIGNS IN THE HEAVENS:
What do the Stars Really Tell Us?**

THE THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ASTRONOMICAL SIGNS

1A. Introduction

- 1b. In previous lessons we have already addressed the reasons why there is no compelling argument for understanding astronomical signs as purely metaphorical.
- 2b. At the same time, there are some principles related to how metaphors work—namely, the concept of a shared strategy between author and reader—that will aid us in understanding how astronomical signs might function.
- 3b. The purpose of this lesson is to provide a broad overview of the key “theological motifs” connected with the heavenly bodies that will help us understand the way ANE peoples viewed and understood the sun, moon, and stars.

2A. The Foundational Passage

- 1b. Astronomical signs will occur in time and space. They will involve created things.
- 2b. There is, then, no more foundational a passage for understanding their function and meaning than the passage that discusses the creation of the heavenly bodies—Genesis 1:14-18.
- 3b. In Genesis 1:14-18 we find such foundational concepts as:
 - 1c. The origins of light and darkness
 - 2c. The divine intent and designated functions of the heavenly bodies
- 4b. In order to understand the significance of astronomical signs, we must first become acquainted with the purposes for which God originally created the heavenly bodies. *Their eschatology has a corresponding protology.*

5b. The Context of Genesis 1:14-18

- 1c. Genesis 1 provides a basic protology for the universe. However, it does more than explain the origins of the universe. It provides a theological foundation for Israel's *covenant worldview*.
- 2c. Israel had been immersed for centuries in Egypt's mythological, pagan worldview. As God's covenant people, they desperately needed their worldview reshaped, and it started with the origins of the universe itself.
- 3c. The opening chapters of Genesis establish this by informing Israel of just where and how the universe originated, who God was, and why He had a claim on them as a nation.
- 4c. Genesis 1:14-18 falls roughly in the middle of the first chapter and introduces a major turning point in God's creative work.
- 5c. Genesis 1:2 introduced the world as "formless and empty"—that was the basic condition of the world on the first day of creation.
- 6c. The remainder of the chapter chronicles how God systematically shaped the formless earth and heaven (1:3-13, corresponding to days 1-3) and then filled the emptiness (1:14-31, corresponding with days 4-6).
- 7c. Genesis 1:14-18 initiates the latter part of this pattern, where God begins to fill the empty earth that he had just formed.

STRUCTURE OF CREATION

"formless" God forms	"empty" God fills
Day 1: light	Day 4: light-bearers
Day 2: heavens & seas	Day 5: heavens/seas filled with animals
Day 3: dry land & vegetation	Day 6: land animals & man
Day 7: God ceases/rests	

6b. The Text of Genesis 1:14-18

- 1c. As we look at this passage and analysis it exegetically, we find four significant points that deserve our attention:
 - 1d. *Divine Intentionality*: Moses uses a kind of Hebrew verb form called a *jussive* that functions to point out the intention or will of the speaker. In this case, when God says, "*Let there be* luminaries," he is issuing a command—a command that reveals his divine will for his creation. This same force is continued in the verbs that follow, meaning everything that occurs in this passage (and the rest of the chapter) reflects the sovereign will of the creator God.

- 2d. *Geocentricity*: Even though God is placing these objects “in the expanse of the sky” (1:14, 15, 17), they are decidedly geocentric. Their function is directed toward earth (“on the earth” is repeated 2x). These objects don’t exist for their own sake. They are meant to benefit earth’s inhabitants.
- 3d. *Pagan Polemic*: There is some evidence that Moses is being intentionally, albeit passively, polemical against pagan solar and lunar deification.
 - 1e. He resists using the common names “sun” and “moon” because they were also the names of solar and lunar deities. Instead, he uses the euphemistic terms “greater luminary” and “lesser luminary.”
 - 2e. Likewise, he mentions the stars almost as an afterthought, in stark contrast with other ANE creation stories like the *Enuma Elish*, which prominently features the stars in both order and function.
 - 3e. Verse 15 contains a *tautology*—an intentional redundancy—that reinforces this point. He had already mentioned in verse 14 that they would be luminaries in the heavens, yet he repeats it in verse 15 just to make the point.
 - 4e. The point is that these objects are not deities. They do not hold in their celestial currents the fates of men. Instead, they are nothing more than luminaries providing illumination. All semblances of idolatrous ANE paganism have been removed. They are servants of God and earth upon which they shine their light.
- 4d. *Purpose and Function*: The main point of the passage is to explain the function of the heavenly bodies. The purpose of the heavenly bodies is fourfold:
 - 1e. to separate day and night
 - 2e. to mark time
 - 3e. to shine light
 - 4e. to rule
- 2c. These four elements are foundational to the rest of this study because they interact either directly or indirectly with the seven motifs that we’ll be discussing in the next few lessons.

3A. The Foundational Motifs

The remainder of this lesson outlines six theological motifs (the seventh will be addressed in a later study) that have a bearing on how the ANE mind would process and form conclusions about astronomical signs.

1b. *Creation*

- 1c. Genesis 1:14-19 presents the sun, moon, and stars as created things. Their powers and functions are designed by God and given for specific purposes.
- 2c. The rest of the OT confirms this. In fact, the Psalter represents a hymnic anthology celebrating God's creation of the heavens (Pss 33:6; 89:11; 96:5; 102:25; 104:19; 115:15; 136:5-6; 148:3-6).
- 3c. In fact, it was the creation of the heavenly bodies to which David attributed man's perceived sense of insignificance (Ps 8:3-4).
- 4c. Because God created the heavenly bodies, he also owns them (Ps 74:16). They always remain obedient to their creator in the OT.
- 5c. While other ANE cosmogonies feature the idea of *chaoskampf*—uncontrolled chaos—in the OT worldview, Yahweh always maintains control, and the heavenly bodies are frequently portrayed as his servants (Job 9:7).
- 6c. There are times when the OT text presents special instances where the heavenly bodies obeyed God's authority, even while that meant altering their natural courses.
 - 1d. Joshua 10:12-14
 - 1e. The context of the passage involves the prolongation of daylight so that Israel could complete their victory of their enemies.
 - 2e. The main point of the passage is made decidedly clear: the uniqueness of that day was seen in the fact that "Yahweh listened to the voice of a man; for Yahweh fought for Israel" (Josh 10:14).
 - 3e. The sun and moon, portrayed as agents of the Divine Warrior, obey Yahweh's command and fight on Israel's behalf (see also Judg 5:20).
 - 2d. Isaiah 38:8
 - 1e. The context of this passage involves Hezekiah, who falls mortally ill. Faced with death, he pleads desperately for God's mercy, to which Yahweh responds by granting him fifteen more years of life (Isa 38:1-5) and promises that Jerusalem would be delivered from the Assyrian threat (38:6).

2e. To seal the promise to Hezekiah and signify that the king's life had been prolonged, Yahweh reversed the movement of the sun's shadow on the stairway of Ahaz.

7c. In both of these passages, the relevant theological point is clear: God has ultimate authority over the sun and light. They are his servants and he can sovereignly manipulate their movements and effects to satisfy his purposes. They are his creations, subject to his direction, and obedient to his commands.

2b. *Stability*

1c. Since the heavenly bodies were created to serve as time markers to mark seasons, days, and years (1:14), they naturally display an invariable regularity.

2c. This is why the sun and moon were central in certain idiomatic expressions in the OT, where daily time was measured according to the sun's position in the sky (Gen 15:17; 19:23; 28:11; Exod 22:25; etc.) and the monthly progress corresponded to the different phases of the moon (Gen 7:11; Exod 2:2; Deut 21:13; 1 Kgs 6:37; etc.).

3c. For this reason, their movements are part of God's "fixed order" (Jer 31:35; cf. Ps 148:6), a term which as a verb denotes the act of carving or engraving on a hard surface (1 Kgs 6:35) and as a noun refers to the permanent ordinances of God's law (Deut 28:15; Ps 89:31; etc.).

4c. Thus, the heavenly bodies were and continue to be emblematic of stability and the permanence of daily life. Though unexpected events may occur from day to day, the natural cycles of the sun—that "the sun rises and the sun sets; and hastening to its place it rises there again" (Eccl. 1:5)—provides a regularity to man's existence that grounds him, comforting his heart in the midst of life's unpredictability.

5c. In this way, Solomon describes man's existence on earth as life "under the sun" (Eccl. 1:3; etc.), in that the sun serves as that universal image familiar to everyone, reminding them of where and who they are.

6c. David also used the solar cycle to illustrate God's revelation in nature by picturing the sunrise as an exuberant bridegroom bursting out of his chamber and the sun as a runner who delights in his daily trek across the sky (Ps 19:5).

7c. In particular, David notes that the sun's rising "is from on end of the heavens, and its circuit to the other end of them; and there is nothing hidden from its heat" (Ps 19:6). This implies the universality of the sun's communication.

8c. Everything upon which its heat falls receives divine speech provided in the created order. The sun's status as a symbol of stability is part and parcel of the human experience, and David assumes that such truths are self-evident to the observer because the sun's cyclical pattern is visible to everyone.

- 9c. ANE writings confirm David's assumption. The Egyptian Hymn to the Sun provides a fitting example. Not only is the deified sun visible globally, but its cycle occurs faithfully, providing a sense of safety and stability for the worshipper.

<p>Hail to you, Re, perfect each day, Who rises at dawn without failing. When you cross the sky all faces see you, When you set you are hidden from their sight; Daily you give yourself at dawn, Safe is your sailing under your majesty. In a brief day you race a course, Hundred thousands, millions of miles.</p>
--

- 10c. Thus, when the sun is obscured, a natural reaction occurs, as is evident in a portion of the Prophecies of Nerferti (ca. 1990-1960 B.C.). Whatever the event was that occasioned this writing, the response to the covering of Re is one of despair and disillusionment as the object which obviously was the source of life and blessing to the people was obscured. Nevertheless, the final lines are indicative of the people's ultimate expectation: while the sun remains covered temporarily, it will inevitably reappear, just as it always does.

<p>The sun is covered and does not shine for the people to see, No one can live when the clouds cover (the sun), Every face is numb from lack of it. Re separates himself (from) mankind If he shines the hour exists (But now) none knows when noon comes; None can discern his shadow, None is dazzled by seeing (him), Nor do the eyes fill with water. As he is in the sky like the moon, But his time of nightfall cannot be transgressed, His rays will be on the face again as in former times.</p>
--

- 11c. All of this underscores the reality that the sun is perhaps the most reliable thing in man's earthly existence.

3b. **Signs**

- 1c. The heavenly bodies were created to be markers (lit., "signs") for the seasons and for daily and yearly time. Psalm 104:19 reiterates this truth rather plainly: "He made the moon for the seasons; the sun knows the place of its setting."
- 2c. Thus, the sun, moon, and stars are "signs" in that they are "a means of transmitting information," in this case regarding the passing and calculation of time.

- 3c. In that original context, they were not depicted as independent signs, i.e., omens/portents, which point to something else.
- 4c. Nevertheless, the remainder of the OT at times recognizes that the sun, moon, and stars did at times portend something else, and the biblical writers even used the term “sign” in certain circumstances to describe their activity.
- 5c. Exodus 10:21-24 presents the darkness over Egypt as a “sign” and a “wonder” intended to “impart knowledge and to bring the people to the realization that ‘the LORD is God, besides him there is no other’” (cf. Exod 7:5; 10:2).¹ The darkness served as an effective means of distinguishing Yahweh’s people from the Egyptians and communicating his sovereignty over Egypt, their land, and their gods.
- 6c. *This is the first time in the OT where the heavenly bodies operate as independent signs*, and the means by which this occurs is through the elimination of their light.
- 7c. Likewise, Isaiah 38:7-8 portrays the sun as a “sign” that God’s promise of mercy to Hezekiah had been granted, and the sign involved the reversal of the sun’s shadow. In this case, the sun’s activity served as a sign of God’s reliability.
- 8c. ANE people were heavily influenced by astronomical activity, so much so that this type of astrological worldview shows up in the warnings of the OT prophets:
- Isa 47:13** You are wearied with your many counsels; let now the astrologers, those who prophesy by the stars, those who predict by the new moons, stand up and save you from what will come upon you.
- Jer 10:2-3** Thus says Yahweh, “Do not learn the way of the nations, and do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens although the nations are terrified by them; for the customs of the peoples are delusions.”
- 9c. Nations such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon regularly practiced astrology, believing that activity such as eclipses, comets, and meteorites were divine portents of future events.
- 10c. These practices were born not only out of religious beliefs but also from political necessity:

¹ Paul A. Kruger, “אִתָּא,” in *NIDOTTE*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1:331.

Babylon was open to invasion on every side. The astrologer or the prophet who could foretell fair things for the nation, or disaster and calamities for their enemies, was a man whose words were regarded with reverence and awe. They were written down as treasures to be preserved for all time and to serve as models for the benefit of his successors in office. The soothsayer was as much a politician as the statesman, and he was not slow in using the indications of political changes to point the moral of his astrological observations.... Nothing was too great or too small to become the subject of an astrological forecast, and every event, from a national calamity such as famine or disaster to the army, down to the appearance of the humblest peasant's last born child, was seriously considered and proved to be the result of causes which had already been duly recognized.²

- 11c. Thus, events such as eclipses were interpreted in various ways depending on the culture. In Mesopotamia, they were believed to be a demonic attack on the moon-god. But in Assyria, they could also portend prosperity for the nation.
- 12c. ANE societies relied heavily on the sun and moon for calculating time. Nations such as Assyria and Babylon used lunar calendars, and the movements of sun and moon were integral to accurately calculating the length of the lunar month. They looked for certain indicators to confirm their predications, and they tended to interpret unexpected solar and lunar activity as unfavorable signs, since it indicated miscalculation.
- 13c. Astrological notations concerning eclipses are especially informative, for they contain some surprising details concerning how astrologers ascribed significance to these phenomena:

When there is an eclipse of the Sun on the twenty-eighth of Iyyar, the king's days will be long...the land will eat an abundant market.... When the Sun at its zenith is like a crescent and becomes full like the Moon, the king will conquer the land of his enemy, the land will overcome (?) its evil and see happiness. When the Sun is eclipsed on the twenty-ninth of Iyyar...the gods of the four regions will be troubled, a great...come, the throne until the fifth year he will hold (?): there will be a revolt in Akkad: son will slay his father, brother will slay his brother, sick princes...days in Akkad, that king a dog will destroy: the enemy will capture a fenced (?) city, that king will die and there will be fighting in the temple of Bel.

- 14c. This may help explain the effectiveness of Jonah's prophetic ministry. Wiseman and others observe that Nineveh's response to Jonah's message is remarkably similar to those descriptions contained in Assyrian omen texts. As it turns out, the total solar eclipse of June 15, 7673 B.C., along with other natural phenomena, may have afforded a providential sign that paved the way for Jonah's warning. Wiseman notes that "a related series of omens, *summa alu*, concentrates on the actions of animals also at such a time. Thus all prognostications in the As-

² R. Campbell Thompson, *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon in the British Museum*, 2 vols. (1900; repr., New York: AMS, 1977), 2:xv.

syrian series telling of solar eclipses specify their effect on the king, animals, and the land as does Jonah (3:7-8), which also specifies that the king stepped down from the throne and laid aside his royal robes (3:6).³

- 15c. These texts offer some fascinating insights into how ancient societies interpreted natural phenomena such as solar and lunar eclipses. What is revealing is that there is no blanket interpretation that so many seem to assume. They did not always portend disaster. Rather, eclipses could at times denote doom and divine wrath on a nation (e.g., Nineveh) while at other times it could indicate two different things at once, victory for the nation and destruction for their enemies.
- 16c. These texts also indicate that since Assyrian and Babylonian astrologers were able to carefully forecast when eclipses would occur, then it means that these events were not necessarily the sudden, terrifying events they were once thought to be to ANE peoples.
- 17c. These passages also suggest, as it appears from the book of Jonah, that God has historically accomplished his purposes by utilizing celestial phenomena, even within the socio-religious context and connotations of the pagan nations. In other words, he has used the paganism of the nations to accomplish his will in them. Thus, Jonah's message of impending destruction came providentially in and around the time of a solar eclipse that prepared the king and his people to receive Jonah's message.

4b. *Idolatry*

- 1c. The previous discussion makes clear that the heavenly bodies were significant objects of idolatry in ANE religious practice. Not only were their movements and activities believed to be signs from the gods, but they were themselves worshipped as deities.
- 2c. Since the sun and moon were integral to agrarian practices in the ANE, it is understandable how the divinely intended functions of the heavenly bodies would have been distorted by pagan thinking and ideology.
- 3c. Characteristics of blessing, growth, life, and prosperity which the OT writings attribute to these objects (cf. Deut 33:14; Eccl. 11:7; Cant 6:10; etc.) were equally recognized by the surrounding pagan nations and exalted as divine attributes.
- 4c. Every ANE culture deified the heavenly bodies in some form, though these deities varied in name and function.
- 5c. In Mesopotamia, the moon god *Nanna-Sin* was considered the grandchild of the elder deities, whose role in the cosmos appears strikingly similar to that of the

³ Donald J. Wiseman, "Jonah's Nineveh," *Tyndale Bulletin* 30 (1979): 47.

biblical account, except that they also ascribe to it power over fertility. The sun god *Utu-Shamash* was considered *Nanna*'s offspring, attributed with authority over "law and justice, life and joy, divination and purification."⁴

- 6c. Canaanite versions of these deities represented in literature from Ugarit contain unique features differentiating them from their Mesopotamian counterparts. The solar deity appears there as the female *Shephsu*, El's representative and messenger, and said to traverse the underworld, escorted at times by *Resheph*, the god of pestilence.
- 7c. In Egypt, solar worship was central to religious thinking. The sun took several deistic forms: *Harakhti* in the morning, *Re* at midday, *Atum* at evening, with *Aten* representing the solar disk. Meanwhile the lunar deity was known as *Khonsu* and is associated with worship at the temple of Karnak.
- 8c. All of these idolatrous systems form the religious backdrop of the OT.
 - 1d. Job mentions the shining sun and splendid moon as objects capable of enticing the heart into idolatry and denial of God (Job 31:26).
 - 2d. Moses twice forbade Israel from worshipping "the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven" (Deut 4:19; 17:3).
 - 3d. Nevertheless, solar and lunar worship occurred in Israel throughout its history. Before Josiah's reforms, Judah had engaged in worshipping not only Baal, but also the heavenly bodies and their constellations (2 Kgs 23:4-5, 11; cf. 21:3, 5; 2 Chron 33:3, 5).
 - 4d. Jeremiah writes that Judah had "loved" and "served" the sun, moon, and "all the host of heaven" (Jer 8:2).
 - 5d. One of Ezekiel's visions includes twenty-five men with their backs to Yahweh's temple, bowing down toward the sun in worship (Ezek 8:16-18).
 - 6d. In northern Israel, Amos notes that they, too, were engaged in celestial idolatry (Amos 5:26-27).
- 5b. **Authority**
 - 1c. The creation account ascribes rule and authority to the heavenly bodies. They were created "for dominion of the day...[and] the night" (Gen 1:16).

⁴ Lowell K. Handy, *Among the Host of Heaven: The Syro-Palestinian Pantheon as Bureaucracy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 107.

- 2c. The position of the heavenly bodies in the sky became representative of their loftiness and transcendence, so that Job can say, “Is not God in the height of heaven? Look also at the distant stars, how high they are!” (Job 22:12).
 - 3c. From this they became symbolic of authority.
 - 4c. Joseph’s initial dream in Genesis 37 provides a launching point for this motif. Here, Joseph sees a vision of the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down to him (Gen 37:9). Coupled with his previous dream (37:5-7), his family rightly perceives the significance of the imagery: Joseph’s father, mother, and brothers will bow down to him (37:10, and he will “rule over” them (37:8). This imagery is no accident. The heavenly bodies had already been ascribed rulership over day and night. Now these symbols of authority (in clear hierarchical order) bow down to Joseph as he rules over them.
 - 5c. In Balaam’s oracles, this most improbably of divine spokesmen prophesies of the coming Israelite ruler as “star” that will come forth from Jacob and a “scepter” that will rise from Jacob (Num 24:17). The use of “star” and “scepter” in parallel expresses the royal authority of this coming individual.
 - 6c. Jesus identifies himself as “the bright morning star” (Rev 22:16; cf. 2 Pet 1:19), a title undoubtedly drawn from Numbers 24:17 and reflective of the symbolism which had long been associated with these heavenly lights.
 - 7c. Daniel 8:10-11 describes a vision of a small horn rising up “to the host of heaven” and causing “some of the host and some of the stars to fall to the earth” and exalting itself as “equal with the Commander of the host.” Here, the imagery of “stars” and “host of heaven” are representative of angelic powers and further underscore that the heavenly bodies at times were symbolic of authority.
- 6b. ***Theophany***
- 1c. Theophany refers to the visible manifestation of God’s presence on earth.
 - 2c. It is curious that theophany is described as both darkness and light. These concepts seem to be polar opposites, yet they converge in accounts of the divine presence.
 - 3c. Yahweh’s appearance is described with terms like “darkness,” “cloud,” “thick gloom,” and “thick darkness,” and also with terms like “light,” “brightness,” “lightning,” “flashes of light,” and “glory.”
 - 4c. This is no accident, nor is it a contradiction. Instead, both sides are vital to any God-human encounter.

The fact that a Yahweh theophany is not spiritually neutral but defining relates to another quality of those theophanies. *When Yahweh does reveal himself, he does not only reveal himself, he also conceals himself.* The revelation comes in flashes of glory that resemble lightning. The concealment takes the form of a thick, dark cloud. God's holiness is the reason for this twofold phenomenon. Because of his holiness, a full revelation of God's glory would be unendurable.⁵

- 5c. This was not always the case. The fact that light appeared on the first day of creation (Gen 1:3) though the sun, moon, and stars were not yet present has proved to be a major interpretive problem. Yet the problem is imaginary, for divine presence affords a simple, straightforward explanation for its source. When the heavenly bodies are created, they are given that same function, which is why David can say that "the heavens are telling of the glory of God" (Ps 19:1). They reflect the very incandescence that characterizes God's glorious presence.
- 6c. Darkness language is mostly derived from the Sinai event (Exod 19:9, 16; 20:21; Deut 4:11; 5:23; Josh 24:7; 2 Sam 22:10, 12; 1 Kgs 8:12; 2 Chron 6:1). It then reappears in other OT depictions of theophany (Pss 18:9-12; 97:2; etc.).
- 7c. Much more attention is given to light. This imagery also has its source at Sinai, but some theophanic descriptions are more subtle and therefore deserve closer attention since their poetic expression masks their theophanic implications.
- 8c. They also carry eschatological implications: "Another characteristic of any Sinaitic theophany, therefore, is that it anticipates the eschatological revelation of Yahweh. The manner of God's theophany at Sinai foreshadows the manner of his appearance when he will come."⁶
- 9c. The familiar expression of God's shining face contains clear theophanic implications:
- 1d. This expression is rooted in Moses' face-to-face encounters with God (Exod 34:29-30, 34-35).
- 2d. It was then solidified in the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:24-26)
- 3d. It reappears in several forms throughout the OT and particularly the psalms (Pss 4:6; 31:16; 80:4, 7, 19; 89:15; 90:8; Dan 9:17).
- 9c. The OT also describes Yahweh frequently using solar imagery:

⁵ Jeffrey J. Neihaus, *God at Sinai: Covenant and Theophany in the Bible and Ancient Near East*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

- 1d. Moses says that Yahweh “dawned” and “shone forth” on Israel (Deut 33:2).
- 2d. David compares God to “the light of the morning when the sun rises” (2 Sam 23:4).
- 3d. Habakkuk says that “His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from his hands” (Hab 3:4).
- 4d. One psalmist even calls Yahweh “a sun” who gives “grace and glory” (Ps 84:11), a phrase that reflects the theology of the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:25). If this is not a divine epithet, then it at the very least ascribes to Yahweh through predication a solar function by which he is seen to do “everything the sun does,”⁷ i.e., shine light (Ps 104:2), illuminate darkness and expose evil (cf. Job 38:12-15), rule the sky (cf. Gen 1:16-18), etc.
- 5d. Balaam’s prophecy of a “star” coming forth from Jacob has clear eschatological implications and takes on new depth and meaning when one considers the concept of theophanic imagery (cf. Rev 22:16).
- 6d. Malachi pictures God’s appearance in the Day of Yahweh as “the sun of righteousness” which “will rise with healing on its wings” (Mal 4:2).
- 7d. Isaiah describes Yahweh’s appearance with similar imagery: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of Yahweh has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples, but Yahweh will rise upon you and his glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isa 60:1-3).
- 8d. Later Isaiah describes Yahweh resuming his role as light-bearer which he had assigned to the sun and moon on the fourth day: “No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; but you will have Yahweh for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory. Your sun will no longer set, nor will your moon wane, for you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be over” (Isa 60:19-20).
- 9d. Isaiah also describes that time, noting that when Yahweh resumes that role, the brilliance of his glory will be so great that the sun and moon will hide in shame, for their light will be incomparable to his (Isa 24:23).

⁷ David H. Aaron, *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphors, Semantics, and Divine Imagery*, Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 60.