

החזים בכוכבים

אבנר רמו



the Babylonian Zodiac

We read in the Book of Jeremiah:

גם-חסידה בשמים ידעה מועדיה, ותר וסוס (וסיס) ועגור שמרו את-עת באנה;
“the stork in the heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtle and the swallow and the crane observe the time of their coming” (Jer 8:7).

Although here and in several other biblical verses (e.g. Gen 21:2), the Hebrew word מועד was translated to English as “**appointed times**”, this word is often translated to Greek (and to English) as “**seasons**” (e.g. Gen 17:21; 18:14; Ex 13:10; Num 9:2; 2 Ki 4:16, 17; Hos 9:5).

In the Book of Ecclesiastes we read: ועת לכל-חפץ ; ועת לכל זמן - “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose” (Ecc 3:1).

In the Book of Amos we read: לכן המשכיל בעת ההיא-ידם: כי עת רעה היא - “Therefore the prudent will keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time” (Am 5:13; see also: Jer 15:11; Mic 2:3; Ps 37:19; Ecc 9:12).

The Psalmist wrote: ויהי יהוה משגב לדך; משגב לעתות בצרה - “And *YHWH* will be a high tower for the oppressed, a high tower in times of trouble” (Ps 9:10; see also: Ps 10:1).

The Greek (and the English) version of these verses indicate that the translators believed that the Hebrew words עת and עתות mean “time” and “times”, respectively.

In the Book of Jeremiah we read:

כה אמר יהוה, אל-דרך הגוים אל-תלמדו, ומאתות השמים אל-תחתו: כי-יחתו הגוים מהמה.
“Thus said *YHWH*: Do not learn the way of the nations, and do not be afraid of the signs of heaven; for the nations are afraid at them” (Jer 10:2).

In a “Letter on Astrology” Maimonides wrote, that already the wise men of Greece determined that Astrology is nothing except for falsehood and lie.”

The words of Jeremiah appears to be a direct disapproval of astrology, a practice which was revered particularly in Mesopotamia. It is therefore odd to find in the Book of Genesis:

ויאמר אלהים, יהי מארת ברקיע השמים, להבדיל בין היום ובין הלילה; והיו לאתת ולמועדים, ולימים ושנים.

“And God said: Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years” (Gen 1:14).

This oddity can be resolved by assuming that here the word **לאַתת** is a letter-substitution error of: **לעתות** - “for times.”