

September 12, 1998

Dear Mr. Person1:

I received an email written between yourself and Mr. Person2, on the subject of Astronomical Data and Prophecy. I realize that I am entering into this conversation unsolicited, however, I do have expertise in this area, and would like to contribute.

Since I do not have Mr. Person2's email address, I must ask that you forward my comments to her/him for me. Also, since I do not know either of you, nor why you are both engaged in this discussion, I have nothing to gain by offering my comments, except to provide the discussion with additional information. The information I offer is absolutely critical to your discussion.

Serious archaeology does not rely upon the presumption of scribal errors in the text. Suspected scribal errors must be proven to be errors beyond any doubt.

Mr. Person1 has based his argument upon the presumption of there being scribal errors in the VAT4956 text, and going beyond this, asserts that the lunar data has been copied from a previous document, making the entire artifact suspect.

Claiming that an ancient author has made errors in their own writing must be proven. Mr. Person1 attempts this proof, and compares the lunar data between two dates sharing a 19 year lunar cycle. Specifically, the astronomical dates of -567 and -510 are compared against the ancient text.

At this time I will offer Mr. Person1 information which may allow him to reach a different conclusion.

The astronomical data which Mr. Person1 cites is correct, as it relates to our modern Zodiac. However, Mr. Person1 (or his sources) have incorrectly determined the stars that were described in the text. These errors result from their assumption of the modern Zodiac as a reference.

These comments are not meant as any criticism to Mr. Person1's scholarship. In fact, very few people are aware of the ancient Babylonian Zodiac. This critical aspect of their astronomy is not difficult to understand, and I will explain it here.

The ancient Babylonian astronomers used a different Zodiac than we assume today. One reference is the book "Die geheime Botschaft des Gilgamesch", by Weltbild Verlag, printed in Germany, ISBN 3-89350-551-2. This is a book describing the ancient epic about Gilgamesch. I am unaware of an English translation.

In this book are charts of the ancient Babylonian Zodiac, using their older names for bright stars and constellations. From these charts it is immediately apparent that they used a different Zodiac than we do today. For example, the constellations of Virgo and Leo are different. Virgo is much smaller, standing "upright", and does not stretch out in an expanse towards Leo. The constellation of Erua stands between Virgo and Leo. Another example is that there is no constellation of Aquarius. Rather there is a Swallow, whose beak holds a band spreading towards Pisces. Such differences are critical to the study of ancient Babylonian texts.

Following is a line by line analysis of the astronomical observations:

Line 1: Month 1, 37th year of Nebukadnezar new crescent moon was observed after sunset on April 22, -567, or Julian Day Number 1514073.3136. The previous month had 29 days, and the moon was between the horns of Tarus.

Line 2: Saturn was indeed in front of the ancient Babylonian Zodiac's constellation called SIM.MACH, the Raven, also called the Swallow (Gilgamesch pg. 156).

Line 3: The night of the 9th is not an error. In their Zodiac Virgo stood upright, and was totally behind (east of) the star Spica. On the 9th the moon was in their Zodiac constellation of Erua, and was below her feet.

It is manifest that the ancient text did not specify "Beta Virginis", a term invented much later in history. "Beta Virginis" is a translation. The original names should always be given when quoting translated text.

Line 4: The observation that Jupiter was in its acronychal rising on or near the 12th provides objective proof that this text is in reference to the year -567 and not to -510. Note that in the year -510 Jupiter is nowhere near its acronychal rising. Acronychal risings only occur once per year, and when combined with a lunar date dramatically narrows the possible "observation-years".

Line 5: No data.

Line 6: Reference to previous year having a 2nd 12th month. This was true in the year -567, and was not true in the year -510.

Line 7: No data.

Line 8: In the year -567 it was possible for the Babylonian astronomers to observe a very thin crescent on the night of May 29th. Apparently they could not see so thin a crescent. So on the next evening of May 30 the new crescent was 5% illuminated, quite thick. Also this made the previous month 30 days, as the text describes.

Line 9: Saturn was indeed in front of the Swallow. This observation was not true in -510. In their Zodiac, Orion's belt is near Orion's right knee. Thus, Orion stands much higher and is slightly positioned into Gemini (as we know it). Gemini stands much more "upright", includes Auriga, with less distance towards Cancer. Leo is positioned about the same as we see the Zodiac today. Since "Beta Geminorum" is a translation, the original text is required for serious study.

Line 10: Praesepe is a specific area within the constellation of Cancer. On the 3rd and 5th Mars enters and exits this area. On the 10th Mercury was moving away from the sun, reached about 9.1 degrees above the sun, so that it could be then be seen at sunset.

Line 11: On the 18th Venus was above Regulus as the text describes.

Line 12: The new crescent was 3.3%, and appeared behind Cancer, with the previous month having 29 days, just as the text describes. Mars and Mercury were in front of Regulus by about 4 cubits.

Line 13: Mercury was indeed below Mars, slightly to the east, Jupiter was directly above Alpha Scorpio, and Venus was visually opposite of Delta Leo. It is manifest that by specifying the precise location of so many planets that the year -567 is again uniquely identified.

Line 14: As with Line #3, this text is not in reference to the constellation of Leo, but is describing the moon as being 1 cubit east of Erua's right foot. On the 5th, this is exactly where the moon was.

Line #15: On the 8th the moon was indeed 2.5 cubits below Beta Libra.

Line 16: This text is also extremely important to pin-point the exact year being observed. On the 9th the summer solstice indeed occurred, about 2 p.m. On the 10th the moon was above Alpha Scorpio. Thus, -567 is again uniquely identified.

Line 17: On the 15th the sunrise and moon set occurred as described.

Line 5': The 11th month began with the new crescent in the Swallow. Jupiter was as the text describes.

I could go on, line by line, but may here simply summarize that the remaining text, on the 2nd side, presents no anomalies or inconsistencies with the year -567. The entire artifact is astronomically consistent with their Zodiac, and the year -567.

From this analysis it is evident that the VAT4956 text is a coherent record of events which occurred in the year 568 B.C. at or near Babylon.

Sincerely,            Wayne L. Atchison