

Signs in the Sky

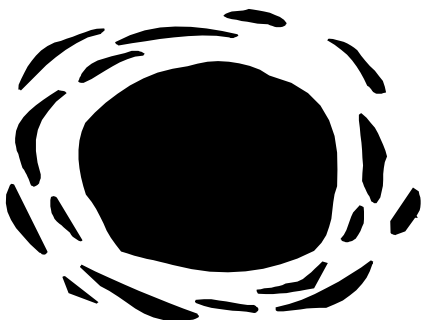
The Bible tells us that when Jesus Christ was born, a strange bright star appeared in the sky. The people of that time believed that the star was a sign of the coming of the Messiah. The story is told that the Three Wise Men followed the star and were able to find the baby Jesus. These wise men were the Magi: Persian astrologers who were used to studying the sky for prophecies and omens. They had been waiting for this sign in the sky, and they knew from their prophecies that it meant a great holy Teacher had come from God.



Modern astronomers have discovered that this story was true. A bright star did appear at that time, which scientists think was Halley's Comet.

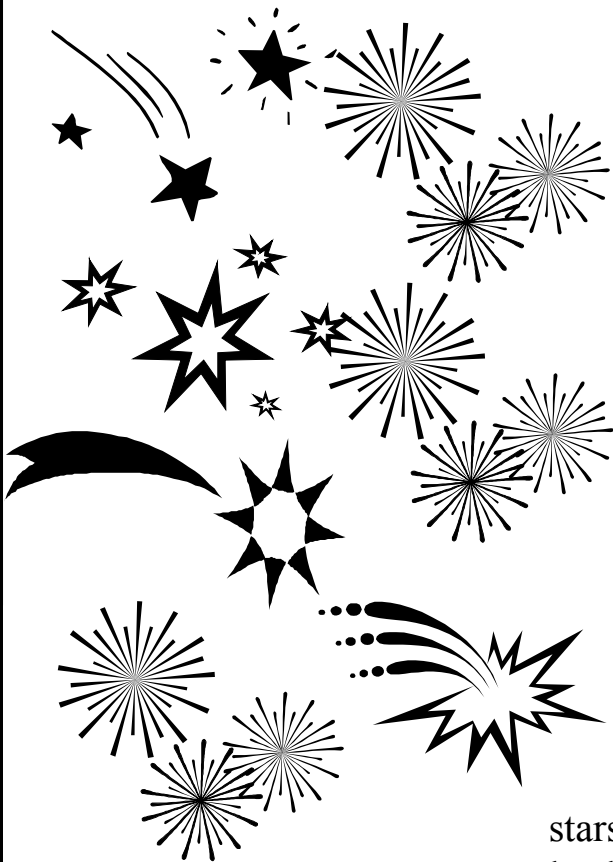
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In 1843, the year before The Báb declared His mission, there was another comet. People looked into the night sky and saw a new bright star. The tail of the great comet measured one hundred and eight million miles in length.



During the same year, in the daytime, people were astonished to see what scientists call perihelia: rings like halos around the sun.

Some people were terrified, sure that this was a sign of the end of the world. Many more thought this was the same star that had appeared to the Magi, and had come again to show that Christ had returned. Some people, by reading the prophecies of the Bible, were convinced that this was true, and even worked out that Christ would return to Mount Carmel (where the Bahá'í World Centre is) and went there to await His coming.



Other astonishing things happened around this time.

In the Bible, one of the prophecies of the second coming of Christ, is that stars would fall from the sky. In 1866 there was a spectacular shower of meteors. Thousands of shooting stars lit up the night sky and were seen by people all over Europe. An observer who watched the shower reported to the paper that more than 3,000 meteors fell during the night.

Although this really did happen, as prophesied in the Bible, Bahá'u'lláh explains that it was a sign of something else that would happen. The 'falling of stars' is the fall from power of the religious leaders of the previous religions.

In the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh there are no priests or ministers. Instead we have our Spiritual Assemblies and the Universal House of Justice.

Things to do:

- a) In an encyclopaedia look up Halley's Comet and find out how long it takes to orbit round the sun.
- b) Find out what a comet looks like. How is it different from a planet? What is its tail made from?
- c) Draw a picture of a comet streaking through the night sky.
- d) Draw a picture of the stars falling. One man who watched this said that some of the stars were green. You could draw all the faces of the people down below, watching.