

As one's eyes would dwell upon a particular constellation he would note how its brightest stars form a definite pattern, and would see the fainter stars as they are scattered around the brighter ones. The Babylonians drew star charts and made extensive observations of the passage of the planets through the constellations. Much was known about the stars in those days.

It comes as a surprise to most readers today to note what must have been obvious to almost everyone in the time of Abraham, that the actual number of stars visible with the naked eye from any one place on earth is not more than about four thousand.

Genesis 15:5 tells us that God said to Abraham: "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." When he heard these words, Abraham may have been greatly puzzled. He could understand the figure of the dust. It was a tremendous illustration of the great promises that God had given about Abraham's posterity. He would have been thrilled if God had said that his posterity would shine in glory like the stars; it would have overjoyed him to think they would possess lasting qualities like the stars; he would have been greatly pleased to hear that they would have exalted positions like the stars; but he may have wondered why the stars would be used as a figure for the great number of descendants. God said that he would be a father of many nations, but four thousand persons would hardly make up one nation, and would scarcely compare with the population of even one of the cities that Abraham had passed on his journey through Mesopotamia.