Upon Stalin’s death, Beria, with his network of spies and contacts, seemed poised to take over. But he fatally underestimated his opponents. As Khrushchev, the outsider, would soon show, the struggle for who would fill the power vacuum left in Stalin’s absence was just beginning. Like this article? SIGN UP for our newsletter. About Jackie Mansky. Jacqueline Mansky is the assistant web editor, humanities, for Smithsonian magazine. “Nemesis: The Death Star” is the story of a possible explanation for periodic comet and asteroid impacts on Earth and other members of the Solar System. In brief, Dr. Richard Muller of Cal-Berkley believes that our Sun may have an as yet undetermined companion star (remember, many stars are part of binary systems). There are about 3,000 stars which meet the basic qualifications for our Sun’s binary companion: visual magnitude. Read More.

The Star grew and waxed to a great brightness and was awesome to behold. It put forth horns and sang, being unlike any other ever seen. There is a story, which even you have preserved, that once upon a time Phaethon burnt up all that was upon the Earth. Which recurs after long intervals.

Plagues Shaped the Story of the Exodus. The earliest non-biblical account of the Exodus is by Hecataeus of Abdera (late 4th century BCE): the Egyptians blame a plague on foreigners and expel them from the country; Moses, their leader, takes them to Canaan, where he founded the city of Jerusalem.