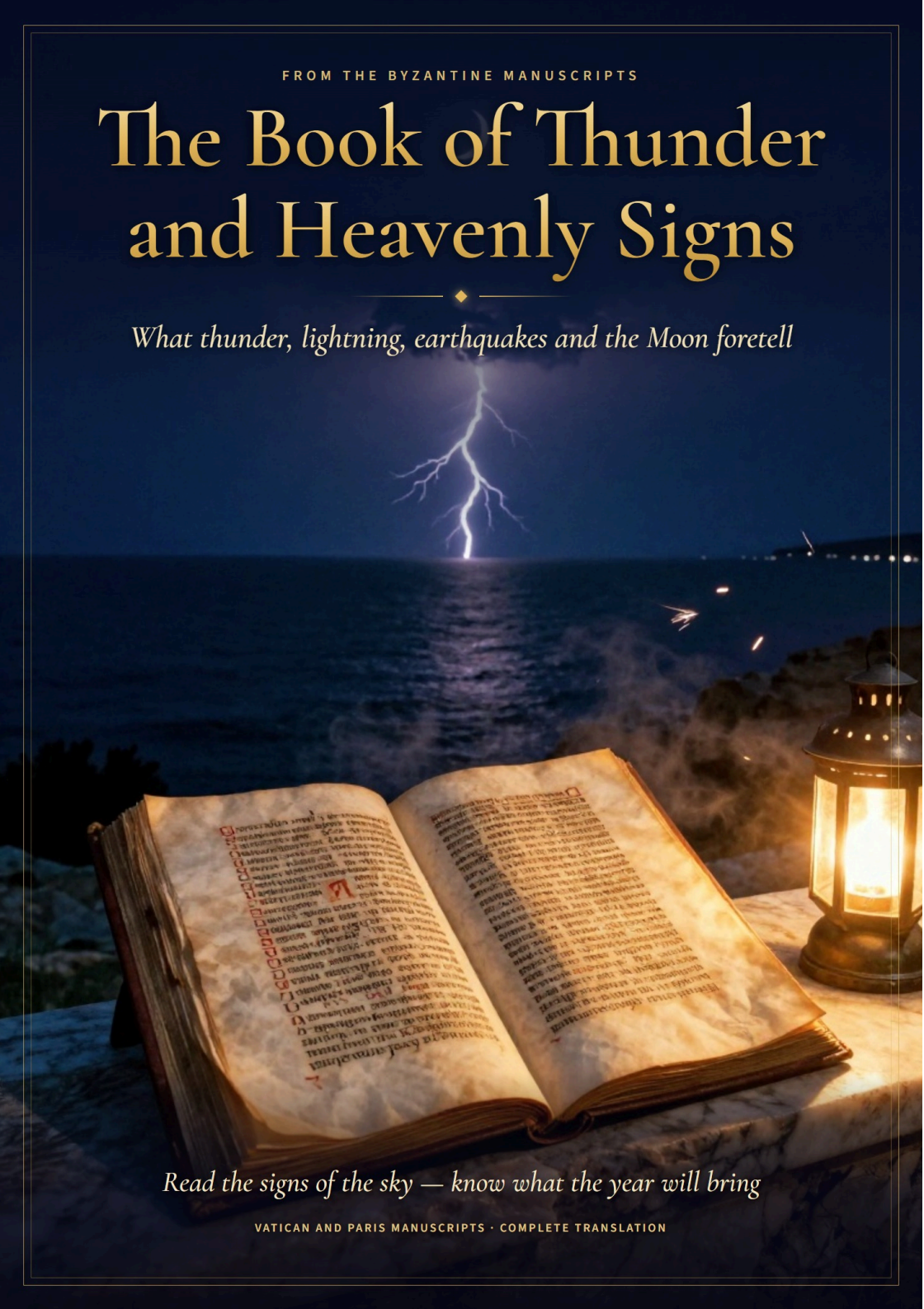
FROM THE BYZANTINE MANUSCRIPTS

The Book of Thunder and Heavenly Signs

What thunder, lightning, earthquakes and the Moon foretell



Read the signs of the sky — know what the year will bring

VATICAN AND PARIS MANUSCRIPTS · COMPLETE TRANSLATION

BOOKS OF WISDOM

The Book of Thunder and Heavenly Signs

What thunder, lightning, earthquakes and the Moon foretell — know what the year will bring

Byzantine and Etruscan books of signs from the Vatican and Paris manuscripts: thunder by the signs of the zodiac and by the months, the thunder calendar of Nigidius for every day of the year, books of lightning and earthquakes, the heavenly signs of the prophet Daniel, the Kalends and the twelve-year cycle, weather signs. Complete translation from the Greek with notes, a preface and commentary

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Modern English text, notes, foreword and commentary © 2026 SIA "Blusa Entertainment".

Sources: the manuscripts Vat. gr. 1066 (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 15th century), BnF Suppl. gr. 1148 and BnF Grec 2381 (16th century). Translated from the editions: John Lydus, On Signs, ed. C. Wachsmuth (Leipzig, 1897); Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum, II, IV, VII, VIII/3 (Brussels, 1900–1912); Geoponica, ed. H. Beckh (Leipzig, 1895); the missing passages of the Vatican thunder books deciphered from the manuscript. Texts in the public domain. No manuscript images are reproduced. A historical source: divination and prophecy reflect ancient belief, not a weather forecast, advice or a promise.

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PREFACE

In Byzantium thunder was not taken for a chance noise. It was taken for a message. When the sky rumbled in January, when the Moon rose blood-red, when the earth trembled at midnight or a thunderbolt struck the sea, the knowing man opened his book and read what it meant: a rich harvest or famine, victory or the fall of a king, peace or war, cheap grain or dear. Whoever could read the signs of the sky knew beforehand. This book contains such books of the Byzantine sages — in complete translation from the Greek.

Three manuscripts. The book rests on three Greek manuscripts in which Byzantine scribes gathered the old teachings of divination.

The Vatican manuscript Vat. gr. 1066 (15th century, 175 leaves) is a large collection of the wisdom of the stars and of nature. On its leaves 162–165 stand two thunder books: one by the twelve signs of the zodiac, the other by the months. It also holds a twelve-year cycle and weather signs from the Sun and the Moon.

The Paris manuscript Suppl. gr. 1148 (16th century, written before 1573) belonged to the French book collector Claude Naulot of Avallon. It is a faithful copy of an older manuscript now kept in Berlin. It contains the revelations on the signs of the sky that go under the name of the prophet Daniel, the thunder book of Hermes Trismegistus, the earthquake book of Orpheus, the winter forecasts of Eudoxus and a thunder book by the Moon's path through the signs.

The Paris manuscript Grec 2381 (16th century, 109 leaves, formerly in the library of the French kings at Fontainebleau) contains extracts from John Lydus' book "On Signs", a Roman augury for the Kalends of January, and weather signs.

John Lydus and the Etruscan thunder calendar. John Lydus (c. 490 – c. 565) was a high official in Constantinople under the Emperor Justinian. In his book "On Signs" he gathered what was still left of the old Roman and Etruscan teachings on thunder, lightning and earthquakes. It is in his book that the famous thunder calendar of the Roman sage Publius Nigidius Figulus, a friend of Cicero, has survived. For every day of the year it tells what thunder foretells if it sounds on that very day. Our manuscript Grec 2381 contains parts of Lydus' book — the thunder book of Fonteius, the lunar observations of Labeo and the earthquake book —, and so in this book we translate Lydus' writings on thunder, lightning and earthquakes in full, including the whole calendar of Nigidius.

Contents. The book has four parts. *The Thunder Books* hold the Vatican thunder books, the thunder books of Hermes and of the Moon, the book of Fonteius, Lydus' teaching on thunder with the Egyptian thunder book, and the calendar of Nigidius for the whole year. *Lightning and Earthquakes* holds the Etruscan doctrine of lightning and two earthquake books. *Signs in the Heavens* holds the revelations of Daniel on eclipses, comets, falling stars, red rain and voices from the sky, together with the signs of the Moon. *The Year, the Kalends and the Weather* holds the augury by the weekday on which 1 January falls, the twelve-year cycle, and the weather signs from the Sun, the Moon, the clouds and the animals.

Sources and translation. Byzantine minuscule is hard to read with certainty, and several versions of these texts have been printed. We therefore translate from the scholarly editions that print the same texts, often directly from our manuscripts or from their originals. Lydus is translated from the edition of Curt Wachsmuth, Leipzig, 1897. The Byzantine books of thunder, earthquakes and the Kalends are translated from the great "Catalogue of Greek Astrological Manuscripts" (Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum, Brussels, 1900–1912). The weather signs come from the Byzantine farming encyclopaedia "Geoponica" (edited by H. Beckh, Leipzig, 1895). For the Vatican thunder books the printed text lacked the beginning and the end, so these passages — the signs of

Aries and Capricorn and the months from August to December — we deciphered ourselves from the Vatican manuscript. Where the ink has faded or the page is stained, we put dots, for we must not invent. Significant differences between the manuscripts are given in the notes. All the texts are in the public domain. No manuscript images are reproduced in this book.

We translate sign by sign, leaving nothing out and softening nothing. These texts speak of kings and tyrants, slaves, barbarians and pestilence as their age spoke. Explanations are given only in the notes, on the page where a word first appears. At the end of the book a short commentary tells what lies behind these signs.

How to Use This Book

The month. The old texts use the Roman (Julian) months, which match ours in name. If it thunders in July, look for the sign of July.

The sign of the Sun. If the book asks in which sign the Sun stands, take the sign of the zodiac by the date: Aries about 21 March – 20 April, Taurus to 20 May, Gemini to 21 June, Cancer to 22 July, Leo to 22 August, Virgo to 22 September, Libra to 23 October, Scorpio to 22 November, Sagittarius to 21 December, Capricorn to 20 January, Aquarius to 18 February, Pisces to 20 March. Some books assign a sign to a month a little differently; then follow that book's own direction.

The sign and the day of the Moon. In which sign the Moon stands, and whether it is waxing or waning, can be seen in any lunar calendar. The days of the Moon are counted from the new moon. In the calendar of Nigidius too, day "1" is the first day after the new moon, and "June" is the lunar month that begins about the summer solstice.

Day or night. Many signs distinguish whether the thunder or the earthquake came by day or by night. This was held to be important.

Several books — several voices. A Byzantine sage had several books, and they did not always speak alike. So it is here too. Compare them, as they did.

This is a historical book. It shows how the Byzantines and the Romans read the sky to know the future. It is not a weather forecast, not medical advice, and it promises no results. But whoever opens it will be able, in the next thunderstorm, to do what they did a thousand years ago: listen to the sky and open the book.

THE THUNDER BOOKS

THE BOOK OF THUNDER AND EARTHQUAKE BY THE SIGNS OF THE ZODIAC

A thunder book, that is, an interpretation of the earthquake book by the twelve signs of the zodiac[1].

Aries

If it thunders in Aries, those who dwell in the east will perish; there will be grief over all the land[2], there will be unrest, people will lose body and life, and the fruits will be ruined. If there is an earthquake, it signifies famine.

Taurus

If it thunders in Taurus, it shows plenty of grain in every place. In the royal court there will be joy and feasting. In the east and among the Arabs there will be famine and mutual slaughter, and wicked kings will be cut off. There will be weakness, but few sicknesses. In the west four-footed beasts will perish. If there is an earthquake, there will be very great heats and distress.

Gemini

If it thunders in Gemini, it signifies strife and sickness among men and the ruin of grain, and the loss of many beasts and oxen. On the mainland there will be upheaval, but afterwards it will bring a sowing. In the inhabited world there

1 The sign is the one in which the Sun stands at the time. The Naples manuscript also pairs each sign with a month: Aries with March, Taurus with April, and so on.

2 The Naples manuscript has lost this sign; it is translated from the Vatican manuscript. The word after "over" is partly faded.

will be change, and confusion in some small place, and the creeping things will perish. If there is an earthquake, there will be ruin in any land whatever.

Cancer

If it thunders in Cancer, varied winds will blow; therefore what is born will be sound and healthy. There will be much grain and barley. In the east, and later among the fair-haired peoples, an all-enfolding cold will come and oxen will die, and the winter will be renowned[1]. The fruits will be few and the pulses few, but wine will abound. From the north will come a threat, and a certain ruler will appear. If there is an earthquake, men will be divided.

Leo

If it thunders in Leo, all the fruits will perish. In the west there will be heresy and blasphemy and movements of enemies. Scab will come upon men, and an itch that devours them. Great dangers will threaten the illustrious. The pulses will perish, and madness and folly will seize the wild beasts. If there is an earthquake, the wise will perish.

Virgo

If it thunders in Virgo, the friends of kings will perish, there will be upheaval on the mainland, and those sailing in the west will be in danger. There will be plenty of grain, barley and pulses, but the birds in the air will perish. All that grows on the earth will be middling. Many winds will blow upon the sea. The winter will be late, and death will come upon men. If there is an earthquake, it signifies ruin from many diseases.

1 The Greek calls the winter "renowned, famous"; the editors suspect that the astronomer Eudoxus was originally named here and his name was later misread.

Libra

If it thunders in Libra, it signifies wars and slaughter of one against another, a multitude of wounds and terrors. There will be famine even among the wild beasts, and it shows the ruin of the fruits; most of the pulses will perish. There will be severe winters from the north and the south. Cattle will perish, men and women will die, and the inhabited world will change. There will be famine and distress, and four-footed beasts will perish, and likewise the common creeping things. If there is an earthquake, death for all.

Scorpio

If it thunders in Scorpio, it signifies mutual slaughter. The mountain lands will perish. The winters will be severe, the fruits will be ruined, and those who dwell in the north will run in madness through every place. The king will have another successor; there will be death and distress of one against another, and a cloud will be poured out. If there is an earthquake, there will be great joy and an influx of good things.

Sagittarius

If it thunders in Sagittarius, there will be upheaval in the land and the mountain folk will move away. The grain of the mountains and all the fruits will perish, but in the plains the whole harvest will be rich. Four-footed beasts will perish in giving birth. The winters will be late, or else locusts will come over all the land. A star that appears to those at sea will bring joy to the whole inhabited world. If there is an earthquake, it signifies the ruin of the flocks.

Aquarius

If it thunders in Aquarius, it shows war, but joy by the sea. Sicknesses and weakness will come upon men. Likewise there will be plenty of grain, barley and the other pulses. The winters will be very renowned and changeable, and

January

If it thunders in January, there will be much grain, but they will eat it weeping. If there is an earthquake, it signifies war.

February

If it thunders by day in February, it shows the ruin of four-footed beasts. If there is an earthquake, the peoples will have strength. If a thunderbolt or a mist rises up to heaven, it shows good for the fruits. If a roaring sound comes from the sky, the fruits will fall.

March

If it thunders in March but does not rain, it signifies the loss of men. If the Moon appears blood-red, there will be much grain. If there is an earthquake, there will be much seed, but the cities by the sea will be in danger. If at night a star falls to the earth, a king in that region will perish[1]; if stars appear by day, there will be slaughter. If there is an earthquake, it signifies the turmoil of war and the rising of enemies.

April

If it thunders in April, there will be much grain, but they will eat it weeping. If there is an earthquake, it shows war, but the cities by the sea will prosper. If the Moon is eclipsed, it signifies the ruin of men.

May

If it thunders in May, it shows unrest among men and turmoil in the world, and signifies the ruin of four-footed beasts and the killing of men of power. If there is an earthquake, the cattle will have famine and the rains will be rare. If

1 The editors correct this place; the manuscripts read "kings ... destroy".