

The Total Solar Eclipse of April 8th 2024

by Bill Herbst

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Eclipses are the most spectacular visual events that occur regularly in our heavens. The northern and southern lights and some comets are way cool, but they don't carry the mythic impact of wonder, awe, and often fear that eclipses do. Many astrologers give considerable weight to eclipses — when they happen, where in the zodiac, how their two sets per year cycle of paired solar and lunar eclipses evolves over time. Astrologers may even find (or invest) meaning in considering where on the earth a given eclipse is visible.

With only one or two exceptions, over my half-century career, I paid almost no attention to eclipses. My work with clients was always about helping them to navigate through the oceans of their lives, whether turbulent or still. The wild-card nature of eclipses didn't lend itself well to that work. Quite simply, I never figured out an effective way to use them to help clients, so I ignored them.

Over the past weeks, however, I've read a couple of articles and seen two videos about the coming total eclipse of the Sun that will occur on April 8th of this year (2024). Four news pieces doesn't constitute a feeding frenzy of public interest, and none of the four I saw were created by astrologers, so I can't say if this eclipse qualifies as a "big deal" or not within the astrological community. After googling various astrology forums, I didn't come up with much. But then, I hardly ever participate in the virtual astrological "community" online, so perhaps I'm wrong and just too far out of the loop to know the hot topics for discussion within astrology.

The main concerns in the pieces I read or saw centered around the practical more than the symbolic. Since this total eclipse will be visible around a path extending across the middle and eastern states of the U.S., some people and certain governmental authorities are apparently gearing up to deal with possible ramifications, such as increased traffic, hotel and motel occupancy, and medical issues (mainly eye damage from people looking directly at the eclipse).

The only obvious connection to astrology in what I watched and read — and what sparked me to write this commentary — were repeated references to this being a more special eclipse than normal because "all the planets are lined up,"

which is a phrase I've seen used in the media at various times over my lifetime concerning some presumably noteworthy astronomical event in the heavens about which astrologers were jumping up and down. That phrase — “all the planets lining up” — brings forth mental images of all the major bodies of the solar system being in a perfectly straight line, like beads on a string. Well, friends, that has never happened before, and it's not happening now. It might make good copy as a sensational clickbait headline, but it's really just a crude exaggeration.

Yes, the eclipse itself is literally a straight-line alignment between three bodies — the earth, the sun, and our moon. That happens four times each year — twice at a new moon, when our moon is between the sun and earth, and twice again at the full moon (two weeks before or after the new moon), when the earth is between the sun and our moon. And yes, that recurring phenomenon is undeniably cool, especially because the visual disks of the sun and moon appear to be the same size. The overall solar system, however, has far too many different motions in divergent planes for a straight-line alignment to occur in any sort of general way involving many bodies.

That's not to suggest that the articles were completely wrong. A concentration of major bodies is indeed occurring now within an arc of about a third the ecliptic (zodiac), with all the major planets but Pluto within 68°, but that's hardly a straight line. Think of it more as a clump. Also, it's not particularly rare. In terms of repeating planetary patterns, a concentration of all bodies within about a third of the chart (where their arc covers no more than four signs or houses) is called a “bundle.” That doesn't happen every year or even every decade, but it does occur two or three times per century.

[Technical note: If we include the four major asteroids sometimes used in charts — Ceres, Pallas, Juno, and Vesta — then the eclipse chart is no longer a bundle, but simply the lesser and more common category of a stellium. My reference to a bundle is from Marc Edmund Jones' formal scheme of seven planetary patterns, which includes only the traditional planets and does not consider asteroids. Some astrologers, especially younger ones, are more likely to pepper their charts with many asteroids, making planetary patterns much less distinct and relevant.]

If we think of the April 8th configuration as an eclipse within a bundle, would that be considered meaningful from an astrological perspective? Does the concentration of major symbols imply more impactful correspondences for individuals or for collective humanity and civilization? Maybe.

Two questions arise from the coming April 8th eclipse bundle pattern in the heavens: *what* and *how much*? In other words, *what* symbolic qualities or characteristics distinguish this eclipse from other past eclipses, and *how much* more symbolically meaningful or noteworthy is that?

The “what” possibilities are determined by astrologers using all the typical textbook techniques of astrology — planets’ sign and house positions, angular alignments, and so forth. The “how much” impact is assessed largely by two factors: symbolic potency and frequency of occurrence. In other words, how powerful is this event, and how rare is it? If it’s really powerful, that’s notable. And if it’s exceedingly rare as well as powerful, then we’ve got something worth paying attention to. If the event isn’t particularly powerful symbolically, and it happens often, then sit down and shut up, because that means this particular eclipse is just life doing it’s regular thing. Don’t be Chicken Little screaming that the sky is falling, because it’s not.

OK, so how powerful is this eclipse? Well, it’s in Aries (at 19+°), and Aries is a power sign. The kind of power invoked in Aries is kinetic and physical. Aries is the first sign in the zodiac and represents beginnings — the amazing effort of birthing. Think of human birth — the intense physical strain and trauma for both mother and fetus of pushing a baby through a tiny opening into the world. Aries symbolizes that process.

Aries symbolizes the urge to ACT, to DO something. The kind of action I’m referring to is spontaneous and impulsive, as well as raw and unrefined. So there’s that for starters with the eclipse. And sitting in that same degree at 19+ Aries will be the asteroid Chiron, which is potentially quite meaningful (although I daresay that no astrologer can be confidently certain of what Chiron means, and what the exact conjunction of Sun, Moon, and Chiron here implies).

On the other hand, Mars, Saturn, and Pluto — which are the traditional malefics and the main planetary power brokers in astrology — are not particularly potent within the overall configuration of this event. Mars and Saturn will be tightly conjoined in Pisces (within the 68° arc). That leans to the negative side but also dilutes the impact. Pluto is in Aquarius as the outlier, not within the grouping of the other planets, but also not provocatively connected by aspect. Also, Mercury is retrograde this month. Taken together, all of that doesn’t bode well for success with actions aimed to create change. For instance, if conspiracy theorists are looking to this eclipse to indicate some major false flag operation, such as a coup or an attack, the kind planned and fomented by secret elites, such events would have a higher chance of ending up botched and ineffective.

What I’d offer about the power of this particular eclipse is that it’s a little like riding a brahma bull. Don’t get on unless you’re willing to get bucked off, because you will. For certain. This eclipse symbolizes raw and wild energy not suitable for intentional human use. Could you surf the wave? Probably not for long before wiping out.

Next, how rare is this event? First off, total solar eclipses happen on average once a year, so that’s not rare. Noteworthy, perhaps, but not rare. Then, how often are all but one of the major bodies aligned within three signs of the zodiac

during a total eclipse? If that happened only once in a millennium, it would be quite rare and a very big deal astrologically. But we've had concentrations of planets similar to this one numerous times over the past century. So, I give this eclipse only middling rarity.

I never researched the correspondence of eclipses with significant historical events, but I assume from the lack of reports that it's not common. Mostly, eclipses come and go every year without anything major happening in the world. Although this eclipse is somewhat more provocative in symbolism than others, I don't expect anything outrageous to occur. Sure, *something* might happen, but I wouldn't predict that.

And individually? If you were born on or close to April 24th of any year, or have the Moon, Saturn, or Mars in your natal chart near 19° of Aries (or another cardinal sign — Cancer, Libra, or Capricorn — then think twice about going bungee cord jumping off a bridge in early April. Otherwise, however, don't sweat it. 99% of humans aren't conscious enough to even sense these energies, much less use them successfully. Just live your life.

Here's a standard graphic of the astrological chart for the eclipse. It doesn't include aspects, but the only really relevant aspects in this chart are conjunctions, which are visually obvious. The chart is erected for Washington, D.C., and would be rotated backwards for American cities further west. Whatever U.S. city we used would show the stellium of planets near the top of the chart (daytime, clustered around midday).

Solar tot. Eclp 2024-04.08

Natal Chart
April 8, 2024
2:27:00 PM EDT
Washington, District of Columbia
38N54 / 77W02
Tropical Placidus True Node

