

Revelation 4: The Heavenly Mishkan

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An examination of Revelation 4

Introduction:

Having read the letters to the assemblies we now shift our focus from the then present issues of the wider believing community to the events that will take place in the heavens. *Yeshua*, manifested through His messenger, had met with *Yochanan* on earth *in the Spirit* on the Day of the Lord; now He calls to *Yochanan* from the heavens and invites him to climb the heights of the heavenly

Mount Zion and enter the Heavenly Temple/Mishkan (Tent of Meeting: Exodus 25, 27). We are told elsewhere in the book of Hebrews that the earthly Temple/*Mishkan* is a shadow, a representation of its heavenly counterpart.

*“We have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, **2** a minister in the sanctuary and in the true **Mishkan** (Tent of Meeting), which the Lord pitched, not man. **3** For every high priest is appointed to offer both gift and sacrifices; so it is necessary that this high priest also have something to offer. **4** Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Instruction; **5** who serve **a copy and shadow of the heavenly things**, just as Moses was warned by G-d when he was about to erect the Mishkan (Tent of Meeting); for, “See, He says, “that you make all things **according to the pattern which was shown you on the***

mountain.” 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises.” –Hebrews 8:1-6

Yochanan, like *Moshe*, is being called up the mountain (metaphorically speaking) to witness vision of the heavenly Temple/*Mishkan* (Tent Meeting).

The Text

Revelation 4:

4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door was *standing* open in the heavens, and the first voice which I had heard, like *the sound* of a *shofar* (Ram’s horn) speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place *after these things*.”

This is the next step in a chronology that shifts from time to time throughout the book, relativ

to the perspective being adopted. Here the perspective shifts from earth *in the Spirit, in the Lord's Day* to *the heavens in the Spirit*.

The first, ***"After these things"***, refers to the events that *Yochanan* has already witnessed and the letters that have been dictated to the messengers of the assemblies. It doesn't mean that the letters have already been delivered, nor is there any indication in the text regarding how much time has passed. This is simply the next part of the unveiling. The first part was relative to the assemblies on earth, whereas this second shift in perspective addresses something taking place in the heavens.

"The door standing open", is most likely symbolic of the door of salvation opened by Messiah. This same door is alluded to in the letter to the Philadelphia assembly (Rev 3:8), a door that no one can shut. This can only refer to the opening of salvation given by *Yeshua* to every believer.

The voice Yochanan had first heard was that of *Yeshua* (Rev 1:10), His voice is like the *shofar* (Ram's horn) which is symbolic of the redemption of Isaac and the strength of the altar of sacrifice. The blessing for the Ram's horn says:

"All blessing comes from You O HaShem our G-d, King of the universe, Who has commanded us to listen to the voice of the Ram's horn." –Siddur

This is the *Word* essence of *HaShem*, the Son, and The Ram of G-d, whose voice holds the Universe together.

"Come up here" is reminiscent of Mount Sinai and G-d's call to Moses (Exodus 19:20, 24). *Yochanan* is the one New Testament writer who acts as a prophet in the *Tanakh* sense. The parallel is undeniable.

The second, ***"After these things"*** confirms the fact that what *Yochanan* is about to see is to

take place in his future after the process of the delivering of the letters to the assemblies. There is no way to know how long afterward, the text does not say, “**soon** take place”, rather it simply says that at some point afterward the things *Yochanan* is about to see will take place.

As the book unfolds we will see that there is no consistent chronology, this is why Chapter 1:19 explains, “*Write what you have (past) seen, what is now (present) and what will (future) take place.*” Allowing for any combination of these three.

The story of the *Woman and the Dragon* for example, is told in Chapter 12, and clearly begins by describing events that took place prior to the writing of the book of Revelation, and yet it is placed at a central point within the book’s chronology.

Therefore, each section of the book must be understood with reference to the wider body of

historical Scripture, failing to qualify it in this manner will result in misinterpretation.

“After these things”, finds its *Tanakh* parallel the text of Daniel 2:28-29, 45, where the Hebrew reads, *“What will come to pass hereafter”*.

2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. 3 And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a ruby in appearance; and *there was* a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

Yochanan was already in the Spirit on the Day the L-rd, there is nothing in the text up until the point that indicates he has ever been out of the Spirit. Therefore he is in the Spirit, ***in the Spirit***. This means the perspective of the vision is shifting. He has been in the Spirit and viewing the present and ongoing predicament of the assemblies on earth, now he is being called up by the Spirit to experience a paradigm shift which

will enable him to view the heavenly *Mishkan* (Meeting Tent/Temple/Tabernacle). This is the very same thing that Moses did, leaving the tribes of Israel at the base of the mountain, he climbed up to meet with *HaShem*.

Yochanan's description of The One seated on heavenly throne is a familiar one, it's a reflection of a number of *Tanakh* passages.

"I saw Hashem sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple." –*Yishaiyahu/Isaiah 6:1*

*"Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne like sapphire in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of a man.**27** Then I noticed from His waist and upward something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, from His waist and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him.*

–Ezekiel 1:26-27

The Scripture describes G-d as invisible, immutable, dwelling in unapproachable light. This is why He is explained using metaphors like light and colour, precious stones, rainbows and so on.

*“He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, **16** who alone possesses immortality and dwells in **unapproachable light**, whom **no man has seen or can see**. To Him be honour and eternal dominion! Amen.” –1 Timothy 6:16*

*“He is the image of **the invisible G-d**, the firstborn of all creation.” –Colossians 1:15*

*“For since the creation of the world **His invisible attributes**, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, **being understood through what has been made**, so that they are without excuse.” –Romans 1:20*

The jasper (earthy red) and ruby (bright red) speak of atonement, redemption and reconciliation.

The rainbow like an emerald almost seems like a contradiction in terms, however if we look at these symbols as parts of a whole we're able to glean their full meaning.

The rainbow is one of the most powerful covenant symbols of the *Tanakh*. It is significant because it is a covenant symbol given to all humanity prior to the giving of the *Torah* at Sinai. The rainbow is seen by some as a symbol of the bridge between G-d and humanity, made possible by sacrifice, cleansing and rebirth. It appears in the clouds (A symbol of the Divine presence) and is a refraction of pure white light which represents the immutable holiness of *HaShem*.

The account of Genesis 9 explains that the rainbow is a covenant sign given to Noah and his

descendants and to all the living creatures of the earth. In Judaism Noah is considered a type of second Adam, one who represents all humanity. For those of us who accept *Yeshua* as the true second Adam, this typing of Noah makes sense. *Yeshua* purchased the freedom of all who would sail with Him.

The general moral obligation of all humanity is found in the story of humanity's rebirth through the flood. The seven colours of the rainbow correspond to the seven *Noachide* laws incumbent upon every human being. They also reflect the attributes of the Spirit of G-d and the unity of the sevenfold light of G-d, keeping in mind that all the colours of the rainbow are the result of refracted white light.

***Noachide* laws:**

"The children of Noah were commanded with seven commandments: [to establish] laws, and [to prohibit] cursing God, idolatry, illicit sexuali

bloodshed, robbery, and eating flesh from a live animal (Sanhedrin 56a; cf. Tosefta Avodah Zarah 8:4 and Genesis Rabbah 34:8)."

1. Do not deny God.
2. Do not blaspheme God.
3. Do not murder.
4. Do not engage in incest, adultery, pedophilia or bestiality, as well as homosexual relations.
5. Do not steal.
6. Do not eat of a live animal.
7. Establish courts/legal system to ensure law and obedience.

These laws were condensed by the early Jewish Church fathers in Jerusalem, who sent them via *Shaul*/Paul the apostle as instructions for new Gentile believers (Acts 15:29; 21:25).

Each of the colours of the rainbow are made up of the three primary colours: a. Red (Redeemer: Father) b. Yellow (Life Giver: Son) c. Blue (Heavenly Comforter: Holy Spirit), and have

illuminating symbolic significance:

1.) Red: *Redemption* - blood (Ex 27:16; Heb 9:13-14, 22), sacrifice (Eph 5:2), sin (Isaiah 1:18) Redemption (1 Peter 1:18)

2.) Orange: *Separation* - Isa 48:4 (Iron neck) Eze 24:6 (rust), Psalm 2:9; Rev 19:15

3.) Yellow: *Life* – man (Gen 2:7), Eternal life (1:4), Glory (Gen 1:4; Num 14:10; Hebrew 1:3), Light (Job 33:30; Jn 1:9)

4.) Green: *New Life* – Garden of Eden (Gen 1:11-13, 2:8, 15)

5.) Blue: *Heavens* (Waters of the sky) – (Jn 6:31, 33, 38), Righteousness of G-d (Ex 27:16)

6.) Indigo: *Atonement/Covering* – (Gen 7:1) Lev 17:13; Psalm 32:1, 147:8)

7.) Violet: *Royalty/Judgement* – (Ex 27:16; Esth 8:15; Matt 21:5-11)

The Seven attributes of the Spirit:

1. Rest
2. Wisdom

3. Understanding
4. Counsel/comfort
5. Strength/life
6. Knowledge
7. Awe

“And rest (1) will come on him via the Ruach (Spirit) of HaShem,

*The spirit of wisdom (2) and understanding (3),
The spirit of counsel (4) and strength (5),
The spirit of knowledge (6) and the Awe (7) of
HaShem.” –Yishaiyahu/Isaiah 11:2*

*The “**appearance as of Emerald**”, (Green),
signifies the creation and new life purchased b
Yeshua, He is seen here as being *echad* (one)
the G-d-head, reflecting the attributes of the
Spirit of *HaShem*.*

***4 Around the throne were twenty-four thron
and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four
elders sitting, clothed in white garments,***

and golden crowns on their heads.

The Hebrew equivalent, “*Zakane*”, elder, literally means, “Bearded ones”.

The “***twenty four elders***” represent the division of the priesthood (1 Chronicles 24:7-18), and the sum of the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel and 12 *Talmidim* (Disciples) of *Yeshua*. They are representatives of the whole of humanity (as alluded to in the symbolism of the rainbow), rulers who submit their crowns to and bow before G-d, denoting His rule over all things. Their white garments are the righteous actions of the kingdom of priests washed in *Yeshua's* blood and made pure (White).

The *Talmud* speaks of the *tzidukim* (righteous ones) in the *World to Come* (*Olam Habah*), saying:

“In the Olam Habah (World to Come)... the tzidukim (righteous) sit with their crowns upon

their heads and feast on the Shekinah (feminine light glory of G-d).” –B’rakhot 17a

5 Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And *there were* seven lamps (*lampas: single flame*) of fire burning before the throne, which are the sevenfold Spirit of G-d;

“The flashes of lightning and peals of thunder mirror the events of Sinai (Exodus 19:16-19), and reflect the symbolic poetry of G-d’s coming in power to deliver His people, ethnic Israel (Psalms 18:12-15; 77:18).

“The seven lamps” are the individual lamp heads that make up the Temple/*Mishkan Menorah*. The Greek here is “*lampas*”, meaning a single flame rather than, “*luchnia*”, meaning candlestick/*Menorah*. These lamps represent the *Shekinah* (feminine glory) of G-d as seen represented in the *Menorah*. This is the original Temple *Menorah* of the heavens whose pattern

was copied in the setting up of the *Mishkan* b Moses.

As mentioned previously, the ***Sevenfold Spirit*** **G-d** is the *Ruach Ha-Kodesh* (The Holy Spirit).

6 and before the throne *there was something* like a sea of glass, like crystal;

*“Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up **10** and saw the G-d of Israel. **Under his feet was something like a pavement made of lapis lazuli, as bright blue as the sky. 11** But G-d did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw G-d, and they ate and drank.” –Exodus 24:9-11 (Ezekiel 1:22, 26)*

and in the centre and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. 7 The first creature was like a lion, a the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the

fourth creature was like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within;

These four living creatures closely resemble the *Cherubim* of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 1:5-11; 10:12, 14-15). The key difference being that the four living creatures of Ezekiel's vision each have four heads mirroring the creatures of Rev 4:7-8 whereas the four creatures in Rev 4:7-8 each have a single head according to the likeness described.

Ezekiel, like *Yochanan*, is unique among the prophets' in that his writing begins with a first person autobiographical narrative. Both Ezekiel and *Yochanan* are recording their visions while in captivity and both are taken in the Spirit to gaze upon the Heavenly Temple and throne room of G-d.

The four living creatures (Cherubim) represent

the four Cherubim of Solomon's Temple, two are fashioned into the lid of the Ark of the Covenant as guardians of the mercy seat and two are made to stand as guardians of the Inner Sanctuary (Exodus 25:18-22; 37:7-9; 1 Kings 6:23-28; 1 Chronicles 3:10-14).

The Hebrew word ***Cherub*** has no known root, however etymologists link its meaning to an Assyrian word used to name similar creatures, and theorize that the ancient Hebrew root probably had similar meaning. The best guess of its meaning is: ***Mighty, Approacher, Bringing Blessing***. Unlike certain other messengers of *HaShem* who sometimes appear in humanoid form, the *Cherubim* are always winged and have an appearance that mirrors specific earthly creatures.

The eyes in front and behind represent their ability to see everywhere and to be able to see both the future and the past (because they dwell with G-d outside of time). Their wings represent

protection and flight; and the eyes beneath the wings keep a loving eye on the people of G-d and a vengeful eye on the enemies of G-d.

Each of the faces represent attributes of G-d and aspects of His rule:

- 1.) Lion (Royalty): King of beasts, fierce hunter
- 2.) Calf/Ox (Strength): Domestic, provider
- 3.) Man/Adam (Messiah): G-d's appointed ruler on earth
- 4.) Eagle (All seeing): Mightiest of birds, bird of prey, sees all from a lofty height

**and day and night they do not cease to say,
“Holy, holy, holy is HaShem G-d, the Shadai
(Almighty), who was and who is and who is to
come.”**

This passage is known in Judaism as *Kedushah* and is part of the third paragraph of the *Amidah* (Standing prayer).

*"I saw HaShem, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple with glory. **2** Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. **3** And they were calling to one another:*

"Holy, holy, holy is HaShem Shaddai (L-rd Almighty);

the whole earth is filled with His k'vod (glory) –Yishaiyahu/Isaiah 6:1-3

It's interesting to note that while the living creatures depicted mirror the *Cherubim* of Ezekiel's vision, it is in fact the Hebrew *Seraph* that is used to describe the creatures who sing the *Kedushah* of Isaiah 6:2-3. Why is that?

Seraphim: Comes from the Hebrew root, "*Sarc*" meaning *to burn*. It is thought that the title Seraphim is a generic title for angelic winged messengers that burn like flames but are not

consumed. This means that both a *Cherub* and a *Malakh* (humanoid messenger) can qualify as *Seraphim* (Plural of *Seraph*).

The overall meaning derived from the root “*Sarap*” is, “**Burners, Destroyers**”. This may be where Psalm 104:4 finds its inspiration: “*He makes winds his messengers, flames of fire his servants.*”

The phrase, “**Who was and is and is to come**” is an expansion of the Divine name (Exodus 3:14-15) and connects The Father and the Son in the refrain. The Aramaic *Peshitta* of the New Testament directly translates the Hebrew, “*Eh, asher ehyeh*”, meaning, “I AM that I AM”.

9 And when the living creatures give *k’vod* (glory) and honour and thanks to Him who sit on the throne, to Him who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and

**cast their crowns before the throne, saying,
11 “Worthy are You, our *HaShem* and our G-
to receive glory and honour and power; for
You created all things, and because of Your
will (*Yeshua*) they existed, and were created.**

Here it is The Father Who is being worshipped (though the Son is represented in the emerald and is indeed part of the G-d-head). The Son is worshipped using similar words in Revelation 5:9-14. Part of the reason for the distinction is show *Yeshua* as *G-d with us* by using comparative terms to reveal Him as lord (mast and G-d (The Son)). John 1 describes *Yeshua* as the thought and word essence of creation, thus linking Him to the praises offered in this refrain. Therefore the, “will” of this psalm is in fact *Yeshua*.

*“You created all things, and because of Your
Yeshua they existed, and were created.”*

May the present peace of Messiah *Yeshua* reconcile you to the eternal rest of *HaShem*!

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