

The Seven Seals of Revelation and the Seven Classical Planets

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Abstract

This paper highlights a straightforward correspondence between the seven seals in the Book of Revelation and the seven “classical planets.” Specifically, the sequence of colors associated with the first to seventh seal in the Apocalypse (respectively: white, red, black, pale, white, black, and golden) agrees well with ancient color series for the planets of the week (consensus: white, red, blue/brown/black, beige, white, black, and yellow, for Monday to Sunday, respectively). Such a relationship is consistent with John’s focus on the sky. Moreover, Revelation is rooted in the *merkabah* tradition of Ezekiel, which later flourished into a Jewish mystical movement whose journeys to the throne of God required specific seals for safe passage through seven levels. Tokens of this kind often have planetary associations, a relationship seen overtly in the “seven seals” of medieval Kabbalistic practice and Islamic magic. The proposed seal-planet correlation differs substantially from its few predecessors, and permits extrapolations in which further symbolism can be identified.

Introduction

The final book of the New Testament, the Revelation of St. John, has captivated readers for almost two millennia with its fascinating yet cryptic imagery. Written near the end of the first century CE on the Greek¹ island of Patmos, the book admits a wide range of interpretations. These include the “preterist” view that it focuses upon events of its own era, the “historicist” view that it describes human history over a long period of time, and the “futurist” view that it describes events yet to come. The “symbolist” view sees in Revelation an allegory of the spiritual

path and of the ongoing conflict between good and evil. Interpretations that emphasize the socio-cultural context of John’s era suggest that he may have been re-mapping the constellations and planets of the Greco-Roman sky in terms of Christian theology.² These views are of course not mutually exclusive. Esoteric devotees incline towards symbolic interpretations, and often see in Revelation both a catalogue of warnings for the human race and an allegory of the internal challenges and triumphs encountered by an individual on the path of discipleship.³

The seven seals hold closed a heavenly book or scroll (Rev 5:1), and only the “Lamb who was slain” (Jesus) is found worthy to loose the seals and read the contents. The opening of each seal (Rev 5:1, 6:1-17, 8:1-6) is accompanied by a dramatic event or episode, usually calamitous; for example, the first four seals unleash the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Collectively, the events associated with the opening of the seals comprise the first of three seven-fold sets of disasters. The second set of catastrophes accompanies the sounding of the seven trumpets (Rev 8-14), while the third corresponds to the seven bowls (vials) of God’s final wrath (Rev 15-22).⁴ As a category, the meaning of the seven seals is not obvious, and they have been

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variously understood as tokens of the “seven spirits of God” (Rev 1:4, 3:1, 4:5, 5:6) or the seven archangels (Tobit 12:15, and perhaps 1 Enoch 20:1-8), the seven stages on an individual’s spiritual path to God, a recapitulation of Jesus’s prophecy about the beginning of the end-times (Matt 24:3-31), etc. The four horsemen seem to reprise the “four sore judgments upon Jerusalem” (Ezek 14:21), while their steeds recapitulate earlier sets of four colored horses (Zech 1:8, 6:1-8).⁵

This paper draws attention to an apparent correspondence between the seven seals of Revelation and the seven “classical planets,” a concept that has parallels in the “seven seal” embodiments found in other Abrahamic religions. The proposed correlation is more straightforward than the few seal-planet schemes proposed previously, and accords well with both the language of the source text and modern astronomical opinion.

Discovery of the Color Correlation

The correlation emerged during an exercise in which I tried to correlate the seven seals of Revelation with the *other* seven seals, the “seven magical symbols” of Judaism⁶ and Islam,⁷ also known as the seven seals of Solomon⁸ (Figure 1).⁹ Secrecy has long attended the Kabbalistic use of these symbols, and documentary evidence of their Jewish history reaches back only to the thirteenth century CE.¹⁰ Islamic tradition holds

that the seven symbols were revealed to Muhammad’s cousin and son-in-law Ali (7th century CE), although they may also be referenced in the *Dua al-Simat* (Prayer of the Signs), which is alleged to pre-date Muhammad and perhaps even Moses.¹¹ In terms of meaning and function,¹² there is likely to be significant overlap between the seven seals of the three Abrahamic religions. “One of the most important uses of sealing in antiquity was to give a proof of authenticity and authority to letters, royal commands, etc. It served the purposes of a modern signature.”¹³ The seven seals on the heavenly scroll in Revelation thus equate to God’s imprimatur or signature, whereas the Kabbalistic “seven signs” of Judaism represent magical God-names¹⁴ that permit entrance to the Supernal Realms,¹⁵ and the Islamic “seven seals” comprise the Greatest Name of God.¹⁶ Members of this last series have direct and well-known planetary correspondences that follow the days of the week,^{17,18} so an obvious way of correlating the Christian and Judeo-Islamic seal series was to try to link them via shared planetary associations.¹⁹ There were, however, no well-known planetary correspondences for the seals of Revelation (a point enlarged upon below), so it was necessary to look for a systematic way in which the seals’ attributes were differentiated by the book’s author, John of Patmos. Color, which features prominently after each seal is opened (Table 1), emerged as the most obvious candidate.

Table 1. The Color Mentioned by John in Connection with Each Seal

Rev	Seal	Text (King James version)
6:2	1 st	And I saw, and behold a white horse [...] and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.
6:4	2 nd	And there went out another horse that was red : and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.
6:5	3 rd	And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.
6:8	4 th	And I looked, and behold a pale horse: ^a and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.
6:9,11	5 th	I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God,

		and for the testimony which they held [...] And white robes were given unto every one of them.
6:12	6 th	And, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.
8:2-3	7 th	And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

^a For the fourth horse (Greek *chloros*, literally “greenish”) most translations (including the King James version) give “pale,” New American Standard reads “ashen.”

Surprisingly, the color sequence for the seals of Revelation agrees well with ancient color series for the planets, arranged according to the days of the week (Table 2). These planetary color sequences are of Babylonian origin, and their prototype(s) would have

arrived in the Greek world many centuries before John described his visions in the first century CE. To quote one authority, “though no doubt Jewish, the author [of Revelation] is also a citizen of the Greco-Roman world and knows its myths and astrology.”²⁰

Table 2. Planet-Seal Correspondence via Shared Color Association

Day	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Planet	Moon	Mars	Mercury	Jupiter	Venus	Saturn	Sun
Colors 1	-	Red	Yellow or Blue	White+Gray	White	Black	-
Colors 2	-	Reddish	Multiple	White	Yellow	Black or Olive	-
Colors 3	White	Red	-	Blue	Colorless (pure)	Black	Yellow
Colors 4	Blue+White	Dark Red	Azure+Darker	Dusty, White+Brown	White	Jet Black	Reddish Yellow
Colors 5	White	Red	Brown	Green	White	Black	Yellow
Colors 6	White	Red	Blue	Blue+White	Green	Black	Yellow
Colors in Rev	White	Red	Black	Pale (greenish, ashen)	White	Black	Golden
Item in Rev	Horse	Horse	Horse	Horse	Robes	Sun	Censer & altar
Seal	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th
Meaning, consequence	Conquest	War	Famine	Death and Hell	Souls of martyrs, purity	Darkness, cataclysm	Silence; 7 angels, trumpets

Information in the upper table pertains to the “classical planets,” that in the lower table relates to the seals of Revelation 6-8. *Upper table*—**Day**: the familiar planetary correspondence derives from Babylonian astrology, which reached Greece in the 4th century BCE; the formulation of the planetary week dates to Ptolemaic Egypt (4th-1st century BCE)²¹ and was displacing the *nundinum* in the Roman world at the time of Augustus (63 BCE-19 CE).²² The sequence in the Table (first day Monday, to final day Sunday) corresponds to the modern international standard for the days of the week.²³ **Planet**: the planetary assignment for each day (i.e., the planet with rulership over the first hour), for which the day is named in many European languages. **Colors 1**: ancient planetary color assignments from the “exhaustive investigation” of Boll,²⁴ as cited by Bobrovnikoff.²⁵ **Colors 2**: “Hellenistic consensus” in the *Tetrabiblos* of Ptolemy, as cited by Malina.²⁶ **Colors 3**: Jewish scheme from the *Zohar* (13th century CE), as cited by Kaplan,²⁷ supplemented with data for Venus taken directly from the *Zohar*.²⁸ **Colors 4**: planetary colors according to the 11th century CE Persian polymath al-Biruni, in his famous treatise on astrology.²⁹ **Colors 5**: planetary colors from the Babylonian scheme³⁰ or its continuation until the 10th century CE by the Sabaeans of Harran, listed by ibn Shaddad (12-13th century CE).^{31,32} See the comparative table by Guinard.³³ **Colors 6**: contemporary assignment for the planets linked to the Islamic seven magical seals, from Harrison and Shadrach.³⁴ *Lower table*—**Colors in Rev**: see Table 1. **Item in Rev**: the object bearing the color in the biblical account. **Seal**: the number of the seal in Revelation. **Meaning, consequence**: traditional interpretation of each seal, etc.

Previous Planet-Seal Associations

Given the huge volume of astrological and apocalyptic fringe literature on the Internet, there are surprisingly few schemes linking the seven seals of Revelation to the planets.³⁵ Older printed material, however, contains a few examples. For instance, in 1907 the Russian astronomer Nikolai Alexandrovich Morozov published a complex (and highly contrived) astronomical interpretation of Revelation, in which the four horses were identified as metaphors for the planets Jupiter, Mars, Mercury and Saturn, respectively.³⁶ In 1941, major astronomical flaws in Morozov’s overall scheme were publicized by Nicholas Bobrovnikoff,³⁷ an astronomer at the Perkins Observatory in Delaware. The latter, an expert on planetary light,³⁸ also criticized Morozov’s assignments for the horsemen on linguistic and color grounds, as follows.³⁹

We see that with the exception of Mars the apocalyptic colors [of Morozov] have little in common with the colors of the planets. Morozov tries to make μέλας [*melas*, Greek] mean inconspicuous, but [...] the meaning of the word is plain black, as black as ink [...] This same

word μέλας was used by the ancients in connection with Saturn and never with Mercury. The situation is no better with Jupiter. The horse is λευκός [*leukos*, Greek] or pure white, used to describe Venus and not Jupiter. Now, if the apocalyptic horses really were planets, we should identify them as follows: the black horse with Saturn, the red one with Mars, the white one with Venus, and the pale one with Mercury.

Bobrovnikoff’s comments largely support the correlations proposed in Table 2, except that in the Table the “pure white” of Venus is linked with the white robes (purity) of the martyrs, and the blue/brown of Mercury (which, in combination, approximate black) has been assigned to the black horse. The latter ensures that the second use of *melas* (Rev 6:12), where its intensity is stressed (“black as sackcloth”), does indeed refer to Saturn. For the five true planets, four of the color-planet correlations for Revelation in Table 2 are consistent with Bobrovnikoff’s colors,⁴⁰ assuming that his “white and gray” for Jupiter is considered an acceptable match for “pale” in Revelation. Bobrovnikoff did not seem to notice any overlap between plausible planetary sequences for Rev 6:2-8 and the one associated with the days of the

week, nor did he try to extend his planetary series beyond the first four seals.

We should recognize that Franz Boll, whose ancient planet-color correlations⁴¹ were used by Bobrovnikoff, had his own astrological/astronomical interpretation of Revelation.⁴² He saw in it Babylonian astral ideas that had undergone Greco-Roman refinement. Boll's interpretation was subjected to a lengthy rebuttal by Joseph Freundorfer,⁴³ who went on to become a Catholic bishop. Although neglected for the better part of a century, Boll's cosmological approach to Revelation has been revived and extended in recent times by Bruce Malina, Professor of Theology at Creighton University, Nebraska. Malina, who points out that John's milieu was one of intense interest in and fascination with the sky, views Revelation as "astral prophecy."⁴⁴ For Rev 6, he interprets the horses of the first four seals as comets in the four cardinal directions of the sky, their riders as members of the Zodiac, and the heavenly altar as the constellation Ara, "The Altar."⁴⁵ Overall, Malina advances a planetary sequence for the seven seals which consists (in order) of Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, Venus, Sun, Moon and Saturn;^{46,47} a double attribution for the sixth seal compensates for the lack of a planetary cognate for the fifth.⁴⁸ His assignments for the second and third seals agree with those in Table 2, providing additional support for the (easy) identification of the red horse with Mars and the (less easy) identification of the black horse, with its balance-carrying rider, as Mercury. Of the latter, Malina writes "The planet Mercury, which in the Sino-Persian tradition corresponds to the color black, is here recognizable by the commercial scale typical of Mercury in Babylonian-Greek celestial interpretation."⁴⁹

Seals in the *Hekhalot* Literature

The correlation in Table 2 is intriguing, and the correspondence of Mars with the red-horsed warrior is particularly apt, but it is difficult to know whether the overall planet-seal relationship is accidental, unconscious

on John's part, or intentional. Like 2 Enoch (probably 1st century CE) and 3 Enoch (5th-6th century CE),⁵⁰ the Book of Revelation is actually a distinctly Jewish apocalypse rooted in the *merkabah* tradition of Ezekiel.^{51,52} This tradition went on to flourish in the sixth to eleventh centuries CE as a pre-Kabbalah mystical movement within Judaism. In its *hekhalot* literature, the visionary ascends through seven heavens and seven palaces to the *merkabah*,⁵³ the throne-chariot of God.⁵⁴ The adept must have made elaborate preparations of purification and must provide the specific seals needed to get past the fierce guards at each of the seven levels.^{55,56} It is often claimed that the seals that permit ascent to the *merkabah* are in fact the "seven magical symbols" mentioned early in this communication,^{57,58,59} which—as stated previously—have overt correlations with the seven classical planets. The seven seals of Revelation may reflect an early form of such thinking in a "color-coded" manner.

The Seal-Color Correlation in a Wider Context

Colors have long been used to symbolize directions. The assignments in the Chinese astrological tradition, which were mediated to the Mediterranean world via the Persians, identified the cardinal directions (north, south, east and west) with the colors black, red, blue/green and white, respectively.⁶⁰ A traditional treatise in the *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* has similar assignments for wind directions: black, red, yellow, and white.⁶¹ Like Malina,⁶² we can use these schemes to locate the four horsemen of the Apocalypse in the four quadrants of the sky; unlike that author, however, we would expect them to appear sequentially from the west (white), south (red), north (black) and east (pale/greenish). One should, of course, be mindful that the details of the color code are not universal.⁶³

The complete color sequence for the seven seals is reminiscent of the color changes that characterize movement through the different stages in the process of alchemy. The goal of alchemy is purification, the transformation of

that which is base and common into that which is perfect and incorruptible. This process applies both to the outer and the inner worlds: improvement of the material within the athanor is closely coupled with spiritual advancement in the operator, and *vice versa*.⁶⁴ To the extent that Revelation describes a sequential process by which the world is progressively purged of its corruption and purified to perfection, it can be viewed as an alchemical workbook.⁶⁵ Not only is much of the imagery in the Apocalypse (e.g., the crowned chimeric beasts, colored serpents and dragons, and the star-crowned woman in childbirth who is adorned with the two luminaries) similar to that in later alchemical emblems,⁶⁶ but John's narrative culminates in a "chymical wedding"⁶⁷ of the cosmic Lamb to the heavenly new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2, 9-10). One can therefore view each seal of Revelation as the divine equivalent of the Hermetic seal on an alchemical retort, the breaking of which signifies the achievement of another stage in the transformative work.⁶⁸ As in terrestrial alchemy,⁶⁹ the process involves two white stages; the first and fifth seals may be compared with the initial temporary whitening (white swan, white eagle, skeleton) of the starting material, and with the later *albedo* or true whitening (unicorn), respectively. The redness of the second seal may be likened to the stage of *rubedo* (pelican, cockerel, salamander, stag), and the cataclysmic blackness of the sixth to the *nigredo* (crow, raven, *massa confusa*). Although the order in which the stages occur does not match that seen in earthly laboratories, the opening of the seventh and final seal nevertheless yields gold, the symbol of incorruptible perfection.

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It is also possible to use shared color associations to relate the seals of Revelation to the *sephiroth* on the *Otz Chaim*, the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. While the dystopia of the seals

invariably places them in opposition to the life-affirming *sephiroth*, the existence of competing and/or incomplete color schemes for the Tree precludes a definitive projection.⁷⁰ More reliable connections can be established by way of shared planetary assignments, as described below. An antithetical situation also obtains if one tries to relate the seals to the oriental and Theosophical "seven rays,"⁷¹ whether these are paired on the basis of color association, seal/ray number, or planetary assignment. The details vary according to which

teachings are consulted.

Extending the Seal-Planet Correlation

Since many traditional and esoteric tables of correspondence include planetary assignments,⁷² the identification of each Biblical seal with a specific planet (Table 2) opens the way to numerous further associations. On a somewhat mundane level, each planet has specific attributes (gender, personality, elemental composition, etc.), as well as rulership over particular metals, plants, perfumes, and hours of the day. Such linkages suggest practical details that might facilitate private meditation on the significance of each seal. On a more sophisticated level, and as anticipated above, it is possible to use the planetary assignments from Table 2 and the *Zohar* to relate John's seals to seven of the Kabbalistic *sephiroth*, namely the lower spheres which collectively comprise the *sephiroth tachtnot* or "seven multiples."^{73,74} The negative consequences that attend the open-

ing of each seal read like a cruel parody or shadow of the corresponding *sephira*,^{75,76,77} suggesting that each seal corresponds to a *qlipha* on the dark reflection of the Tree.⁷⁸ Thus the loving kindness of Chesed is, in the first seal, transformed into oppression and conquest; Geburah, with its severe and purifying energies, is partnered through the second seal with war; and the splendid glory of Hod is reduced via the third seal to the abject misery of famine. In the fourth seal, the triumph of death exposes the limited sovereignty of Malkhut's material world, while in the fifth, the Netzach-like faith and endurance of the martyrs still awaits the victory and eternal reward of this *sephira*. In the sixth seal, the world is shaken to its foundation (Yesod) by cataclysm. The mercy (*rokhmin*) of Tiphareth is manifest in the last-minute rescue of the hundred and forty-four thousand servants of God (Rev 7:3-4), prior to the beauty of this *sephira* being unleashed in the sense alluded to by Rainer Maria Rilke when he wrote "For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror, which we are still just able to endure."⁷⁹

Caution is advised in mapping the seven seals to signs of the Zodiac. Although correspondences can be established simply on the basis of shared planetary associations, much relevant astral information resides elsewhere in the Book of Revelation. An integrated analysis of the complex Zodiacal symbolism in John's visions has been provided by Bruce Malina.⁸⁰ Similarly, while it is possible to project the seals of Revelation onto other arcane systems,⁸¹ the relationship may not always be straightforward.⁸²

The planetary assignments allow additional attributes from the Abrahamic religions to be associated with the seals. For example, the seven magical signs of Islam map to the seven seals of Revelation as shown in Figure 2a. While these symbols are ultimately positive emblems of divinity,⁸³ it is possible to see Apocalyptic references in their shapes, thereby allowing each to become a visual focus for meditation or prayer around the cognate Biblical seal. Thus in Figure 2a we may perceive the crown or archery equip-

ment of the first horseman (Rev 6:2) in the symbol at far right; discern a casualty of war in the next glyph, traditionally described as a "blind and maimed *mim*,"⁸⁴ sense the measured and costed rations of famine (Rev 6:6) in the "#", our modern pound/number symbol; and see in the four strokes a reflection of the fourth seal, with its power over a fourth part of the Earth (Rev 6:8). In the same vein, the cursive flourishes of the next character become a mnemonic for the flowing robes of the martyrs (Rev 6:11), while the symbol second from the left—which resembles an open and closed scroll in the Islamic and Jewish versions, respectively (Figure 1, far left)—reminds us of the sixth seal, in whose cataclysm "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together" (Rev 6:14).⁸⁵

The seal-symbol correspondence also enables us to name the Jinn associated with the Biblical seals.⁸⁶ Fittingly, all of the color-based Jinn names for which I have translations from the Arabic⁸⁷—Ahmar ("the Red One"), Abiad ("the White One"), and Mudhab ("the Golden One")—agree fully with the colors for the cognate seals of Revelation (the second, fifth and seventh, respectively; Table 2). Of greater importance, perhaps, is the ability to identify the archangels who preside over the Biblical seals. From first to seventh, they are known to Islam as Gabriel, Semsamiel, Michael, Sarfiel, A'aniel, Kasfiel, and Ruqiel.⁸⁸ A similar sequence is presented in Rabbi Joseph Tirshom's *Shoshan Yesod Olam*, a Kabbalah compendium from the sixteenth century CE;⁸⁹ he lists Gabriel, Samael, Michael, Tzidkiel, Anel, Kaptziel, and Raphael.⁹⁰ In the Christian literature of the following century, Benjamin Camfield's *A Theological Discourse of Angels and Their Ministries* would identify the same archangels (with "Zapkiel" for Kaptziel and "Camuel" for Samael) as "the seven spirits who always stand in the presence of God,"⁹¹ thereby returning us to John's "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God" (Rev 4:5). These same angels sound the seven trumpets after the opening of the seventh seal (Rev 8:2-9:14, 11:15).

Possible Christian Symbolism

In developing the seal-color-planet correlation, my focus on the technical details of one small set of events in John's vision is not in any way intended to detract from the iconography of the Apocalypse proper, in all its glorious richness. Nor is the color-planet correlation meant to supplant traditional interpretations of the seals' import, but rather to supplement them.⁹² For those seeking a Christological dimension to the seal-planet correspondence, I would suggest that the placement of the first day of the classical week (Sunday) at the final position in the series (Table 2) can be thought of as reflecting Jesus's prophecy that the "first shall be last, and the last shall be first" (Mt 19:30). It also echoes Rev 1:8, 21:6, and the self-disclosure of Jesus in Rev 22:13, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." The positioning of the first symbol (pentagram) at both the beginning and the end of the "seven magic signs" actually has numerous precedents, which date back to the earliest appearance of the symbol series in Islamic manuscripts⁹³ (Figure 2b);⁹⁴ moreover, the identification of the pentagram with Jesus accords well with its adoption as the symbol of the Christ by esoteric schools such as the Lucis Trust.⁹⁵ Placing the solar token at the end also ensures that the final Biblical seal corresponds with Sunday, the day of the Resurrection (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2; Lk 24:1; Jn 20:1).⁹⁶ Thus the day which most modern Christians keep holy and on which they rest—just as God blessed and rested on the seventh and final day of Creation (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:11)—corresponds with the seventh and final seal of the Apocalypse, which ushers the present Creation to a close.

Conclusion

The few previous schemes that relate the seven seals of Revelation to the planets have been convoluted or incomplete. This article draws attention to a straightforward color-based correspondence between the seven seals and the celestial bodies of the planetary week, a correlation which hitherto seems to have gone unremarked. A planetary

connection is hardly surprising within a vision sequence largely situated in the sky, but there are also other precedents for such a relationship. The vision-journeys of early medieval Jewish mysticism, which are rooted in the same tradition as Revelation, required specific seals for safe passage through seven heavenly palaces. These have been linked to the "seven seals" important to mid-medieval Jewish Kabbalah and Islamic magic, which have direct correlations with the seven classical planets and the cognate days of the week. The seven seals of Revelation appear to reflect similar planetary associations indirectly by way of color. The seals' color sequence evokes a sense of alchemical purification, while their planetary associations encourage extrapolation to other esoteric systems. The correspondences add to the already rich symbolism of Revelation, and show that it is still possible to discover new and compelling associations for details of the Apocalypse.

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- ¹ In the political map of the time, Patmos lay off the coast of the Roman province of Asia.
 - ² Bruce J. Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys* (Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 1995).
 - ³ Zachary Lansdowne, "The Beasts of Revelation: Glamour and Maya," *Esoteric Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (2006): 35-42; Zachary Lansdowne, "The Two Witnesses," *Esoteric Quarterly* 5, no. 3 (2009): 15-28.
 - ⁴ John Sweet, "The Book of Revelation," in *Oxford Guide to the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, 651-655 (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 652.
 - ⁵ Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 118 & 124.
 - ⁶ Aryeh Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah – the Book of Creation in Theory and Practice* (San Francisco: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1997), 169-172.
 - ⁷ Hans A. Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere in der Mohammedanischen Zauberei* (Graz, Austria: Geheimes Wissen, 2006), 76-195. This is a modern reprinting (by M. Munteanu) of the 1930 Berlin edition of Walter de Gruyter & Co. The original pagination is not preserved.
 - ⁸ Gaster, M. (1936) "Review of *Siegel und Charaktere in der Mohammedanischen*

- Zauberei by H. A. Winkler,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1, (1936): 131-133.
- ⁹ In Figure 1, the Jewish series is after Eliahu ben Moshe Loans and Joel ben Isaac Halpern, *Toldot Adam* (Lemberg/Lviv, Ukraine: Kugel and Yerleger, 1872), Section 158, while the Islamic series is after Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere*, 151-152. Since the symbol series normally occur in the context of Hebrew and Arabic, respectively, they should both be read from right to left.
- ¹⁰ Gabriella Samuel, “The Seven Mystical Seals,” in *The Kabbalah Handbook* (New York/London: Tarcher/Penguin, 2007), 301.
- ¹¹ Stephen Lambden, “Some Notes on Islamic Concepts of the *al-Isim al-A’zam*, the Mightiest, Greatest or Supreme Name of God: From the Islamic Solomon (fl. 10th century BCE) to Imam Ali (d. 661 CE) and beyond.” At <http://www.hurqalya.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/PAPERS/GREATEST%20NAME/CHAOTER%20FOUR%20%20ISLAMIC%20LITERATURES.htm> (accessed May 22, 2010). Of the *Dua al-Simat*, whose transmission can be traced back at least as far as Shia Imams of the eighth century CE, Lambden writes “It probably came to be designated the *Dua al-Simat* because of the implications of the Arabic word *sima* (pl. *simat*), which word can indicate an outward “sign,” “mark” or “characteristic,” and most likely refers to the “signs,” “tokens” or evidences of the power of the *ism al-a’zam*, God’s “Mightiest Name,” which is specifically mentioned in the opening line and is powerfully indirectly evoked throughout this weighty devotional supplication.”
- ¹² Algis Uždavinys, “Metaphysical Symbols and Their Function in Theurgy,” *Eye of the Heart* 2 (2008): 37-59.
- ¹³ D. Miall Edwards, “Seal,” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1915). Online at <http://www.bible-history.com/isbe/S/SEAL/> (accessed March 14, 2010).
- ¹⁴ Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto, *Shorshei haShemot*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Hotzaat Nezer Shraga, 1999). The author (17th century CE) is glossed as the RaMaZ.
- ¹⁵ Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 301.
- ¹⁶ Georges C. Anawati, “Le Nom Supreme de Dieu (*Isim Allah al-Azam*),” in *Atti del Terzo Congresso di Studi Arabi e Islamici: Ravello, 1-6 Settembre 1966*, 7-58 (Naples: Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1967).
- ¹⁷ Tewfik Canaan, “The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans,” in *Magic and Divination in Early Islam*, ed. Emilie Savage-Smith, 125-177 (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Variorum, 2004), 169-171. Originally published in *Berytus Archaeological Studies* 4 (1937): 69-110 and 5 (1938): 141-151.
- ¹⁸ Frances Harrison and Nineveh Shadrach, *Magic That Works – Practical Training for the Children of Light* (Vancouver: Ishtar, 2005), 65-66.
- ¹⁹ This is particularly justified if (as prefigured in the Introduction) the seven seals are identified with the “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev 4:5). The Holy Place in the Jerusalem temple contained, in addition to the table of shewbread and altar of incense, a seven-branched candelabrum. Of this the Jewish historian Josephus (1st century CE) writes “Now the seven lamps signified the seven planets; for so many there were springing out of the candlestick.” From *The Wars of the Jews* V, 5:5, in *The Works of Flavius Josephus*, trans. William Whiston (London and New York: J.M. Dent and E.P. Dutton, 1915). Online at <http://www.ccel.org/j/josephus/works/war-5.htm/> (accessed March 17, 2010).
- ²⁰ Sweet, “The Book of Revelation,” 654.
- ²¹ Bonnie Blackburn and Leofranc Holford-Strevens, *The Oxford Companion to the Year: an Exploration of Calendar Customs and Time-Reckoning* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 566-568.
- ²² Robert L. Odom, *Sunday in Roman Paganism* (New York: TEACH Services, 2003), 20.
- ²³ International Standards Organization, ISO 8601:2004.
- ²⁴ Franz Boll, “Antike Beobachtungen Farbiger Sterne, mit Einem Beitrage von Carl Bezold,” *Abhandlung der Königlich Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München* (Philosophisch-Philologische & Historische Klasse) 30, Abh. 1 (1916).
- ²⁵ Nicholas T. Bobrovnikoff, “Pseudo-Science and Revelation,” *Popular Astronomy* (USA) 49 (1941): 251-256. Online at <http://adsabs.harvard.edu/full/1941PA.....49..251B> (accessed February 15, 2010).
- ²⁶ Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 127.
- ²⁷ Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 184.

- ²⁸ Zohar, vol. 2, Bereshit B, 29 – The Third Chamber: Netzach.
- ²⁹ Abu'l-Rayhan Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Biruni, *The Book of Instruction in the Elements of the Art of Astrology* [*Kitab al-Tafhim*], trans. R. Ramsay Wright (London: Luzac, 1934), 240.
- ³⁰ Rumen K. Kolev, *Babylonian Astronomy and Astrology* (Los Angeles: Halloran Software, 2000). Excerpted at the website of the Centre Universitaire de Recherche en Astrologie. Online at <http://cura.free.fr/december/09kolev.html> (accessed February 15, 2010).
- ³¹ Daniel Chwolsohn, *Die Ssabier und der Ssabismus*, vol. 2. (St. Petersburg: Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1856), 382-398.
- ³² Michael Baigent, *From the Omens of Babylon: Astrology and Ancient Mesopotamia* (London: Arkana/Penguin, 1994), 186-187.
- ³³ Patrice Guinard, "Planets, Colors and Metals," trans. Matyas Becvarov, version 1.2, November 2004. Online at the website of the Centre Universitaire de Recherche en Astrologie, <http://cura.free.fr/22plcome.html> (accessed February 16, 2010).
- ³⁴ Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 66.
- ³⁵ An exception is <http://revelation13.net/horsemen.html>, which assigns the four horsemen (in order) to Jupiter, Mars, Saturn, and Pluto (accessed February 16, 2010).
- ³⁶ Nikolai A. Morozov, *Die Offenbarung Johannis – Eine Astronomisch-Historische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Spemann, 1912). A German translation of this author's Russian book of 1907, "Revelation Within Thunderstorm and Tempest. History of the Origin of the Apocalypse."
- ³⁷ Bobrovnikoff, "Pseudo-Science and Revelation."
- ³⁸ Nicholas T. Bobrovnikoff, "Spectra of the Planets," *Reviews in Modern Physics* 16 (1944): 271-285.
- ³⁹ Bobrovnikoff, "Pseudo-Science and Revelation," 254-255.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 254.
- ⁴¹ Franz Boll, "Antike Beobachtungen Farbiger Sterne."
- ⁴² Franz Boll, *Aus der Offenbarung Johannis. Hellenistische Studien zum Weltbild der Apokalypse* (Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner, 1914).
- ⁴³ Joseph Freundorfer, *Die Apokalypse des Apostels Johannes und die Hellenistische Kosmologie und Astrologie* (Freiburg: Herder, 1929).
- ⁴⁴ Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 126-132.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-117 & 126-128.
- ⁴⁷ If Malina is aware of Bobrovnikoff's commentary, he does not mention it. It is also worth noting that neither Malina's nor Morozov's sequence corresponds to the "Chaldean order" of the planets, namely Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus, Mercury, and Moon (Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 234-235).
- ⁴⁸ Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 117.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.
- ⁵⁰ Matthew Black (1993) "Enoch and the Books of Enoch," in *Oxford Guide to the Bible*, eds. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 184-185.
- ⁵¹ Pierre Prigent, *Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 22-36.
- ⁵² James R. Davila, "The Book of Revelation and the Hekhalot Literature," November 2008. Online at http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/divinity/media/revelation_hekkalot_paper_SBL08.pdf, (accessed March 25, 2010).
- ⁵³ Paradoxically, the journey is often referred to as a "descent" to the *merkabah*.
- ⁵⁴ Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 131 & 212.
- ⁵⁵ David R. Blumenthal, *Understanding Jewish Mysticism: A Source Reader*, vol. 1, *The Merkabah Tradition and the Zoharic Tradition* (New Jersey: Ktav, 1978).
- ⁵⁶ Peter Schäfer, *Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).
- ⁵⁷ Georges Lahy, *Vie Mystique et Kabbale Pratique. Angéologie et Pratiques Théurgico-Magiques dans le Shiour Qomah, la Merkabah et la Kabbalah Maassith* (Roquevaire, France: Editions Lahy, 1995), 138.
- ⁵⁸ Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 47-48.
- ⁵⁹ Wahid Azal, "The True Greatest Name (*Ism-i-A'zam*) Symbol," April 29, 2009. Online at <http://www.iranian.com/main/blog/nur/true-greatest-name-ism-i-azam-symbol> (accessed May 15, 2010). Azal holds an MA in Islamic studies, medieval Arabic and Persian literature, founded the Ecclesia Gnostica Bayani

- Universalis, and leads the N.U.R.- Fatimiya Sufi Order. He writes that “a version of the [seven-glyph] symbol is known within the Jewish Hekhalot (seven palaces) or Mer-kavah (throne chariot) mystical literature of the immediate pre-Islamic era (to which it is, *inter alia*, known as Solomon's Seals and attributed to the Archangel Metatron or Yahoel, i.e. the Lesser YHWH).”
- 60 Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*, 126.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 63 In the Old Testament, for instance, Zech 6:6 associates black horses with the north but grisled/bay ones with the south. A much later counter-example is provided by the seven colored pavilions in the Persian poet Nezami's *Haft Peykar* (“The Seven Beauties;” 1197 CE), which are laden with astrological significance. These retain sandal/green in the east but swap the traditional colors for north and south, while allocating white to the center. See Gernot Windfuhr, “Ferdowsi's *Haft Peykar*,” 2nd Ferdowsi Conference, Tehran, Iran (Ilex Foundation and the Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia), August 21-28, 2000. Online at <http://www.ilexfoundation.org/pdf/ferdowsi2/windfuhr300.pdf> (accessed May 17, 2010).
- 64 Titus Burckhardt, *Alchemy: Science of the Cosmos, Science of the Soul*, trans. William Stoddart (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1997).
- 65 This idea has also been explored from the perspective of Carl Jung's alchemical model of human psychology. See Edward F. Edinger, *Archetype of the Apocalypse: A Jungian Study of the Book of Revelation*, ed. George R. Elder (Chicago: Open Court, 1999).
- 66 Adam McLean, *Foundation Study Course on Alchemical Symbolism*, CD-ROM (Glasgow: AlchemyWebsite.com, 1999).
- 67 *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz: Anno 1459*, attributed to Johann Valentin Andreae, is the third of the Rosicrucian manifestos (1616 CE). Its allegorical narrative is divided into seven days, like Genesis, and relates to the *conjunctio* or “sacred marriage” of a king and queen, a union of opposites that constitutes the goal of the alchemical process. Online at http://www.alchemylab.com/chemical_wedding_rosenkruetz.htm (accessed May 18, 2010).
- 68 I am indebted to an anonymous member of the journal's review panel for drawing my attention to the alchemical potential of the seal-color sequence in Revelation, and especially for proposing this analogy.
- 69 Adam McLean, “Animal Symbolism in the Alchemical Tradition.” Online at <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/animal.html> (accessed May 18, 2010).
- 70 Compare, for example, the following. Alan Richardson, *The Magician's Tables – A Complete Book of Correspondences* (London: Godsfield/Octopus, 2007), 58 & 101-102. Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 293. Tim Dedopulos, *Kabbalah – An Introduction to the Esoteric Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (Camberwell, Australia: Viking/Penguin), 63 & 72. Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 184.
- 71 John Nash, “The Seven Rays: A Case Study in the Dissemination of Esoteric Knowledge,” *Esoteric Quarterly* 3, no. 1 (2007): 33-50.
- 72 Richardson, *The Magician's Tables*, 6-181.
- 73 Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 184.
- 74 Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 293 & 298-299.
- 75 Richardson, *The Magician's Tables*, 57-59.
- 76 Dedopulos, *Kabbalah*, 34-55.
- 77 Samuel, *The Kabbalah Handbook*, 288-293.
- 78 Dedopulos, *Kabbalah*, 76-77.
- 79 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies*, trans. Stephen Mitchell (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992). Online at <http://www.homestar.org/bryannan/duino.html> (accessed May 18, 2010).
- 80 Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation*.
- 81 The seven chakras, the Tarot deck, etc.
- 82 The most appropriate way to extend the seals' associations to the Tarot might be first to chose direct matches from the Major Arcana, such as Death for the fourth seal (death and hell) and Judgment for the seventh, with its trumpeting angels (as depicted on that Trump); then to add self-evident planetary counterparts, by which the first and fifth seals would correspond to The Moon and The Star, respectively; and to use traditional planetary assignments for the remainder, by which the second seal (war) would correspond with the lightning-struck Tower, and so on. For Tarot planetary assignments, see Jane Lyle, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Tarot* (London: Chancellor/Octopus, 2001), 67.

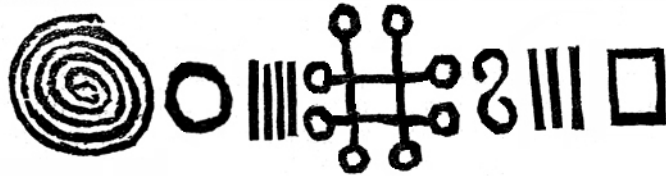
- ⁸³ Not only do the symbols collectively comprise the Greatest Name of God, but tradition links each glyph to an individual appellation within the “ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah.” From Figure 2a, it follows that the seven seals of Revelation relate (in order) to *Jabbar* (the Compeller), *Shahid* (the Witness), *Thabit* (the Stable), *Zahir* (the Visible), *Khabir* (the Shrewd), *Zaki* (the Pure), and *Fard* (the Singular). Anawati, *Le Nom Supreme de Dieu*, 27.
- ⁸⁴ Tewfik Canaan, “Arabic Magic Bowls,” *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 16, (1936): 79-127.
- ⁸⁵ Discussion of the seventh seal will be reserved for the following section, “Possible Christian Symbolism.”
- ⁸⁶ For the seals of Revelation, the sequence is Murrah, Ahmar, Barqan, Shamhurish, Abiad, Meimun, and Mudhab. See Anawati, *Le Nom Supreme de Dieu*, 27; Canaan, *The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans*, 171.
- ⁸⁷ Edmond Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l’Afrique du Nord* (Paris: Maisonneuve & Geuthner, 1984), 160. This book is a facsimile reprint of the 1908 Algiers edition.
- ⁸⁸ Canaan, *The Decipherment of Arabic Talismans*, 171. These anglicized names are from Harrison and Shadrach, *Magic That Works*, 66.
- ⁸⁹ Jeffrey H. Chajes, *Between Worlds: Dybbuks, Exorcists, and Early Modern Judaism*, (Philadelphia: Univ. Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 65.
- ⁹⁰ Kaplan, *Sefer Yetzirah*, 168.
- ⁹¹ Gustav Davidson, *A Dictionary of Angels, Including the Fallen Angels* (New York: Free Press/Simon & Schuster, 1967), 268.
- ⁹² “The symbol is multivalent, having a multiplicity of meanings that do not diminish but instead enrich each other.” Timothy Scott, “Understanding ‘Symbol’,” in *Sacred Web* 6, 91-106 (Vancouver: Ali Lakhani, 2000). Republished online in 2007 as “The Traditional Doctrine of Symbol,” at <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/eyeoftheheart/assets/editors/scott/Symbol.pdf> (accessed March 14, 2010).
- ⁹³ Examples of the eight-symbol series can be found in copies of the thirteenth century CE work by Ahmad al-Buni, “Sharh al-Jaljalutiyya al-Kubra,” Book 4 in his *Manba’ Usul al-Hikma*. Facsimile online at www.digitaloccultmanuscripts.com (accessed December 31, 2009).

- ⁹⁴ The eight-symbol series in Figure 2b are from the following sources in the author’s manuscript collection. Top series: copy (18th century CE) of what is believed to be a *ruhani* (white magic) work by Sheikh Abu al-Kassem al-Somsamaei, composed in Algeria. Middle series: Islamic paper amulet (20th century CE) sourced from Lebanon, which concludes with five repeats of the eight-symbol seal series. Bottom series: unidentified *ruhani* manuscript, date uncertain; here the pentagrams have become hexagrams, probably because the latter are easier to draw. Other instances of the popular eight-symbol series can be found in print, e.g. Doutté, *Magie et Religion*, 164, and online, e.g. Azal, “The True Greatest Name (*Ism-i-A’zam*) Symbol” and <http://sites.google.com/site/ruhaniya/translations> (accessed May 16, 2010). Additional examples will be presented in my forthcoming book, *The Seven Seals – Theophany and Talisman*.
- ⁹⁵ “Superimposed upon the triangle of new age forces is the five pointed star of the Christ. This star has been his vehicle in the human family during the entire Piscean era. It has been, and is today, of marvellous potency. [...] Although we are already entering the Aquarian age, the established rhythms of the old era are still dominating humanity as a whole [...] Our symbol, therefore, blends the two eras and rightly pictures the work of the Christ today and the forces he must wield. The point in the centre is the place where the Christ stands. It is the centre of the star, the centre of the triangle, and the centre of the disc of golden light.” Foster Bailey, “A New Age Symbol.” Online at the Lucis Trust, http://www.lucistrust.org/en/arcane_school/talks_and_articles/a_new_age_symbol (accessed May 18, 2010).
- ⁹⁶ An identification of Jesus with the seventh seal of Revelation is also consistent with passages in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (2nd century CE) where the Son of God seems to be viewed as a seventh angel, albeit much superior to the first six. See Simone Pétrement, *A Separate God: The Christian Origins of Gnosticism*, trans. Carol Harrison (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 65-67.

Figure 1. The Seven Magical Seals⁹

Both series read from right to left.

(a) Jewish



(b) Islamic



Figure 2. Mapping John's Seals to Symbols

All series read from right to left

(a) Seal-Symbol correspondence

Seal N° (Rev) 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Symbol (Islam) ☆ ۞ ۞ ۞ ۞ ۞ ۞

(b) 8-Symbol series (Islam)⁹⁴

