

“Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever:  
a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

*Hebrews 1:8, KJV*

## AARON'S ROD

When I was growing up, a picture of the Lord Jesus hung on the wall beside my bed. He was walking near a river, and some sheep were by His side. Jesus also cradled a little lamb in one of His arms. In His other hand, He held a shepherd's staff. And right behind the Lord, a black sheep followed along.

I remember looking at this picture at night while I tried to fall asleep. For some reason, I always identified with the black sheep. I felt different from other people, probably because of my personality type. At times the "black sheep" of the family will do something to merit rejection. Other times, perhaps just for being born, they are considered worthless by some of their family. Of course, my parents always loved me. The rejection didn't come from them. I did, however, have a "Joseph moment" with extended family. No, I wasn't thrown into a pit, but had one been available, I probably would have been. Am I bitter? No.

How come? Well, the Lord was with me in that dark place. His love is greater than any hatred others may express. It was as if the Lord reached down with His shepherd's staff and gently pulled me into His arms. When I was strong enough, He set me down by His side. Now I follow along closely. And I will never leave. Not ever.

During the last couple of days, I have considered how to present the material for this chapter. Late last night, the pieces suddenly fell into place. Basically, I decided to use the blessing Jacob gave his son, Judah (Genesis 49:8-12). I think it will provide the necessary framework for a variety of topics.

The first part of the blessing says, "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you" (v. 8). The main point I would like to make is that God doesn't always use the obvious to fulfill His will. Sometimes He chooses what seems foolish in man's eyes. In 1 Corinthians 1:26-28, it says, "Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things...."

*Bud & Blossom*

When the people grumbled and complained about Moses and Aaron, the Lord had them take a rod from the leader

of each tribe (Numbers 17:2). The rod, interestingly enough, was a symbol of authority during Bible times. So, the Lord told Moses to write the man's name on his rod. Aaron's name was written on the rod for the tribe of Levi (v. 3). Then, the twelve rods were placed before the Lord in the tent of the covenant law (v. 7). The next day Moses saw that Aaron's rod had not only sprouted, but it also budded, blossomed, and produced almonds (v. 8). Life had burst forth out of dead wood! This was proof that the Lord had chosen Aaron to lead the people in worship.

The Hebrew word for "rod" in this story is *matteh*.

According to the Strong's Concordance, it is "a branch (as extending)," "figuratively, a tribe," also "a rod, whether for chastening or correction, ruling (a scepter), throwing (a lance), or walking (a staff)." It is also "a support of life," much like bread is to the body.

Let's take a look at the temple of the Lord. When the priest entered the holy place, the lampstand was on his left. This was one of the most beautiful articles in the temple; perhaps it was the most beautiful. First of all, the lampstand was made of pure gold (Exodus 25:31). It also had flowerlike cups, buds, and blossoms. And the most glorious characteristic was its light. The lampstand lit up its own beauty! Plus, it provided light for the holy place. Otherwise, the priests wouldn't have been able to see the table of shewbread or the altar of incense. They would have had trouble performing their priestly duties.

We, too, need God's light in our natural lives as well as our

spiritual. In 1 John 1:5-7, it says, “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

### *Correction*

The Word of God is often compared to a shepherd’s rod. Since Phillip Keller was a shepherd, he understood the importance of this tool. In his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Keller says that “the rod was, in fact, an extension of the owner’s right arm. It stood as a symbol of his strength, his power, his authority in any serious situation. The rod was what he relied on to safeguard both himself and his flock in danger. And it was, furthermore, the instrument he used to discipline and correct any wayward sheep that insisted on wandering away” (113).

We would be in trouble if we didn’t have the Word to help us and guide us, to correct us when we sin or when man’s philosophies try to creep in (2 Timothy 3:16). Without the Word, we would be similar to a sheep without a shepherd. It is important to note that Jesus is the Word. The beloved disciple tells us that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). Therefore, when we spend time reading and studying the Bible, we are actually spending time with our Shepherd Jesus. The Lord says it well in John 10:11: “I am the good shepherd. The good

shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Another wonderful use for the rod is what many shepherds call passing “under the rod.” In Ezekiel 20:37, the Lord tells Israel, “I will take note of you as you pass under my rod...” A shepherd will count his sheep using this method. He will also use it to part the sheep’s wool, looking for any parasites or problems with the skin. This careful process is very personal and intimate (115). It is a gentle reminder of how the Good Shepherd takes care of us. He helps us improve. The Lord changes us and transforms us until we become more like Him (2 Corinthians 3:18).

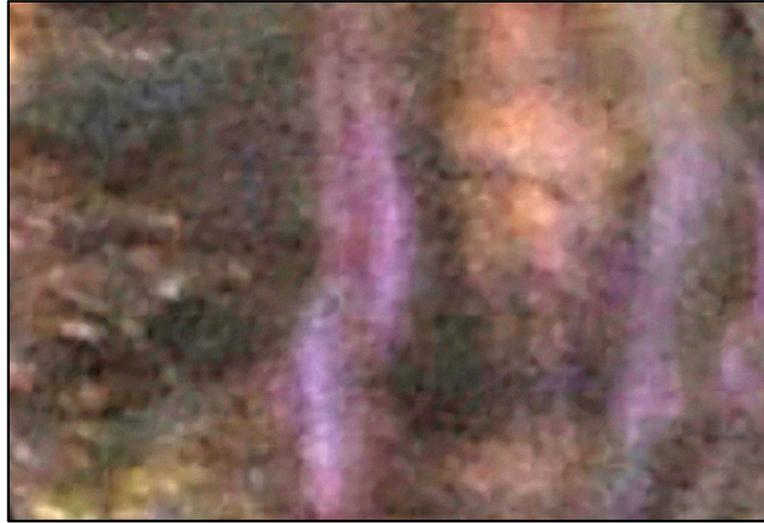
### *Lion’s Whelp*

Let’s take a look at the next verse in Jacob’s blessing. It says, “Judah is a lion’s whelp” (Genesis 49:9, KJV). The Hebrew word for “whelp” is *gmr*. According to the Strong’s Concordance, it is “a cub (as still abiding in the lair), especially of the lion:—whelp” or “a young one.”



*Lion Cub*

In chapter five, we discovered a young lion and a lamb to the left of the Lord (His right).



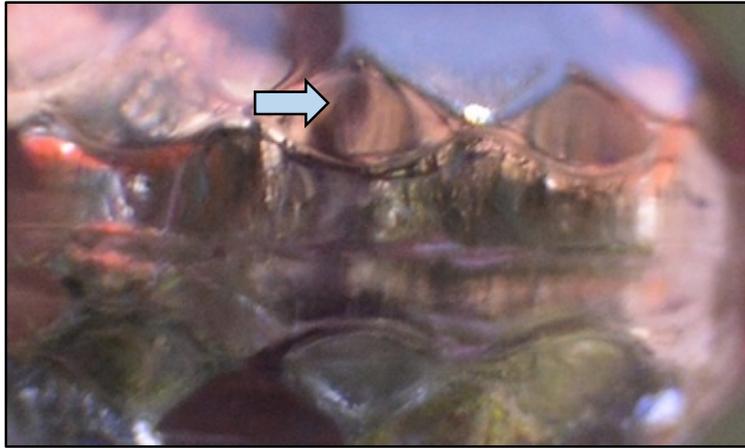
Jesus, of course, is both the Lion and the Lamb. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:5), and He is the “Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

*The outline of the lion is large.*

*And the lamb is above the lion on top of the building.*

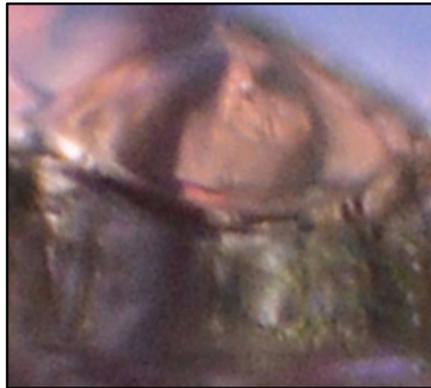


The arrow points to the lion's back in the picture below.

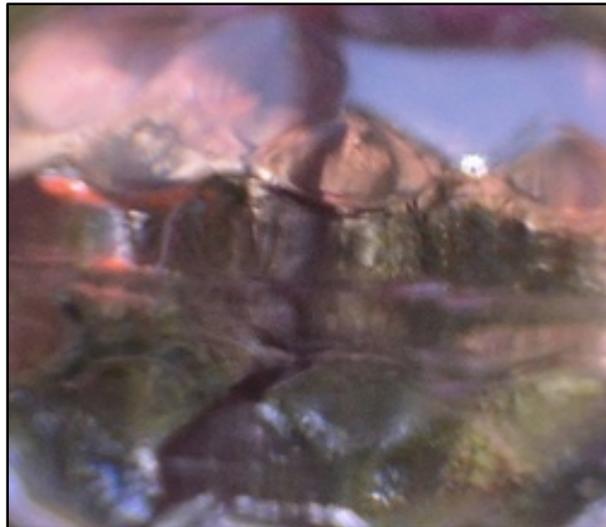
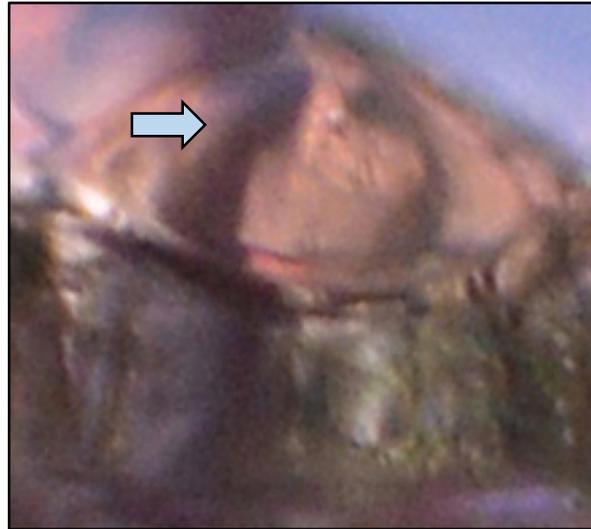


The last part of Genesis 49:9 says that “he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?” (KJV). The lion on the golden building (or bronze mountain) looks like an older lion. He looks powerful and wise.

In the other miracle picture, we find a donkey and her foal in the same place where the lion and lamb had been. When Jacob blesses Judah, he says the following phrase: “Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine” (Genesis 49:11, KJV).



The Hebrew word for “binding” is *acar*, which means “to yoke” or “to hitch.” It also means “to tie.” I have often wondered about the dark circle (or horseshoe) around the donkeys. Then it occurred to me that it is a part of the vine from the tree of life. It wraps around the donkeys like a large yoke or tie.



*This is a view of the donkeys and the vine from a distance.*

The foal is reaching its head up to nudge its mother's cheek. Her eye is closed, and they are both lying down.



### *Staff*

Since we are on the topic of young animals, I would like to return to the lamb for a moment. In his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Keller explains that a staff, “more than any other item of his personal equipment, identifies the shepherd as a shepherd. No one in any other profession carries a shepherd’s staff” (119). It is a long, slender stick with a hook on one end. It is also custom-made to fit the owner, and it only works with sheep.

The rod often symbolizes authority, power, and discipline, while the staff is associated with being loving and kind. My favorite use for a staff is when the shepherd will gently lift a newborn lamb and bring it to its mother. Keller explains that a skilled shepherd will move swiftly with his staff amongst thousands of ewes and lambs (120). Amazingly enough, he will return each baby to its mother with the help of the staff.

### *Holy Spirit*

While the Word of God is likened to a rod, the Holy Spirit is often compared to a staff. In John 14:26, Jesus tells His disciples that the Father will send the Holy Spirit in His name. The Holy Spirit, of course, brings comfort to us through Scripture, as well as through His presence. He also reminds us of the Lord's words to His people.

*King David says, "Even though  
I walk through the darkest  
valley, I will fear no evil, for  
you are with me; your rod and  
your staff, they comfort me."*

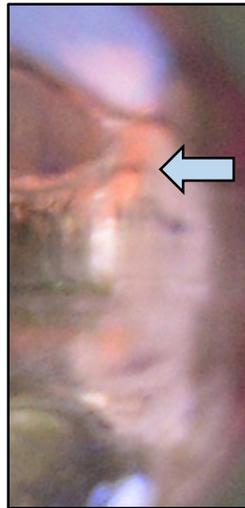
*Psalm 23:4*



In Revelation 4:5, the beloved disciple sees seven lamps burning in front of the throne, "which are the seven Spirits of God" (KJV). Let's return to the stump of Jesse for a moment, where we see a Branch that bears fruit (Isaiah 11:1). These are the seven fruitful attributes of the Spirit.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that “(1) the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—(2) the Spirit of wisdom (3) and of understanding, (4) the Spirit of counsel (5) and of might, (6) the Spirit of the knowledge (7) and fear of the Lord...” (v. 2). Each of the seven attributes has a connection to the seven branches of the lampstand.

In Revelation 1:12-13, the beloved disciple says, “I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.”



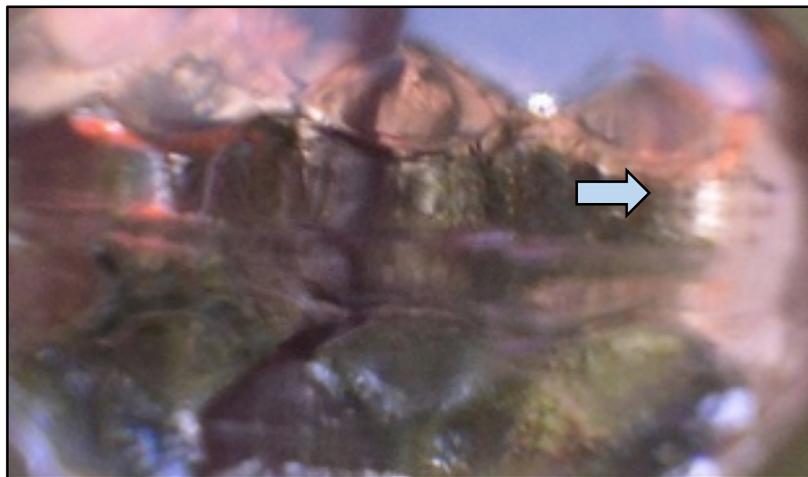
*Golden Sash*

The seven lampstands represent the seven churches in the following cities: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Revelation 1:20-3:22). Jesus warned the church at Ephesus that they had left their first love (2:4). If they didn't repent, the Lord told them He would remove their lampstand from its place (v. 5).

If they were victorious, however, Jesus said they would have the right to eat from the tree of life (v. 7).

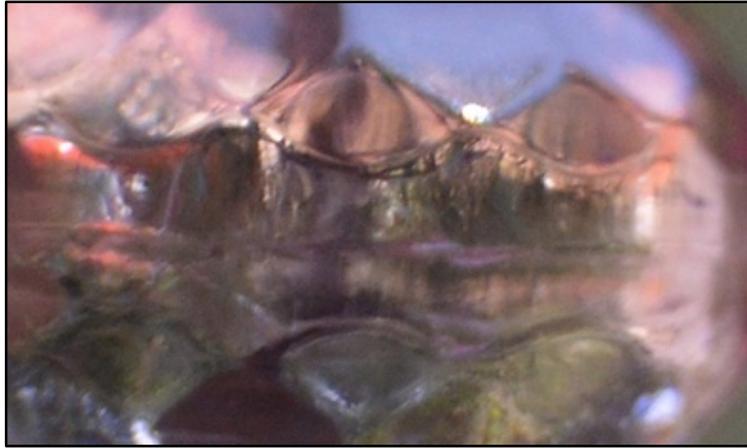
The oil for the lampstand is also significant. In Zechariah 4:1-3, an angel shows the prophet a vision of a gold lampstand. It has a bowl at the top, and there are seven lamps with seven channels. There are also two olive trees, one on either side of the lamp. When Zechariah asks about these things, the angel quotes the Lord Almighty: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit...” (v. 6).

Each morning and evening in the holy place, the high priest would trim the wicks and bring oil for the lampstand (Leviticus 24:2-4). The gold lampstand in Zechariah, however, has a continual supply of oil. In his book *Be Heroic*, Warren W. Wiersbe says, “No priest had to provide the oil because it was always coming from the trees” (220). The oil, of course, is a reminder that light is supplied by the Holy Spirit and not by human effort.



In the picture above, the heavenly lampstand is visible.

In the picture below, however, the lampstand is not as clear. I have often wondered why we can't see it as well. Then it occurred to me that in the New Jerusalem, we will see Jesus in all His glory. Since He is visible in this illustration, He *is* the One representing the Light. Isaiah 60:1 says, "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you."



The Lord's light is represented by the shaft of the lampstand. In John 8:12, He says, "I am the light of the world."

Jesus also tells His disciples that they are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). The branches represent God's people. He is the Vine, and we are the branches (John 15:5).



In Ephesians 5:8, the apostle Paul tells the church in Ephesus that they were once darkness, but now they are light in the Lord. Therefore, they should “live as children of light...” That is our job. We are the branches of His glorious tree. Just like the lampstand in the holy place, we should shine the light of the Lord in the dark world.

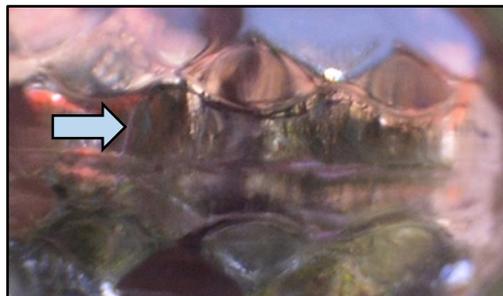
### *Garments & Clothes*

The next part of Genesis 49:11 says that “he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes” (KJV).

When I discovered the image of our Shepherd in the first picture, I thought He was beautiful. You can see His purple robe and its long train flowing down the steps. The color of the robe represents Jesus’ shed blood.



The arrow points to the Good Shepherd in the picture below.



## *Garden of Gethsemane*

We can only imagine the pressure Jesus felt in the Garden of Gethsemane. Since Luke was a physician, he provides some insight into the Lord's physical condition. Luke says, "And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Apparently, there is a condition called *hematidrosis*, which is also called "blood sweat." Since it is a rare condition, there isn't a lot of information on it. One cause, however, is likely due to intense fear or stress.

My mom's passing, for example, was unexpected. The stress I experienced that week caused the blood vessels in my nose to burst. I was getting bloody noses regularly for about two months. This experience, although not as difficult as the Lord's, helps me try to understand what Jesus may have gone through in the Garden of Gethsemane. I'm sure you can recall a time in your life when you experienced extreme pressure as well.

What is simply beautiful and perfect about the Lord is how He approached these difficulties through prayer. Oftentimes people become obsessed with a problem, trying to solve it in their own strength. In Jesus' case, He could have run away. He and His disciples could have left the area and traveled to a safer place. Jesus, however, understood what was about to happen. He understood *why* it needed to happen.

When Judas brought the soldiers and religious men to Jesus

in the garden, Peter, being the bold man that he was, cut off the right ear of the high priest's servant (John 18:10). The servant's name was Malchus. Just think about it for a moment. If you had been in Jesus' shoes, what would you have done? How would you have reacted? I probably would have been too afraid to have done anything. Some people may have tossed the ear into the trees. Others may have used the distraction to run. But, what did Jesus do? In the face of hatred, He demonstrated love. Jesus said, "No more of this!" And he touched the man's ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51). Jesus healed someone who was against Him that day. The man wasn't a friend, but a foe. Malchus was a person who played a role in arresting Jesus. Just like the high priest, he may have wanted to see the Lord punished. I have to wonder what crossed Malchus' mind when Jesus restored his ear. I'd like to think that he eventually had a change of heart (and not just a change of ear).

### *Olive Oil*

Isn't it fascinating how everything in the temple points to the Lord? Even the olive oil has a special meaning and purpose. First of all, the name "Gethsemane" means "olive press." In Exodus 27:20, the Lord tells Moses to command the Israelites to bring clear oil of pressed olives for the light. The King James Version uses the word "beaten," which is *kathiyth* in Hebrew. It comes from the root word *kathath*, meaning "to bruise," "violently strike," "beat (down, to pieces)," "break in pieces," "crush," "destroy,"

“discomfit,” “smite,” and “stamp.” Of course, we know that the Lord was beaten on our behalf. The olives serve as a reminder of the pressure and pain Jesus went through for us.

During Bible times, people used an ancient olive press to make the olive oil. Interestingly enough, they also used their feet. It may have been similar to stomping grapes. Micah 6:15 says that “thou shalt tread the olives” (KJV).

In the temple, Aaron and his sons kept “the lamps burning before the Lord from evening till morning” (Exodus 27:21). The lamps also required continual attention (Leviticus 24:4). They needed a regular supply of oil. If the lamps ran out of oil or stopped burning for some reason, they would get rekindled from the fire on the altar of sacrifice. Since the Lord sent the Holy Spirit to help the church, we receive a continual supply of oil that keeps our spiritual light burning in a dark world (Matthew 5:14; John 15:26).

The parable of the ten virgins suddenly comes to mind. When the women went out to meet the bridegroom, five of them took jars of oil for their lamps, while the other five didn't (Matthew 25:3-4). Since the bridegroom took a long time, all the women got tired and fell asleep (v. 5). Five of them didn't have enough oil, so they went to buy some more. While they were away, they missed the bridegroom's arrival (v. 10). A bride generally enjoys preparing for her wedding day. How much more should we prepare for the return of our Beloved and for the wedding of the Lamb?

A key theme in this story is vigilance. We need to keep watch for the catching away of the church. An important part of being vigilant, I believe, is to be in close relationship with Jesus through the Word and through prayer. The body of Christ as a whole may have the rapture in mind, but how many are truly ready for it?

### *Fruitfulness*

Welcome to a fruitful study of the Lord's millennial reign! In this section, we are going to take a look at the last verse of Jacob's blessing. It says, "His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk" (Genesis 49:12, KJV). This is in reference to the fruitfulness of God's kingdom. The Lord will look and see the vineyards. He will taste the milk from the herds that graze in the hills. And spiritual things will be in His people's hearts and minds. For example, Jesus' shed blood as well as His purity will keep our praise and worship burning brightly throughout eternity.

This morning I awoke to Isaiah 27:6. In this verse, the prophet says, "He shall cause them that come of Ja'-cob to take root: Is'-ra-el shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (KJV). I would like to take a look at three interesting words in this verse. Let's begin with the word "face," which is *paniyim* in Hebrew. As you may recall, it is used in the "face of the deep," the "face of the waters," and even the "bread of the face."

The second word I would like to point out is "blossom." In

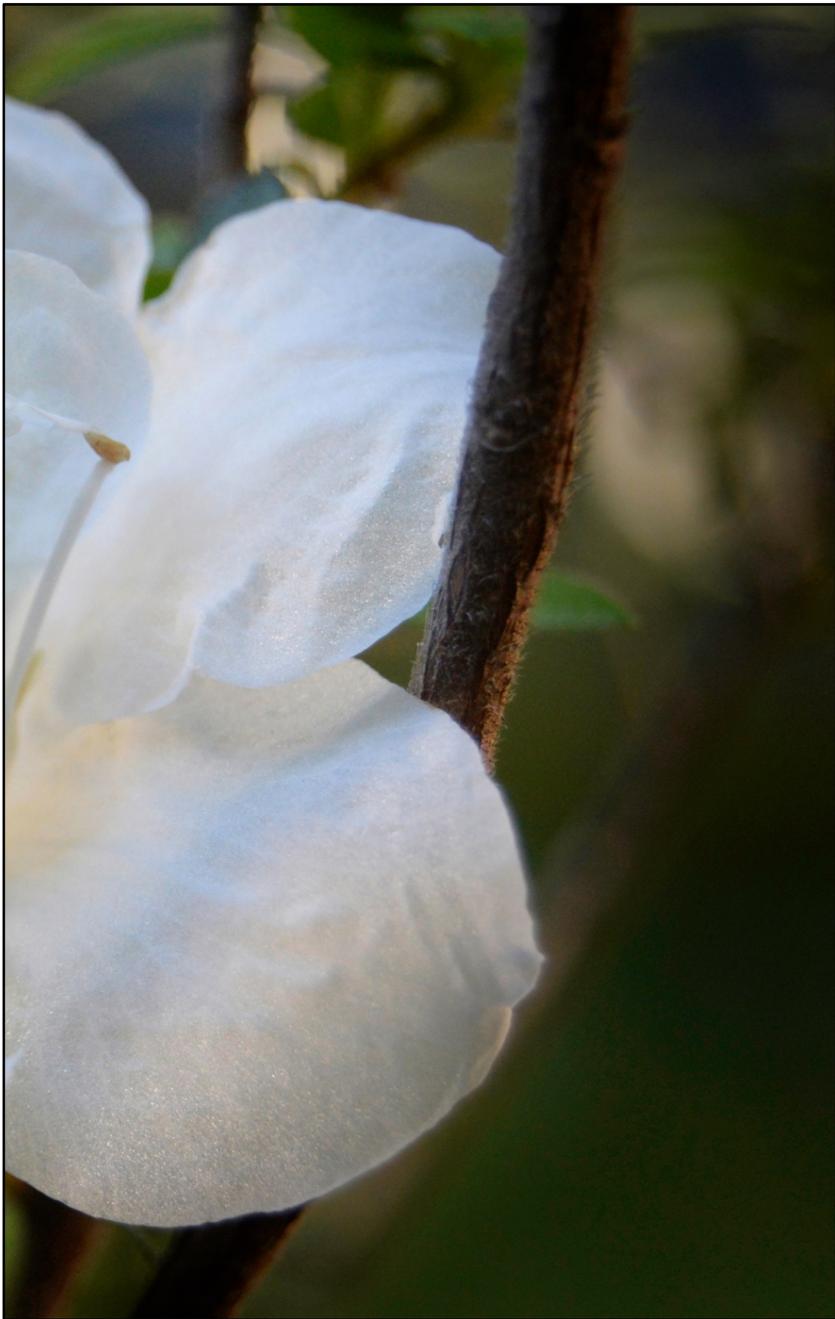
Hebrew, it is *tsmts*. This word means “to twinkle,” “bloom,” “blossom,” “flourish,” and “shew self.” Isn’t it wonderful how a Star shall rise out of Jacob (Numbers 24:17)? Stars, of course, twinkle. And the almond flower has the shape of a star in its center. Creation certainly declares the glory of the Lord, doesn’t it?

Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word *tsmts* is also used to describe Aaron’s rod. Numbers 17:8 says that it “bloomed” blossoms (KJV). And the word “blossoms” in this verse is *tsyts*, which means “glistening, i.e. a burnished plate; also a flower (as brightly colored); a wing (as gleaming in the air).”

Last summer I took a few photos of some white azalea flowers in our backyard. It is the closest example I have to an almond flower. What I’d like to point out is how the petals glisten in the sunlight. It is as if they glisten or twinkle like a star.

*Azalea Petal*





In Exodus 25:31, the Lord gives Moses instructions for the lampstand. Once again, we find the word “beaten.” In this example, however, it is “moulded by hammering” (*miqshab*). And it comes from the root word *miqsheb*, which is “something turned” or “rounded.” It is like a hairstyle set with curls.

Let’s take a moment to examine a flower bud. If you think about it, a bud is basically made up of layers of twisted or contorted petals. In the springtime, they “curl out” or “curl open.” Here we find a similarity to the winding of a DNA strand, the coiling of a vine, or the twisting of a whirlwind.

The lampstand in the holy place had something called “knops,” which were fashioned into golden buds. The Hebrew word is *kaphtor*, which means “to encircle.” Architecturally speaking, it is similar to a wreath. The crown of thorns suddenly comes to mind. Out of death (darkness), we see life (light). Out of a broken branch with thorns (the curse of our sins), God brought forth new life through the resurrection of the Lord. Even Aaron’s rod represents Jesus’ glorious resurrection.

What is beautiful about a flower bud is how it begins in darkness. When it starts to open, when it unfolds, the light glistens or twinkles on the petals. It is similar to a star shining in the dark of the night. Psalm 119:130 says, “The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” The petals are also like the wings of a bird. As the bud opens, it spreads its wings to fly. The Hebrew word for “bud” in Isaiah 27:6 is *parach*, which means “to

break forth as a bud” and “to fly (as extending the wings).”

### *Almond Bowls*

So far we have taken a look at the shaft, the branches, the knops, and the flowers. Therefore, the last part of the lampstand that we need to study are the bowls. These too were made of gold and then fashioned into the shape of an almond (Exodus 25:33-34).

According to the Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word for “bowls” in Exodus 25:31 is *gebiya*. It is “a goblet” or “the calyx of a flower.” The sepals of a flower, for example, are green and leaf-like. They form a layer that encloses the petals. Basically, it provides a protective covering around the flower, like a green cup that holds the bud. Here we see the spiral pattern once again.

The golden bowls, like an almond cup, held the oil on the lampstand. Without any oil, the lamps would not work. Therefore, the Israelites faithfully offered fresh oil, so the priests could fill them regularly.

God chose the almond tree since it was the first fruit tree to blossom in the spring. Apparently, it can bloom as early as January. The word “almond” comes from a root word meaning “to be alert,” “sleepless,” and “on the lookout” (*shaqad*). This, of course, is a reminder of the parable of the ten virgins. They were “on the lookout” for the bridegroom, but unfortunately only five were prepared.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, it describes the day of the Lord.

It also provides instruction for God's children as the day approaches. Let's go ahead and read the entire passage:

“Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, ‘Peace and safety,’ destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing” (1 Thessalonians 5:1-11).

As children of the day and children of light, we should live accordingly. One day we will not need a lamp since the glory of the Lord will be our continual light, both naturally and spiritually. Revelation 21:23 says, “The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.”

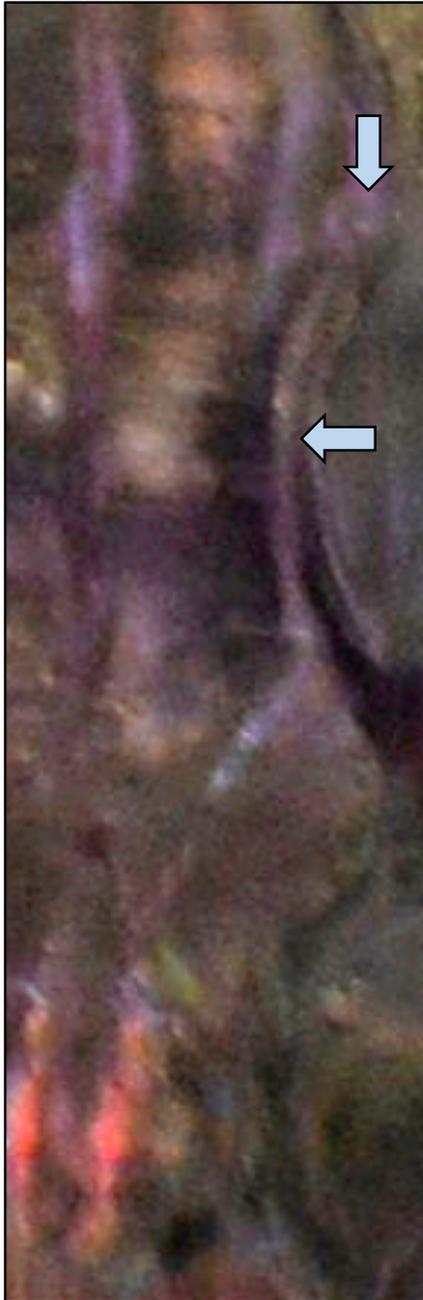
## *Scepter*

You may have noticed that I skipped over a verse in Jacob's blessing. Therefore, let's return to Genesis 49:10 for a moment. In the King James Version, it tells us that "the scepter shall not depart from Ju'-dah...." As already noted, the rulers of Israel came from this tribe, including King David and all his descendants. Jesus, of course, is from this royal line as well. He is the coming ruler who Jacob speaks of in this blessing.

The prophet Isaiah tells us that "there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jes'-se, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots" (Isaiah 11:1, KJV). A "rod," in this verse, is likened to a "branch." And Jesus is The Branch who will bear fruit (NIV). The Lord's fruitfulness is seen in Aaron's rod. The buds, blossoms, and almonds are all a product of God's fruitfulness. And the tree of life is also similar to a rod with its branches and fruit. In Revelation 22:2, the beloved disciple describes this tree. He tells us that it is on each side of the river, probably like a canopy hanging over the green grass. It also produces twelve kinds of fruit.

Let's take a minute to think about a scepter. Interestingly enough, a ruler was considered the shepherd of his people. His scepter was like a rod and staff. On the left side of the Lord (our right), you may have noticed a long arm. In this illustration, it resembles a scepter, a rod, and a staff.

First of all, Isaiah 52:10 tells us that "the Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God."



The first arrow points to Jesus' shoulder.

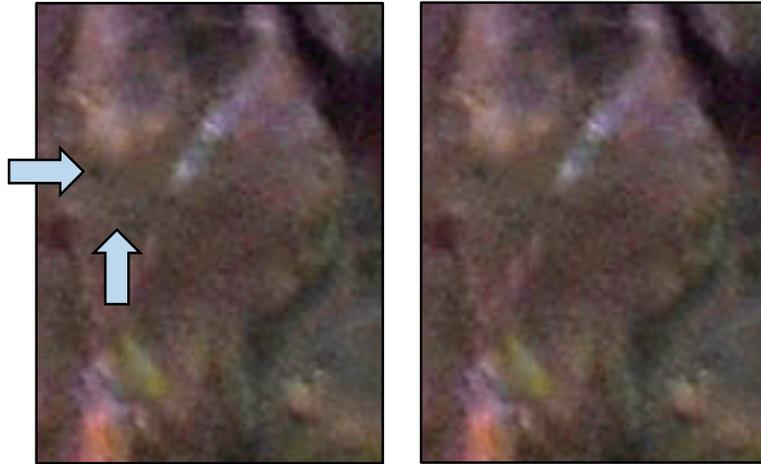
In the second example, His shoulder is the ornamental ball on top of the scepter.

In the third example, His arm is similar to a shepherd's rod. The arrow points to the center of the rod.

In the last example, the rod/staff curves into a hook. It actually becomes a part of a lamb's backside. The tail is a part of the rod. And the curves make up the lamb's behind. There are two little green legs. And the lamb is looking over his shoulder toward us. He is basically looking past his backside.

Jesus, of course, is the Good Shepherd as well as the Lamb of God.

The arrows point to the lamb's eye and nose.



After the soldiers stripped Jesus of His clothing and put a robe around Him, they twisted a crown of thorns for His head and placed a reed in His hand (Matthew 27:29, KJV). The reed was supposed to represent a king's scepter, but little did they know that Jesus was really, truly their King.

Numbers 24:17 tells us that "there shall come a Star out of Ja'-cob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Is'-ra-el..." (KJV). The star reminds me of a flower bursting forth. Remember how blossoms glisten? And the scepter is similar to a tree growing up from the ground. It is like the tree of life bearing fruit, or like Aaron's rod producing flowers and almonds.

In Ezekiel 19:11, the verse describes strong branches fit for scepters of rulers. King David's scepter probably came from a tree. If we go further back in history, his first rod and staff probably came from a tree within his father's pasture. A shepherd boy generally chooses a young sapling

that is dug up from the ground. In his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, Keller explains the personal, yet exciting process. He says that it “is carved and whittled down with great care and patience. The enlarged base of the sapling where its trunk joins the roots is shaped into a smooth, rounded head of hard wood. The sapling itself is shaped to exactly fit the owner’s hand” (112).

Just think of the Lord’s scepter coming from His own root in the ground. Being a carpenter, He would probably carve and whittle it Himself. The scepter, of course, represents Jesus’ rule and reign over all creation. It also represents His resurrection life. No other king that has ever lived, and no other king that will ever live, can make such a claim. Only Jesus has life flowing from His throne. That’s why He is called the King of kings (Revelation 19:16).

### *Throne*

Sometimes, during the process of studying and writing, I need to stop and take a deep breath. The material can be overwhelming at times, and yet it is absolutely beautiful! I imagine that is what God’s throne will be like.

Yesterday morning I came across Psalm 11, which was written by King David. In verse 4, he says, “The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord’s throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men” (KJV).

One day the New Jerusalem will come down out of Heaven to the New Earth (Revelation 21:2). Verse 22 says that “the

Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.” God will dwell among the people (v. 3). His holy temple and His throne will be there, and we will serve Him (22:3).

Currently, the Lord observes and examines everyone on the earth from His throne in Heaven. There is nothing that we can keep hidden from Him. Psalm 11:2 tells us that “the wicked bend their bows; they set their arrows against the strings to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.” What can we do when the enemy tries to harm us (v. 3)? We can trust in the Lord. David explains that “the Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked, those who love violence, he hates with a passion” (v. 5). Unless they repent, unless they receive Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord, they will receive judgment one day (v. 6). If there is one thing that takes place on God’s throne, it is justice. He is fair and just. We have been given time to seek the Lord and find Him. This is His mercy and grace.

So, yesterday I was curious about the word “eyelids.” Verse 4 tells us that “his eyelids try the children of men.” Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word for “eyelids” is *aph’aph*, which means “an eyelash (as fluttering).” Figuratively speaking, it is a “morning ray.” The root word is *umph*, which is “to cover (with wings)” or “to fly.” It also means “to shine forth.” I have never thought of eyelashes that way before. They are like little rays of sunshine as one opens his or her eyes to the light of day. Additionally, they are like the fluttering wings of a bird. Who would have ever guessed that these things would go together? Well, God

would, of course, since He created us!

You may recall that the word for “blossoms” also speaks of the wings of a bird, as well as glistening and gleaming. Psalm 55:6 says, “Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest” (KJV). Our eyes look and see the light. Our hearts yearn for more. We hope for peace, for rest. If only we could fly away into the sunset. Or, better yet, if only we had the wings of a dove to fly into eternal daylight, then we would see our Lord. This is the heart’s cry of God’s children.

Many of the Old Testament believers desired to see the face of God. In his book *Psalms, Volume 1*, James Montgomery Boice asks if this is wishful thinking. But then he replies, “Not at all. Because, when we come to the end of the New Testament, to the letters of the apostle John, who gazed often on the face of the earthly Jesus, we find him promising, ‘When he [that is, the heavenly, glorified Jesus] appears, we shall be like him, for *we shall see him as he is*’ (1 John 3:2, italics added). The upright really will see God’s face” (96).

Let’s read Psalm 11:7 in two translations. The King James Version says, “For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.” Then, in the New International Version, it says, “For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; the upright will see his face.” Don’t you just love this verse? The Lord watches over us with His beautiful face. And one day we will see Him. We will actually see the Lord! What a glorious day that will be.

At this time, I'd like to look at a few details of God's temple, especially His throne. Let's begin with the altar of sacrifice. When the Lord gave Moses instructions for the tabernacle, He said that this altar should be made of shit'-tim wood with an overlay of brass (Exodus 27:1-2, KJV). The wood, I believe, points to the tree of life, while the brass (or bronze) often symbolizes God's judgment. In the New Jerusalem, however, there will no longer be any curse (Revelation 22:3). Therefore, the brazen altar will likely have a more glorious design. I personally think it will be made from wood as well as a gemstone like jasper. Please note the red color on the right.



In the holy place, the table of the Lord and the altar of incense were made of shit'-tim wood (Exodus 37:10, 25, KJV). Instead of brass, however, they had an overlay of pure gold (vv. 11, 26). The wood, once again, points to the tree of life, while the gold represents God's deity and glory. Let's review Numbers 24:17. It says, "There shall come a Star out of Ja'-cob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Is'-ra-el..." (KJV). The star is similar to the gold in the holy

place, while the scepter is like the wood from the tree of life. These things point to God's throne, to His eternal rule and reign over all creation.

Next, we arrive at the lampstand, which was made of pure gold (Exodus 37:17). Once again, this points to the Lord's deity and glory. And we should probably add kingship to the list as well. Where do we find the wood, however? If all the parts of the temple point to the throne, then there has to be wood somewhere in the lampstand. Of course, all life flows from the throne of God. Plus, the tree of life is central in His kingdom. Interestingly enough, within the lampstand, oil flows through the wick (v. 23). Yes, it is the wick! Just like a branch is pruned from the vine (John 15:1-2), so a wick is trimmed using a wick trimmer (NIV) or snuffer (KJV). The trimmed pieces were then placed in a tray (NIV) or a snuffdish (KJV). And all the accessories were made of pure gold (v. 24).

At this point, I have to wonder where the priests emptied the tray. So far I haven't been able to find a definite answer. In Hebrews 9:6, the writer mentions the outer room. Leviticus 1:16 and 6:10-11, however, give a more specific answer for the altar. In these examples, the ashes from the altar of sacrifice were placed on the east side of the altar. Still, I have yet to find the exact location for the wick. By now, you may be wondering why any of this even matters. Well, if the pieces represent how God prunes our lives, then I think it is important to recognize what will become of it all. Yes, I understand that He removes our sins, but I

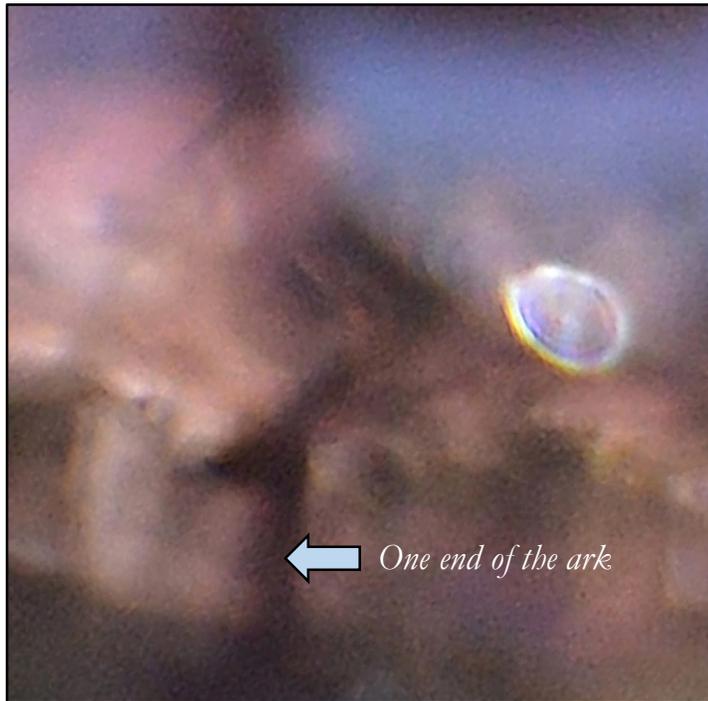
am going to give you a very humble guess. Remember, I am not a scholar, but only a simple student of the Bible.

Therefore, it is my humble opinion that the ashes will be made new one day. During the millennial reign, water will come out from under the threshold of the temple and flow toward the eastern region (Ezekiel 47:1, 8). Wherever the river flows, “swarms of living creatures will live” (v. 9). Life will return. I believe this includes the ashes from all living things. Then, as we transition into His eternal reign, God will make all things new (Revelation 21:5). Whether recreated or made completely new, I do not know for sure. The point is that everything (of God) that once existed will exist again, but it will be in a better condition, in a perfected condition.



The other night for the first time, I noticed a person dressed in purple, holding a bowl. The “whirlwind” makes up the bowl. I believe this represents the bronze pot (or brass pan) that the priests used to remove ashes from the altar of sacrifice (Exodus 27:3). The person is likely a priest. Perhaps it is the Lord serving in the temple. He is on the far right in purple, and he takes up most of the length of the picture. I just noticed another face in the pinkish-white color as well. He, too, is looking at the bowl.

Finally, we have arrived at the ark of the covenant, which I believe represents the throne of God. Revelation 11:19 tells us that “God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.” As previously noted, the long rectangular box in the picture could represent the ark.



The ark of the covenant was made of shit'-tim wood, which comes from a shittah tree, probably the acacia tree (Exodus 25:10, KJV). And there was an overlay of pure gold, both inside and out (v. 11). The atonement cover, which is also called the mercy seat, was also made of pure gold (v. 17). Please note the wheel in the picture. This could represent a flash of lightning.

In Malachi 1:12, the altar is called the “table of the Lord” (KJV). It is my humble opinion that the table could be a part of the heavenly throne. The ark of the covenant and the table may connect to form God’s throne. In the picture below, Jesus is lying down on the altar of sacrifice. On the left, the bread bowl is open, perhaps presenting the Bread of Life at the Lord’s table. The first arrow points to the bread bowl, which is in line with Jesus.



The beloved disciple tells us that “the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city...” (Revelation 22:3). On the right side, we see a lamb that looks like it has been slain. It is on a smaller red altar. The altar of sacrifice then stretches across the picture to form a longer altar for Jesus. I believe this represents the throne of God, as well as the throne of the Lamb.

Every part of the temple serves the Lord in some way. I love the next verse, which was written by the beloved disciple, John. He explains that “we love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19, KJV). Let’s take a look at this

truth in light of service. We could say that we serve Him because He first served us. As a result of Jesus' sacrifice, we have an opportunity to serve Him eternally. As a result of His great love, we can love Him forever. What a blessing!

Let's take a moment to read Revelation 22:3 once again, but this time we will focus on the last phrase. It says that "the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and *his servants will serve him*" (italics added). Our worship and service will be in the heavenly throne room. We will serve the Lord in His temple. Perhaps we will take manna from the tree of life to bake bread or to use as incense. There will be a continual flow of God's glory that shines on His glorious city and beyond. Isaiah 60:3 tells us that nations will come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His dawn.

### *Lawgiver*

At this moment in our study, we are not going to leave God's heavenly throne room. We are, however, going to take a look at it from a slightly different direction.

Let's review Genesis 49:10. In this verse, Jacob tells us that "the sceptre shall not depart from Ju'-dah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet..." (KJV). According to the Strong's Concordance, the Hebrew word for "lawgiver" is *chabaq*, which means "to engrave." It refers to an ancient scribe who would cut (or engrave) the laws into stone or metal tablets. The Ten Commandments suddenly come to mind.

In Exodus 24:1, the Lord tells Moses to "come up to the

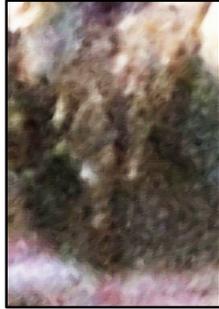
Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.” The people were instructed to worship from a distance, although Moses was allowed to approach the Lord (v. 2). In verse 9, the men went up the mountain where they saw the God of Israel. The King James Version describes it beautifully. It says “there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness” (v. 10, KJV).



In previous examples, I identified the one standing on the purple pavement as a mighty angel (Revelation 10:1) or an angel of the Lord (Genesis 32:24). Another possibility is that it illustrates the Lord Himself.

Please note the sapphire stone, which has a violet color. The violet also makes up the Lord’s head covering, which is His prayer shawl. Therefore, the one standing on the sapphire pavement is standing above Jesus’ face.

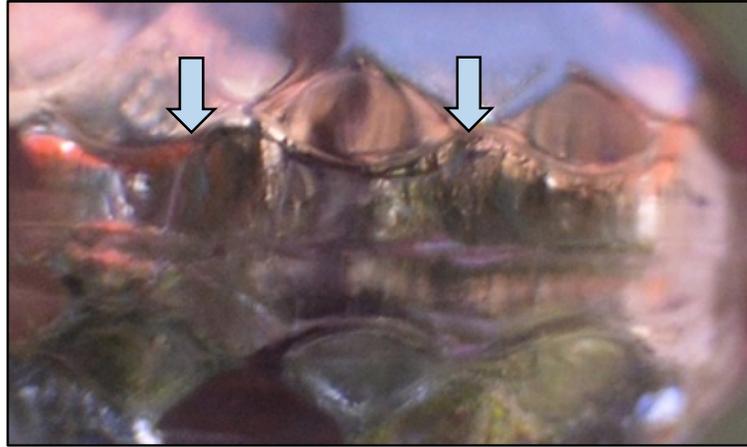
The Hebrew word for “paved” in Exodus 24:10 is *libnah*, which means “transparency” or “paved.” It comes from a root word that means “(altar of) brick or tile.” Therefore, we could think of the sapphire pavement as being a part of the heavenly altar.



And the Hebrew word for “clearness” in Exodus 24:10 is *tobar*, which refers to the “brightness,” “purification,” “clearness,” and “glory.” When they saw the God of Israel standing on the sapphire pavement, He was standing on holy ground. The pavement was clear and bright, and God’s glory was present.

I know I am giving you several words to process, but please hang in there with me. We have one more word to learn for this study. In Exodus 24:12, the Lord tells Moses to “come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written...” (KJV). The Hebrew word for “tables” is *lunach*. Interestingly enough, it means “to glisten.” It also refers to a polished plate or table. Remember how the altar of sacrifice is called the table of the Lord in Malachi 1:12? Well, I am beginning to think that the stone tablets could represent the Lord’s table. Come to think of it, the stone tablets could also represent the altar of sacrifice.

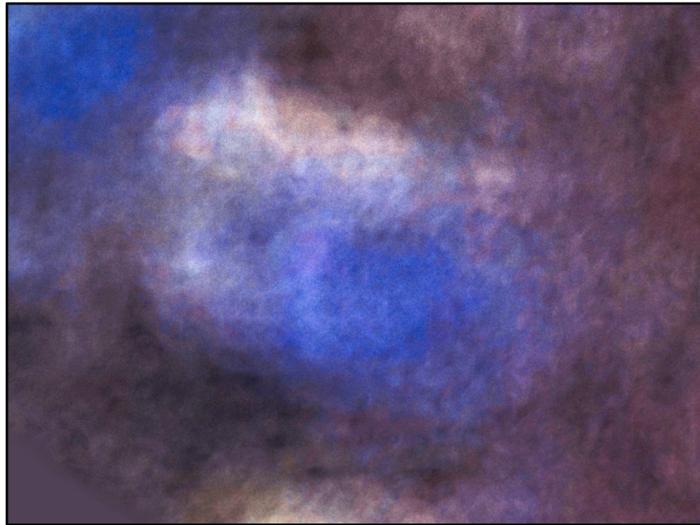
Let's return to Jacob's blessing for a moment. He tells us that "the sceptre shall not depart from Ju'-dah, *nor a lawgiver from between his feet...*" (italics added). In Exodus 24:10, the God of Israel is standing on a pavement of sapphire. He is about to give Moses instructions for the tabernacle. Then He gives him the two stone tablets (31:18). Isn't it fascinating how there are *two* tablets? This is reminiscent of the two stacks of bread and the two onyx stones.



Please note the position of the (1) Shepherd-King on the left and the (2) Lawgiver on the right. The East Gate is in between them, while a full-length picture of the Lord Jesus is below.

I'd like to take a moment to point out how the Law is a part of the written Word. It was placed on "tables." Similarly, the Lord is the Living Word. And He, of course, was placed on a table in a tomb after His death. You may recall how an angel was on either end, which resembles the ark of the covenant. God's throne is such a beautiful illustration of the Lord's death and resurrection!

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” Death, unfortunately, comes through our inability to keep the Law. But Jesus’ perfect life—His ability to fulfill every commandment perfectly, as well as His death and resurrection—these are the things that bring forth life. Jesus is the living, breathing Word of God. John 1:14 says that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” And one day we will stand before His throne, which is a reminder of His great sacrifice. We will dwell with Him forever (Revelation 21:3). We will worship Him forever. We will serve Him and love Him forever. Oh, what a day that will be!



God’s life-giving presence is seen in conjunction with the sapphire stone. We, of course, read about the pavement of sapphire just before the Lord gives Moses the Ten Commandments. We also see the violet-blue color in Jacob’s ladder, as well as in a DNA strand.

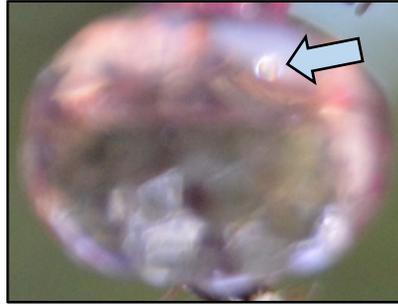
In Ezekiel 1:26, the prophet tells us that the throne had an “appearance of a sapphire stone” (KJV).



Although each image is interesting in its own way, the one above is especially vibrant. To me, it goes along beautifully with Ezekiel’s description of the glory of the Lord. He tells us that it was “like the appearance of a rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day...” (Ezekiel 1:28). You can see the bright purple throne on our left, which likely corresponds with the verse that says “His throne was flaming with fire” (Daniel 7:9).

It is important to note the position of the throne in this photo. It is in the same place as the “wheel” in the other pictures.

*Daniel 7:9 says that the throne’s wheels were all ablaze.*



I came across a lovely description from the Dead Sea Scrolls. I think it sheds some light on this scene as well. The English translation says, “The cherubim bless the image of the Throne-Chariot above the firmament, and they praise the majesty of the fiery firmament beneath the seat of his glory. And between the turning wheels, angels of holiness come and go, as it were a fiery vision of most holy spirits; and about them flow seeming rivulets of fire, like gleaming bronze, a radiance of many gorgeous colors, of marvelous pigments magnificently mingled.”



*God’s throne likely appears as a sapphire stone when the glory of God is revealed in a special way.*

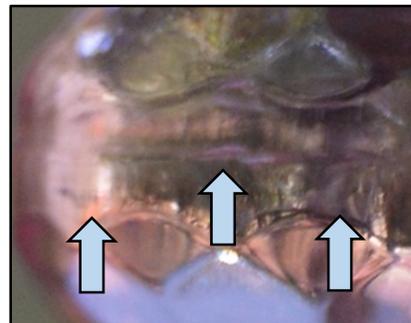
I am happy to say that we are nearing the end of this chapter. And it has been such a lovely journey! I always have mixed feelings when I arrive at this part of the writing process. Of course, it is joyful to share what I have learned, but it also sad to see it come to an end.

Before we move on to the last chapter, I'd like to go ahead and take a look at the three items inside the ark of the covenant. Hebrews 9:4 tells us that it "contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant."

In chapter three, we learned about the pot of manna. The shape of the vial resembles the tree of life. It also contained an omer of manna from Heaven, probably from the heavenly tree. Once again, the gold directs our attention to the glory of God. It is possible that a pot of manna may have a place at the heavenly table in the New Jerusalem. It may be a part of the Lord's table.

Aaron's rod also connects to the tree of life, since it is like one of the branches—The BRANCH! God's glory is seen through its glistening blossoms. It is also visible in the gold lamp that shines brightly for the priests during their service.

*Please note the gold on our left, the wood on our right, and the sapphire in between.*



When the high priest entered the most holy place, the smoke from the censer covered the mercy seat above the tablets of the covenant law (Leviticus 16:12-13). A cloud also covered the mountain when the Lord gave Moses instructions for the tabernacle. The censer and smoke work along with the altar of incense. Every part ministers to the Lord as He sits on His throne.



*Several people are embedded in the sapphire stone, which is within the Lord's prayer shawl in the main picture. The corners on the right-hand side have been touched-up. This was necessary since a magnifying tool was used.*