

Revelation

Chapter Eight



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Revelation 8:1

“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

The Seventh Seal.

The seventh seal is opened.

Silence.

The chapter begins with a moment of silence in heaven, underscoring the gravity of what is about to unfold.

“Jewish commentators affirmed that the Song of Moses, which predominantly predicts the judgment of Israel because of idolatry, caused the whole creation to respond in silence.” **(Beale, G. K.. The Book of Revelation (The New International Greek Testament Commentary) (p. 802). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.)**

“Be silent before my Sovereign HaShem, For the day of HaShem is approaching; For HaShem has prepared a sacrificial feast, has bidden the guests purify themselves.” **(Zephaniah 1:7)**

“Formerly they had disbelieved everything as a result of their sorceries, but at the destruction of their firstborn they acknowledged this people to be the offspring of God. For when profound silence encompassed all things and the night was at midpoint in its swift course, your all-powerful Word leapt from your royal throne in heaven like a relentless warrior into the midst of a land doomed to destruction.” **(Wisdom of Solomon 18:14, New Catholic Bible)**

Half an hour.

It is interesting to see the flow of time in heaven. Hyperliterally, if a day to HaShem is 1000 years, then half an hour would be 20.83 years.

Revelation 8:2

“I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven shofars were given to them.”

Seven Angels.

“I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels who carry up the prayers of the holy ones and go before the glory of the holy one.” (**Tobit 12:15, Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash*, ed. Jacob N. Cerone, trans. Joseph Longarino, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 943.**)

“Joshua son of Nun summoned the priests and said to them, “Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and let seven priests carrying seven ram’s horns precede the Ark of HaShem...while the seven priests bearing the seven ram’s horns marched in front of the Ark of HaShem, blowing the horns as they marched. The vanguard marched in front of them, and the rear guard marched behind the Ark of HaShem, with the horns sounding all the time.” (**Joshua 6:6, 13, cf. Nehemiah 12:41**)

Shofars. The shofars may indicate Rosh HaShanah, also known as Yom HaDin, the Day of Judgment. On this day, the Unetaneh Tokef is read,

"Let us now relate the power of this day's holiness, for it is mighty and frightening. On it Your Kingship will be exalted; Your throne will be firmed with kindness and You will sit upon it in truth. It is true that You alone are the One Who judges, proves, knows, and bears witness; Who writes and seals, Who counts and Who calculates. You will remember all that was forgotten. You will open the Book of Remembrances — it will read itself – and each person's signature^[30] is there. And the great shofar will be sounded and a still, thin voice will be heard. Angels will be frenzied, a trembling and terror will seize them — and they will say, 'Behold, it is the Day of Judgment, to muster the heavenly host for judgment!' — for even they are not guiltless in Your

eyes in judgment. All mankind will pass before You like a flock of sheep. Like a shepherd pasturing his flock, making sheep pass under his staff, so shall You cause to pass, count, calculate, and consider the soul of all the living; and You shall apportion the destinies of all Your creatures and inscribe their verdict. On Rosh Hashanah will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed – how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will die; who will die after a long life^[41] and who before his time; who by water and who by fire, who by sword and who by beast, who by famine and who by thirst, who by upheaval and who by plague, who by strangling and who by stoning. Who will rest and who will wander, who will live in quietude and who will be tormented, who will enjoy tranquility and who will be distressed, who will be impoverished and who will be enriched, who will be degraded and who will be exalted. But Repentance, Prayer, and Charity mitigate the severity of the Decree.” (**Unetaneh Tokef, cited at Wikipedia.org**)

Revelation 8:3

“Another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer. Much incense was given to him, that he should add it to the prayers of all the holy ones on the golden altar which was before the Throne.”

Another angel.

While the angel is unidentified, “sources would point to the messenger being Gabriel (“judgment of El”) as he is associated with fire and bringing judgment upon the earth.”

(Revelation Commentary, 13 Petals.org)

“The angel fulfills a task assigned to a priest in the earthly temple.” (Keener, Craig S.. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set) (p. 745). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

Censer/Golden Altar. The altar of incense in the Holy Place. While the Book of Revelation uses the Greek word λιβανωτός (*libanōtos*) for the censer, it uses θυσιαστήριον (*thysiaστήριον*) for the Altar of Incense. In Hebrews 9, some translations render the word θυμιατήριον (*thymiātērion*) as “Altar of Incense”, which is clearly incorrect. The word simply means “a place

where to burn incense" which can mean *either* the altar of incense or the censer, the latter of which is the meaning there. Furthermore, the Greek Septuagint of 2 Chronicles 26, when describing King Manasseh using the censer in the Temple, uses the exact word that Hebrews does: θυμιατήριον (*thymiatērion*). The Septuagint also uses this word in Ezekiel 8:11, as does Josephus in Antiquities 4.2.4; 8.3.8. Other ancient writers do as well, such as Herodotus 4.162; Thucydides 6.46; Diodorus 13.3; Aelian v. h. 12.51.

“R. Abba said: ‘There are two altars below and two altars above. Of the latter one, the innermost of all, is that on which is offered the inner fine incense, which is the bond of faith, and the most high Priest of all offers this incense with the bond of faith. This is called the Altar of Gold, the place where all the threads of faith are bound together.’” (**Zohar, Vayikra 30b, Soncino Press Edition, cited at 13Petals.org**)

Incense.

See commentary on Revelation 5:8.

“HaShem said to Moses, “Take to yourself sweet spices, gum resin, and onycha, and galbanum; sweet spices with pure frankincense: there shall be an equal weight of each; and you shall make incense of it, a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy: and you shall beat some of it very small, and put some of it before the testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be to you most holy. The incense which you shall make, according to its composition you shall not make for yourselves: it shall be to you holy for HaShem. Whoever shall make any like that, to smell of it, he shall be cut off from his people.”

(Exodus 30:34-38)

Revelation 8:4

“The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the holy ones, went up before God out of the angel’s hand.”

Out of the angel’s hand.

The priests would take the powder of the ketoret and burn it.

“From the hand of the angel before God” indicates that the petition of 6:10 is now being formally presented before God with angelic favor and authority.” (Beale, G. K.. **The Book of Revelation (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)** (p. 815). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.. Kindle Edition.)

“A violent noise arose like thunder. I (Baruch) said, ‘O, Lord, what sort of noise is this?’ And he said to me, ‘At this very moment the angel prince Michael is going down to receive the prayers of human beings.’” (3 Baruch 11 cited at Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash*, ed. Jacob N. Cerone, trans. Joseph Longarino, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 945.)

Revelation 8:5

“The angel took the censer, and he filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it on the earth. There followed thunders, sounds, lightnings, and an earthquake.”

Threw it to the earth.

It appears that the Ketoret, the Prayers, and the Fire ‘congeal’ into the judgments that impact the oceans, fresh waters, foliage and trees just as it did in Egypt. It may be a *middah keneged middah* punishment based on Amos 5:7:

“Seek the LORD and live... you who turn justice to wormwood and throw righteousness to the ground.” (Amos 5:7)

“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried to my G-d; from his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; and the foundations of the mountains moved and were shaken, because he was angry. Smoke went out from his nostrils, and a devouring fire from his mouth; coals were kindled by it. And he bowed the heavens, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he rode on a kerub, and flew; he flew on the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion around him was dark with waters and thick clouds of the skies. Out of the brightness that was before him

his thick clouds passed, hail stones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail stones and coals of fire. And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and confounded them.” (**Psalms 18:6-15**)

“R. Simeon further discoursed on the verse: “And thou shalt make an altar (mizbeah) to burn incense upon” (Ex. XXX, 1). ‘This verse’, he said, ‘raises a problem, for we find that there were two altars, namely, the altar of burnt-offering and the altar of incense, the former the outer altar and the latter the inner one. Now, why was the altar of incense called mizbeah (lit. slaughtering-place), seeing that it had no connection with animal slaughter? The explanation is that this altar was efficacious in defeating and subduing the numerous powers of the “other side”, so as to make them powerless and unable to act as accusers. Hence the name mizbeah (place of slaughter). The “evil side”, when it beheld the smoke of the incense ascending in a pillar, was subdued, and fled, and was quite unable to approach the Tabernacle.” (**Zohar, Shemot 219a-b, Soncino Press Edition, cited at 13Petals.org**)

Thunders, Sounds, Lightnings, Earthquake.

These four are an echo of Mount Sinai.

Revelation 8:6

“The seven angels who had the seven shofars prepared themselves to sound.”

Prepared themselves.

Before one blows a shofar, they say the blessing and inhale deeply.

Revelation 8:7

“The first sounded, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. One third of the earth was burnt up, and one third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.”

Hail and Fire.

"Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as has not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now...Moses stretched out his rod toward the heavens, and HaShem sent thunder, hail, and lightning flashed down to the earth. HaShem rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was very severe hail, and lightning mixed with the hail, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. The hail struck throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and animal, and the hail struck every herb of the field, and broke every tree of the field." (**Exodus 9:18, 23-25**)

"He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land. He struck their vines and fig trees, broke down the trees of their country." (**Psalm 105:32-33, Sefaria.org**)

"R. Judah and R. Nehemiah (both ca. 150). The one said, "Like the peel of a pomegranate, out of which (= through which) its core is seen (the fire is the outer peel and the hail is the core)." (**Exodus Rabbah 75b, cited at Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash*, ed. Jacob N. Cerone, trans. Joseph Longarino, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 946.**)

"This plague echoes the seventh plague in Exodus 9:24-25. The mixture of hail and fire evokes the image in Ex 9:23-24 and Ps 105:32...The mixture with blood here probably evokes the plague of blood (see comment on Rev 8:8-9)." (**Keener, Craig S.. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set) (p. 746). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.**)

"Behold, tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail such as has not been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now' (Exodus 9:18).... However, there will be one like it in the time to come. When? In the days of Gog and Magog, as it is written, ... 'A torrential rain, and great hailstones, fire and sulfur' (Ezekiel 38:2, 22)." (**Exodus Rabbah 12:2 cited in David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary : A Companion Volume to the Jewish New Testament*, electronic ed. (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1996), Re 8:7.**)

Revelation 8:8

“The second angel sounded, and something like a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea. One third of the sea became blood,”

Great burning mountain.

Babylon is called a burning mountain in Jeremiah 51:25, while it is possible this is figurative (i.e. a kingdom whose impact on the ‘sea’ could be referring to nations), it may better be interpreted literally: An asteroid.

Scientists estimate an object about 100m across hits earth every 1,000 years. The Jet Propulsion Laboratory monitors NEOS (Near Earth Objects) and classifies them using an impact prediction system called Sentry. Another method of classification is the Torino Scale, which categorizes the impact hazard associated with near-Earth objects (there is also the Palermo Technical Impact Hazard Scale).

A few notable NEOs:

2023 DZ₂ - diameter ~56 meters) with a 63 day observation arc showed a 1 in 430 chance of impact on 27 March 2026. This was ruled out after further observations, and will safely approach Earth on April 4, 2026. This is during Passover week.

2017 AM₄ - August 1st, 2024, 1 and million chance. During the Three Weeks.

99942 Apophis - Friday, April 13, 2029 (1 week after Passover), it will pass closer than geosynchronous communication



satellites at 19,000 miles. This is about 10 times closer than the Moon. It was given a 2.7% chance of hitting earth in 2029. This has now been ruled out. Visible to the naked eye. Earth will perturb Apophis. Seven years later, it is set to make another pass on March 27, 2036. The name was given by its discoverers who were fans of the show Stargate. It refers to a “god of darkness” and the enemy of the sun. If it were to hit, it would be the equivalent of tens to hundreds of nuclear weapons. There is an issue with this. Non-gravitational acceleration arising from anisotropic thermal re-emission of absorbed radiation, known as the Yarkovsky effect.

On February 28, 2002, CNN published a disturbing article where Geoffrey Sommer, a researcher at the Rand Corp, suggested that if an impact was deemed inevitable, that the authorities do not tell the public, saying, “If an extinction-type impact is inevitable, then ignorance for the populace is bliss.”

2017 BL30 - August 3, 2029.

One third of the sea became blood.

What happened to Egypt on a national level is happening to the world on a global scale.

“HaShem said to Moses, Tell Aaron, Take your rod, and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt, over their rivers, over their streams, and over their pools, and over all their ponds of water, that they may become blood; and there shall be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.” (**Exodus 7:19**)

Revelation 8:9

“and one third of the living creatures which were in the sea died. One third of the ships were destroyed.”

One third of the living creatures in the sea.

“The fish that were in the river died; and the river became foul, and the Egyptians couldn't drink water from the river; and the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt.” (**Exodus**

7:21)

One third of the ships.

Due to a shockwave, or a massive tidal wave as a result of the impact? This would seem to rank a 9 on the Torino scale: “A collision is certain, capable of causing unprecedented regional devastation for a land impact or the threat of a major tsunami for an ocean impact. Such events occur on average between once per 10,000 years and once per 100,000 years.” (**Wikipedia, Torino Scale**)

Revelation 8:10

“The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from the sky, burning like a torch, and it fell on one third of the rivers, and on the springs of the waters.”

A great star fell from the sky.

Not only is a flaming mountain thrown into the sea, but a “star” that hits the freshwater supply. Some hold that this is a historical person, others a celestial being. If this is to be interpreted literally, one may envision a scenario like a scene in a movie where the United States and the governments of the world identify an incoming asteroid set to impact the earth, attempt to intercept it with a nuclear weapon. After the detonation, smaller pieces fragment off, while remaining in trajectory toward earth, thus poisoning the fresh water supply with nuclear radiation. This is pure speculation, but a scenario similar to this one would fulfill the visuals of this verse.

Revelation 8:11

“The name of the star is called Wormwood. One third of the waters became wormwood. Many people died from the waters, because they were made bitter.”

Wormwood.

Ἄψινθος *Apsinthion*. לענה (la'anah) occurs 8 times in the Hebrew Bible. *Artemisia absinthium* and *Artemisia vulgaris* are species native to North Africa and temperate Eurasia.

"Wormwood" is a bitter and toxic plant, often associated with bitterness and calamity in the Old Testament (Jeremiah 9:15; Deuteronomy 29:18). Flowers in the middle of the summer. Absintin is one of the most bitter chemical agents in Absinthe (which can have a distinctive green color). *Artemisia absinthium* contains a neurotoxin named Thujone. The Midrash connects the bitterness to Passover, and wormwood to Tisha b'Av. It is also linked to the lifestyle of Esav (i.e. immorality, based on Proverbs, "her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword").

"Because they forsook my Torah I had set before them. They did not obey Me and they did not follow it . . . Assuredly, thus said HaShem of Hosts, the God of Israel: I am going to feed that people wormwood and make them drink a bitter draft." **(Jeremiah 9:15)**

"Assuredly, thus said HaShem of Hosts concerning the prophets: I am going to make them eat wormwood and drink a bitter draft; for from the prophets of Jerusalem Godlessness has gone forth to the whole land. Thus said HaShem of Hosts: Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They are deluding you, the prophecies they speak are from their own minds, not from the mouth of HaShem." **(Jeremiah 23:15)**

"Like the preceding plague, this judgment alludes to the poisoned water of Exodus 7:20-21, but through a sort of poisoning or embittering agent called "wormwood" (Jer 9:15; 23:15; cf. Jer 8:14), often used figuratively (for idolatry—Deut 29:18; fruits of adultery—Prov 5:4; suffering—Lam 3:19). This plague strikes local freshwater supplies and would naturally worry John's readers in Asia, especially in Laodicea (see comment on Rev 3:15-16).

(Keener, Craig S.. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set) (p. 746). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

The city's name is the same as one of the Ukrainian names for *Artemisia vulgaris*, mugwort or common wormwood: *чорнобиль*, *chornóbyl'* (or more commonly *полин звичайний* *polýn zvycháynyy*, 'common artemisia').^[5] The name is inherited from Proto-Slavic **čьrnobyľ* or Proto-Slavic **čьrnobyľ*, a compound of Proto-Slavic **čьrnъ* 'black' + Proto-Slavic **byľь* 'grass', the parts related to Ukrainian: *чорний*, romanized: *chórnyy*, lit. 'black' and *било* *byló*, 'stalk', so named in distinction to the lighter-stemmed wormwood *A. absinthium*.^[5] **(Chernobyl, Wikipedia)**

"Subsurface water was especially affected by radioactivity in the 30-km zone of evacuation (so called "[exclusion zone](#)"), surrounding the [Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant](#), or CNPP (Kovar &

Herbert, 1998).^[3] The major and most hazardous contaminant from the perspective of hydrological spread was [Strontium-90](#).” (Wikipedia)

One third of the waters.

This is similar to the Waters of Marah, the Waters of Bitterness.

They could not drink of the waters of Marah, because they were bitter (15:23)

“Because they—the children of Israel—were bitter, everything they tasted was bitter to them.”
(Chassidic saying, cited at Chabad.org, Parsha In Depth, Beshalach)

It is also an echo of the judgment of the Sotah:

‘If any man’s wife goes astray, and is unfaithful to him, and a man lies with her carnally . . . and there is no witness against her . . . The priest shall bring her near, and set her before HaShem; and the priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle the priest shall take, and put it into the water. . . He shall make the woman drink the water of bitterness that causes the curse, and the water that causes the curse shall enter into her and become bitter.” **(Numbers 5:12-24)**

Revelation 8:12

“The fourth angel sounded, and one third of the sun was struck, and one third of the moon, and one third of the stars; so that one third of them would be darkened, and the day wouldn’t shine for one third of it, and the night in the same way.”

One third of the sun, moon, stars...struck.

“This plague echoes the ninth plague in Exodus 10:22-23; many ancient texts speak of darkness as a dreaded judgment.” **(Keener, Craig S. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set) (p. 746). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)**

“Although the heavenly lights were cursed on the day of preparation for the Sabbath (of creation, because of Adam’s sin), they were struck לָקוּ (diminished in their luminous power) only after the exit of the Sabbath (= on Sunday, for the sake of the honor of the Sabbath).”

(Genesis Rabbah 8A, cited at Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash*, ed. Jacob N. Cerone, trans. Joseph Longarino, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2021), 947.

“There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars. And upon the earth nations will be confused by the roaring of the sea and its waves. People will lose heart from fear and anticipation of what is overtaking the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to happen, stand straight and lift up your heads, because your salvation is near!” (Luke 21:25-28, *The Tree of Life Version*, Messianic Jewish Family Bible Society)

Revelation 8:13

“I saw, and I heard an eagle, flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe! Woe! Woe!” for those who dwell on the earth, because of the other voices of the shofars of the three angels, who are yet to sound!”

An eagle.

“Eagle, usually a symbol of Rome here used ironically as the herald of Rome’s destruction.”
(*The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, Oxford University Press, pg. 478)

“...the term here could mean (as it often does, including in the *LXX) “vulture,” indicating a bird of prey (see 19:17).” (Keener, Craig S.. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set)* (p. 746). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)

Woe. Woe. Woe.

“The next three trumpets are woes (9.12).” (*The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, Oxford University Press, pg. 479)

“The announcement of three impending woes indicates that as negative as the first four trumpet plagues were, the worst is yet to come. “Woe” often begins a new oracle in *1 Enoch and probably serves a similar function here.” **(Keener, Craig S.. The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set) (p. 746). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.)**