

Psalm 104:1-9

"a psalm of David concerning the constitution of the world," or a hymn of creation.

It is often taken to be Adam's song, sung outside the closed gates of Eden from which he has been expelled. It touches on each day of creation.

Observant Jews recite Psalm 104 in its entirety every day during morning services, and on certain occasions, such as the New Moon.

This is paired with Numbers 19 about the Red Heifer sacrifice. Probably because of verse

Psalm 104:1-2 - "Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:"

- **Isaiah 40:22** - "He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth; its dwellers are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to live in."

- **Jeremiah 10:12** - "God made the earth by His power; He established the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding."

The heavens enlightened by the celestial orbs suspended in it, as the holy tabernacle was by the lamps of the golden lampstand.

- **Genesis 1:3** - "And God said, Let there be light, and there was light."

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. And Jesus, the Son of his love, is the Light of the world.

God is "clothed" with honor, majesty, light and "the heavens."

In fact, Creation is the garment with which God has invested himself.

Similar in **Psalm 93:1** (NET) - "The LORD reigns! He is robed in majesty, the LORD is robed, he wears strength around his waist. Indeed, the world is established, it cannot be moved."

Psalm 104:3 - "Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

Clouds - in these sometimes God rides to execute judgment on his enemies, Isaiah 19:1 and in these sometimes he appears in a way of grace and mercy to his people, **Exodus 13:21**, in these, as in chariots, Christ went up to heaven; and in these will he come a second time; and into these will the saints be caught up to meet the Lord in the air at his

coming, **Acts 1:9**.

The Targum is, "upon the swift clouds, like the wings of an eagle"

In **Genesis 15**, God directs Abram's attention towards the stars, declaring that his descendants should be like them. The relationship between Abram's descendants and the stars goes beyond numbers alone. The stars of heaven, created on the fourth day, are not merely characterized by their numerousness, but also by their role as rulers and light-givers (**Genesis 1:14-19**). Some have suggested a relationship between the blessings upon the sons of Jacob and the tribes in **Genesis 49** and **Deuteronomy 33**, the organization of the camp in Numbers, and the signs of the zodiac. Abram's descendants, like countless stars, shall serve as a sort of celestial people, exercising God's rule over the earth (cf. **Numbers 24:17**).

The stars are also bearers of light and are related to the angels as the sons of YHWH (cf. **Job 38:7**; **Psalm 104:4**). The descendants of Abram will be sons of YHWH, light-giving rulers like the angels. This is a theme that is taken up in such places as **Daniel 12:3**, where the resurrected righteous shine like stars. Christians are called to be like celestial lights (**Philippians 2:15**; **Matthew 13:43**). As the salt and light of the world, we fulfilments of the Abrahamic promise of seed like the sand and the stars. The promise that Abram's descendants would be like the stars of heaven for multitude is one that is recalled at various points during the Exodus (**Exodus 32:13**; **Deuteronomy 1:10**; **10:22**), Moses declaring the multitude of the children of Israel to be a fulfilment of that promise.

<https://alastairadversaria.com/2013/02/18/abrams-sure-covenant-of-exodus-40-days-of-exoduses-5/>

Even deeper, this could also be talking about the light which no man can approach unto, as it is called **1 Timothy 6:16**.

Psalm 104:4 - "Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:"

Quoted in Hebrews:

- **Hebrews 1:6-7** - "And again, when God brings His firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all God's angels worship Him.' Now about the angels He says: 'He makes His angels winds, His servants flames of fire.'"

The Targum has, "he maketh his messengers, or angels, swift as the wind, his ministers strong as flaming fire"

Ministers = *shâraṯh* - those who serve, a word usually referring to the priests ministering in the Tabernacle. Used for both angels and priests.

Actually, this phrase can be interpreted to mean "the elements of wind and fire do His bidding to execute His purpose."

Or as the New Jerusalem Bible: "appointing the winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants"

But John Gill says, "but this sense is contrary to the order of the words, and the design of them, and to the apostle's sense of them, **Hebrews 1:7** which is confirmed by the Targum, Septuagint, and all the Oriental versions."

In reality, the text can probably be interpreted either way.

Rashi has it both ways:"lit. He makes His messengers winds. He makes the wind His messengers."

The flaming fire is associated with the awesome presence of God as on Mt. Sinai and also with punishment. In **Revelation 1:14** Jesus is described as having eyes like a flame of fire.

Isaiah 66:15 - "See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bringdown his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire."

Jeremiah 23:29 - "Is not my word like fire, says the LORD, and like a hammer which breaks the rock in pieces" (Although the Hebrew here has only "fire", the LXX has "flaming fire" the exact same phrase as in **Ps 104:4**).

We have previously talked about fire in the symbolism of the threshing floor - the fire burns up the chaff as part of the process. The flames of fire over the heads of the apostles at Pentecost reflect this idea.

But now we see an additional type (since this Psalm is paired with **Numbers 19**) - the burning of the Red Heifer, in which we participate as the female Red Heifer/ Bride / Body of Christ.

The Red Heifer was wholly burned.

To become "flames of fire" suggests we are completely consumed as a burnt offering in dedication to God, that preaching the cross in humility (the hyssop) and love combined with the sprinkling of the water/ Spirit serves to reproduce spiritually that cleansing in which those who repent and believe are sprinkled with the waters of separation made from the ashes of the Red Heifer.

The Ashes created from the intense fire and burning of he Red Heifer were set apart in a clean place, but then divided into three parts - one part remained on the Mount of Olives in a deep niche or recess in the wall of a clean cave prepared for it, another was placed in a similar niche in the eastern wall of the Temple, and the third was distributed to the Levites, to use to mix with the previous ashes from he nine Red Heifers, then with the waters of Siloam to create the waters that cleansed from the defilement of touching a dead body, and from sin.

Spiritually this is realized in Christ's presence in Heaven - reflecting the portion laid up in the wall of the Temple, his presence in us as his Bride/Body on earth, reflected in the part distributed to the 24 courses of Levites, and the Body we partake of in the afikomen/ Lord's Supper.

Psalm 104:5 - "Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever (*olam*)."

Nor will it be until the dissolution of all things, when it shall flee away before the face of the Judge, and a new earth shall succeed it (**Revelation 20:11**). This earth is not eternal.

Psalm 104:6 - "Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains."

At which time the earth was "without form, and void." The reference is to **Genesis 1:2**; where, in the account of the work of creation, what is there called "the deep" - the abyss - (the same Hebrew word as here - תְּהוֹמִים *tehôm* - covered the earth, or was what "appeared," or was manifest, before the waters were collected into seas, and the dry land was seen.

Psalm 104:7-8 - "At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them."

- **Genesis 1:9** - "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear, and it was so."

Psalm 104:9 - "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth."

The Targum adds, "Thou hast set a bound to the rolling waves of the sea."

The waters did turn again and cover the earth at the time of the flood; but never shall again. (**Genesis 8:21, Genesis 9:11**)

- **Isaiah 54:8-19** - "'In a surge of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you,' says the LORD your Redeemer. 'For to Me this is like the days of Noah, when I swore that the waters of Noah would never again cover the earth. So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you or rebuke you. Though the mountains may be removed and the hills may be shaken, My loving devotion will not depart from you, and My covenant of peace will not be broken,' says the LORD, who has compassion on you."