

## CHAPTER THREE: THE “FOUR HORSEMEN”

The prophecy called, “The four horsemen of the Apocalypse” is often misunderstood because it is read only in the context of the book of Revelation. However, after the symbols used in this book are traced back to the Old Testament, John’s vision is easily understood. The Apostle was Jewish, and his vision was based on symbolism found in the book of Zechariah. Zechariah’s name means “Yah has remembered.” His prophecies were written after Israel had returned from the Babylonian captivity. The symbolism of the prophet’s vision is connected to the return of Israel from this Diaspora—and their final return in the last days.

### RETURN FROM BABYLON

Zechariah records two different visions of “horses” in his book. The first vision corresponds to the Zionist movement that he had recently witnessed. We read:

“Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will

shew thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten [70] years?" (Zechariah 1:7-12)

Zechariah had this vision in "the second year of Darius." Darius was a Meda-Persian king who ruled Palestine when the return from the first Diaspora was being completed. After Zechariah asks for the interpretation of this vision, an angel interprets these "horses" as "**These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.**"

In the Hebrew, the word "earth" comes from a word that means "land or earth".<sup>1</sup> It does not necessarily mean the entire world, but can mean "a region of land." Zechariah had just witnessed the return of the Babylonian captives, and also those who were scattered throughout the Middle East. Thus this phrase had a familiar meaning to him—his own people had literally traveled, "back and forth throughout the land" as the horses in his vision.

A horse in ancient times was the primary mode of transportation; therefore they are a perfect symbol for the returning exiles, who had recently returned to their homeland. In the interpretation of this vision, the words of the angel prove these horses are symbolic of the first Zionist movement. We read:

"...how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these **seventy years?**"

Seventy years was the length of the Babylonian captivity—the period of time when God had indignation against His people. Thus the angelic interpretation of this passage ties the first return of Israel to these "horses."

When the prophet looks at these horses, they are standing among myrtle trees. This is a common tree in Palestine. This component of this vision attests to the fact that the rider, and these horses, had returned to Jewish soil.

Zechariah continued to write words in the remainder of this chapter that *connect* these "horses" to the first Zionist movement. The words that follow are part of the same vision; therefore the same subject. We read:

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<sup>1</sup> אֶרֶץ 'erets

“Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.” (Zechariah 1:16-17)

The restoration of the Jewish Temple occurs after the “horses” return. If these “horses” (in a symbolic sense) brought the exiles home, it is logical that God would promise the restoration of His Temple.

After this, Zechariah continued to describe the Jewish immigration to Israel:

“Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the LORD shewed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.” (Zechariah 1:18-21)

We read: “These are the horns which have scattered Judah.” The “four horns” that scattered Israel are connected to the “four horses” that bring them home. Thus the *entire first* chapter of Zechariah describes the return of the exiled peoples of Israel, including the “horses” in the prophet’s vision.

## **The Return in the Last Days**

Zechariah wrote about a similar vision of “horses” in chapter 6. Since there have been two returns of Israel in history, this second vision is obviously a prediction of their second return to Palestine:

“And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of

all the earth. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country." (Zechariah 6:1-8)

The interpretation of these "horses" is clearly given in this vision. Zechariah asked the angel: "what are these, my lord?," and the angel responded: "**These are the four spirits of the heavens ...**" The word "spirit" comes from a Hebrew word that means "a wind, or breath<sup>2</sup>." Therefore, this passage can be translated: "these are the four *winds* of heaven..."

The first vision defined these horses as "**those whom the LORD sent to walk to and fro in the earth.**" In this second vision, God defined these horses as "**the four winds of heaven.**" Prior to this, Zechariah defined the "four winds" as the *four corners of the earth or the four directions* to which the exiles of Israel were scattered:

"And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. Come, come, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon." (Zechariah 2:4-7)

This passage is a prophecy of the second Zionist movement, since this return ends with a time of universal peace on the earth, when the Son of David will rule in Jerusalem:

"A

nd many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee." (Zechariah 2:11)

The "four winds of heaven" is a Biblical term used for the scattering and re-gathering of Israel. Compare these passages:

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<sup>2</sup> רוח *ruwach*

“These [horses] are the four spirits (רוּחַ *ruwach*, winds) of the heavens”  
(Zechariah 6:5)

“I have spread you abroad as the four winds (רוּחַ *ruwach*) of the  
heaven” (Zechariah 2:6)

The term used in both Scriptures is identical. God had previously told Zechariah that his people would return from *the four winds of heaven*, and afterwards the “horses” are defined as these four winds.

Throughout the Bible, the phrase “four winds of heaven” is used many times to describe Israel’s exile, and return. The prophet Ezekiel wrote:

“Then said he unto me, Prophecy unto the wind, prophecy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophecy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.” (Ezekiel 37:6-12)

The breath of God breathes from the “four winds” to resurrect the dead bones of Israel, as the “four horses” transport the Jewish people home. If the phrase “four winds” is linked to the return of Israel—and the horses are defined as the “four winds”—they are one and the same. Therefore, the four “horses” in the book of Revelation should have the same interpretation.

## **THE HORSES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

The “horses” in John’s vision predict events that will take place as the second Zionist movement occurs. As each “seal” is opened—and each “horse” comes forth—these events act as a countdown for the Judgment Day of God. From the book of Zechariah, we learn that these events will take place in *specific* geographic locations.

Before we compare Zechariah’s prophecy to the book of Revelation, the vision of the “seven seals” should be understood. The majority of people

believe that the Great Tribulation *begins* when the first “seal” is opened. A closer examination of the symbolism however, brings us to a different conclusion.

John sees a vision of a scroll in heaven, sealed with seven seals. This scroll is obviously symbolic of the Judgment of God. There is a similar scroll in the book of Ezekiel. In chapter two, we read about a scroll that is filled with “woe” that would fall upon Israel (Ezekiel 2:10.) The “scroll” in Revelation is similar; only it predicts “woe” the entire world will experience in the last days.

As stated, the scroll in Revelation is sealed with “seven seals.” A seal on a scroll consisted of hot wax that contained a stamp with the insignia of a king or magistrate. These “seals” held the scroll *closed*. This is an important point. The scroll of judgment is sealed **shut**, and *cannot* be opened and read until **ALL seven seals** are removed.

If the Judgment of God *begins* when this scroll is opened, the “seven seals” must correspond to events that will occur as the Great Tribulation is approaching. And, since these horses are symbolic of the return of the Jewish exiles, the events of the first four “seals” occur as the second Zionist movement is taking place—prior to the Great Tribulation.

When the Scroll of Judgment is finally opened, fire immediately falls on the earth (Revelation 8:1-7.) This is the *beginning* of the Great Tribulation.

## SEAL #1: THE WHITE HORSE

In John’s vision, the first “horse” that comes forth is one<sup>3</sup> of the *white* “horses” of Zechariah 6:

“And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four Beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” (Revelation 6:1-2)

The word “conquer” in this verse comes from a Greek word<sup>4</sup> which means: “to conquer; to carry off the victory, to come off victorious” (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon.) The rider on this horse brings victory, and liberates the people of God. Since this “horse” is a symbol for the return of the exiles, this rider obviously brings victory to Jews over their oppressors, allowing them to return home. Zechariah specifies the region of land where this “victory” will occur:

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the “lead horse,” pulling a “chariot full of horses.”

<sup>4</sup> νικάω *nikao*

“The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them...” (Zechariah 6:6)

The chariots full of white and black “horses” go forth into “the north country.” The horses are being delivered to this region to transport the Jewish people home—after victory has been achieved. In a *similar* manner<sup>5</sup>, the Lord will return to deliver Israel riding on a white horse (Revelation 19:11-15.) After comparing Revelation to Zechariah, it is evident the white horse in John's vision brings victory to the exiles of Israel that dwell in the lands north of Israel.

The prophet Jeremiah also predicted there would be a great deliverance of exiles in this region:

“Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.” (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

“Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.” (Jeremiah 31:8)

The context of Jeremiah is the latter days, since He wrote that “Jacob's trouble” (the Great Tribulation) would occur at this time (Jeremiah 30:7.) Obviously, Jeremiah, and Zechariah predict the same thing. A large number of exiles will return from the “north country” in the end time.

The lands due north of Israel are Russia, and the former republics of the Soviet Union. For decades, the Jewish people in this region were oppressed, and were prevented from immigrating to Israel. But after the fall of the Soviet Union, these Jews were freed. They had “obtained the victory” over their oppressors “in the north country.”

We read that this rider on the white horse is “victorious” *once*, then “carries off the victory” *again*. This implies more than one influx of Jewish immigrants from this region, and reflects current history.

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<sup>5</sup> A different prophecy, which takes place at the *end* of the Great Tribulation, yet the symbolism is the same.

## SEAL #2: THE RED HORSE

The “red horse” of John's vision will cause the men of the earth to kill each other:

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second Beast say, Come and see. 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.” (Revelation 6:3-4)

In this passage, the phrase “great sword” comes from two Greek words. The first is *megas* [μέγας], which means “great.” The second word is *machaira* [μάχαιρα], which means “a large knife.” Let's read this prophecy again, with these definitions added:

“And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second Beast say, Come and see. 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, large knife.”

This rider was given “a great, large knife.” This is not a symbol that one would use if conventional military conflicts were the subject. Instead of a “great sword,” a *small weapon* is used, causing great bloodshed between men. John's prophecy could occur in Israel, the Middle East, or the entire world, since the prophet Zechariah did not identify the destination of the “red horse,” as he did with every other horse in his vision.

When we look at recent history, we discover that about the same time the Soviet Union fell, the Intifada (the Arab uprising in Israel) began. Terrorist attacks increased in Israel exponentially.

A “large knife” is the perfect symbol for this terrorist uprising. These attacks cause great bloodshed, while using small weapons. When small, heinous acts are committed, this fuels the fire for large military responses; bringing death, and destruction upon many, although many times it is warranted.

These terrorist attacks have occurred as the red “horse” brings the Jewish exiles home. A timeline from the web site [www.infoisrael.net](http://www.infoisrael.net), reveals that the Intifada began about the same time that many Jews were freed from the captivity of communist Russia:



"1987 CE Intifada begins

1989 CE Beginning of mass immigration from countries of the former Soviet Union (up to 60,000 annually)."

Terrorism is provoking people throughout the world to kill one another. Therefore, it is not conventional weaponry normally used by armies that are causing great bloodshed, but smaller weapons: suicide bombings, mortar attacks, and cutting off heads with large knives.

### **SEAL #3: THE BLACK HORSE**

After the third seal is removed, the "black horse" comes forth, bringing economic chaos:

"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third Beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four Beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine." (Revelation 6:5-6)

As we had previously read, the "black horse" goes into the North Country:

"The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them ..." (Zechariah 6:6)

The black horses travel to the same region as the "white horses." In Revelation, John predicted that an economic catastrophe will occur in this region, as these "horses" go forth. As previously noted, the lands due north of Israel are Russia, and the former Soviet Union.

Throughout the 1980's, and 1990's, signs could be seen outside of synagogues saying: "Free Soviet Jewry!" After communism fell, the emigration of Jews from this region coincided with an economic depression. These economic hardships—and AntiSemitism (some Russians blamed Jews for the economy)—have convinced many Jews to leave Russia, and return to Israel:

“Reports from Russia say there has been a big increase in the number of Jews emigrating to Israel ....the increase was mainly owing to Russia's economic problems and political instability.” (From: *INCREASED JEWISH EMIGRATION FROM RUSSIA*. Saturday, January 8, 2000, BBC World News.)

The prophesied depression of the fourth seal exactly matches the economic conditions of Russia during the late 1990's. The Apostle John heard these words in his vision:

“A measure of wheat for a penny, three measures of barley for a penny.”

The Greek word for “penny” is *denarion* [δηνάριον.] In Matthew 20:2, we find that this was equivalent to one day's wage. A comparison of Revelation with Zechariah reveals that a depression will occur in the “north country” so severe that an entire day's wage will purchase a “measure of wheat” (or a loaf of bread.) At the height of the Russian depression, food was so scarce that the conditions of this prophecy were easily met:

“The minimum monthly wage would now buy just one litre of vegetable oil, two cans of stew and a loaf of bread in Moscow.” (From: *PANIC BUYING HITS RUSSIA*. Tuesday, September 8, 1998, BBC World News,)

In John's vision, he also heard the words:

“hurt not the oil and the wine.”

This element of John's prophecy also describes the economic depression that hit Russia. Russia traded some of its petroleum reserves for staple products—among them oil, and wine—to pass out to its citizens during the cold winter months. As John predicted, “oil and wine” were something that this depression did not affect. These goods were dispensed as relief from the government:

“Mr. Gavrilesco said Romania had offered to provide large amounts of wheat, flour, soya beans, meat, edible oil and wine, which Russia said it could pay for with crude oil and gas -- either immediately or during the winter months.” (From: *ROMANIA AND RUSSIA TO SWAP FOOD FOR FUEL*. Friday, October 23, 1998, BBC World News, )

The Russian depression during the 1990's could easily be a fulfillment of the third "seal." *More than* a day's wage paid for a loaf of bread, and oil and wine were commodities made available through the government. This economic depression convinced many Jews who dwelt in the "north country" to return to Israel. The "black horse" brought them home.

#### **SEAL #4: THE "YELLOW-GREEN" HORSE**

In the Greek, the word "pale" comes from the word *χλωρός* [*chloros*], which means, "greenish yellow." By process of elimination, this "greenish yellow" horse of Revelation corresponds to the "grisled, and bay" horses of Zechariah chapter six. In Revelation, we read:

"And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth Beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the Beasts of the earth." (Revelation 6:7-9)

The word "grisled" comes from the Hebrew word *בָּרָד* [*barod*,] which means "marked," and "bay" is from *אָמוֹץ* [*amots*], which means "strong." As stated, the "Pale" or "greenish-yellow" horse corresponds to the chariot full of "marked, and strong horses" in Zechariah's vision. These "horses" were sent into the "south country":

"...the grisled (marked) go forth toward the south country. And the bay (strong) went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth." (Zechariah 6:6)

The "marked," and "strong" horses go into the south country, and from this region they walk "to and fro the earth (or land.)" The region due south of Israel is Ethiopia. From this location, it is obvious that these horses would walk "back and forth" throughout the continent of Africa.

As the "greenish-yellow horses" walk back and forth, great suffering comes upon "one fourth of the earth." Many who have read this passage believe it teaches: "one-fourth of the world will be *killed*." This is not what this prophecy asserts. The term "fourth part of the earth" is identifying *landmass*, not population. The continent of Africa can easily be described as "one-fourth" of

the then known world. Therefore, after the "fourth seal," is opened, we should look for several events to occur in this region:

—**Many will be killed "with the sword."** In this passage, the Greek word *rhomphaia* [ῥομφαία] is used, which means a "large sword," instead of *machaira* [μάχαιρα,] which means, "a large knife." "A large sword" is an obvious symbol for conventional warfare. During the past few decades, wars have been taking place in Africa at an alarming rate. Genocide has occurred in many countries, such as Rwanda:

"WASHINGTON - President George W. Bush called the 1994 genocide of a half-million people in Rwanda "one of the most significant tragedies in modern history" and said the United States would give any help the country wants to help track down those responsible." (From: *BUSH OFFERS TO HELP CATCH RWANDA CRIMINALS*. June 01, 2006, Military.com)

—**Many will be killed "with hunger."** Without argument, Africa has been experiencing some of the worst famines in the history of the world:

"KHARTOUM (Reuters)...Since 2003, at least 200,000 people in Darfur have died from bullets, hunger or disease, 2.5 million have been thrown out of their homes, many burned to the ground, and hundreds of women have been raped, mainly by Arab militia after a rebellion broke out." (From: *SECURITY COUNCIL PANEL IN SUDAN FOR DARFUR TALKS*. By Evelyn Leopold. Boston News.com, June 5, 2006)

"Fourteen million people-half of them children-face starvation in Africa. But freelance health worker Anne Lloyd who has just come back after a three-week fact finding mission to the region of Oxfam, warns that poor sanitation and disease will account for many deaths. She said cholera, malaria, diarrhea, TB and measles will kill the already weakened people, particularly those who are already suffering from Aids/HIV." (From: *DISEASE WILL RAVAGE FAMINE TORN AFRICA*. Saturday, 3 August, 2002, BBC News.)

—**Many will be killed “with death.”** This phrase is obviously a term for plagues, because plagues bring death. Today, diseases in Africa—such as AIDS—kill millions of people:

“AIDS could kill 31 million people in India and 18 million in China by according to projections by U.N. population researchers. By then in Africa, where AIDS likely began and where the virus has wrought the most devastation, researchers said the toll could reach 100 million. “It is the worst and deadliest epidemic that humankind has ever experienced,” Mark Stirling, the director of East and Southern Africa for UNAIDS, said in an interview.” (From: AIDS TOLL MAY REACH 100 MILLION IN AFRICA. June 3, 2006. By Terry Leonard, Associated Press)

—**Many will be killed “with the Beasts of the earth.”** The word translated “Beasts” comes from the Greek word *therion* [θηρίον.] This word can be used for snakes in the Greek language. For instance, we read that the snake that bit Paul is called “a Beast”:

“And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous Beast [*therion* θηρίον] hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the Beast into the fire, and felt no harm.” (Acts 28:5)

As the African bush is being destroyed, many snakes are finding their way into populated areas. This has brought an epidemic of fatal snake bites to this continent:

“Snake bites constitute a serious public health problem and a medico-surgical emergency in Africa. Annually, the number of accidents involving snakes reaches one million, resulting in 600,000 envenomations and more than 20,000 deaths.” (From: FINNISH INSTITUTE OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH (1/04/2001; from African Newsletter 1/2000 p. 12-15.)

All of the events of the “fourth seal” have been occurring for the past decade or more. At the same time, Jews are returning to Israel from the African

continent. John's "greenish-yellow" horse is the color of the African bush, and many Jews have returned from this this region. Recently, there has been a large emigration from the country of Ethiopia (BBC World News, Wednesday, June 23, 1999.) Clearly, all four horses have come forth, because these same events have occurred during the second Zionist movement.

### **SEAL #5: CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION**

The "Fifth seal" on the "scroll of Judgment" predicts that Christians will be persecuted, and killed throughout the world:

"And when he had opened the fifth seal, 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 they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Revelation 6:9-11)

We are now witnessing the killing and imprisonment of many Christians for their faith in countries such as China, Indonesia, and throughout the Middle East. There have also been Christians killed by gunmen as they were worshiping in their churches or seminaries. During the past decade, these incidences have been reported in my countries—including the United States. Furthermore, many Muslim nations have adopted strict Islamic "blasphemy" laws. If Islam is not confessed, a Christian can receive the death penalty.

*It appears that the fifth seal has now been opened.*