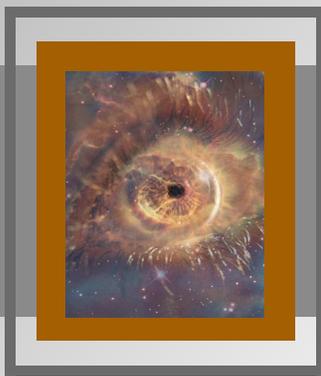


VISIO



DIVINA

The Wisdom of Contemplative Vision

HYMN FOR MELCHIZEDEK

Psalm 110

The anthology of the Psalms holds many mysterious and historical treasures. This ancient hymnal, preserved in many manuscripts, is not always fully understood nor is it complete. Puzzles and questions remain as scholars work to repair damage or clarify obscure passages. Psalm 110 is one example. It was used by the early followers of Yeshua and mentions the enigmatic figure, Melchizedek who initiated Abraham and Sarah in their travels.

Because of its uniqueness, the British scholar Margaret Barker has devoted time to its reconstruction as a hymn used by the first Temple Jewish mystics of the early Christian Era. Although the original Hebrew text is now somewhat corrupted, making a number of verses hard to understand, possible reconstructions can be made based upon textual evidence and archaeology, which has been an important focus for Margaret Barker.

Strikingly, this Psalm may be speaking about “secret” experiences taking place in the ancient Holy of Holies within Solomon’s original temple. A stream of mystical tradition treats these experiences as templates for the transformation of human beings behind the veil when individuals were being initiated as “priests after the ancient Order of Melchizedek.” The early such as the Book of Hebrews believed that Yeshua offered this priesthood to all who followed him. The “priesthood of all believers” was meant not for the elite few, but for anyone who followed Yeshua’s path.

The first verses of this Psalm makes clear that God is creating a “royal priesthood” from those who are

birthed and begotten and not simply made or created. This birth gives rise to beings who possess the royalty of the divine nature which is later described in early Christianity as *theosis* (or the divinization of a human being through the gift of the divine Spirit). Humans were meant to become God-like creatures, possessing the divine nature as royal beings. According to the ancient imagery, they were invited to sit in Wisdom’s lap as she sat on her throne. There they were called “dew from the morning.”

This was the mysterious birth of humans into divine form. In early Christian theology it was understood not simply to be an experience exclusive to Yeshua, but offered to all. He explained this to Nichodemus in St. John’s well known third chapter of that Gospel. It was a birth “from above,” from out of transcendence along the vertical axis and from the divine womb of wisdom which is enthroned as the Mother of all such births. This is also in fulfillment of a promise made to us out of a divine Desire from Eternity.

The Holy of Holies was said not just to be the birth-chamber where human beings were born as children into the divine Realm, it was also seen as the bridal chamber where they were later raised up by Wisdom in divine marriage. In that capacity they will serve the earth and its peoples not simply as kings and queens but as servants and priests—keepers of wisdom and the holy mysteries.

These mysteries were believed to be encoded in this ancient Psalm. The day of birth is the day of “counterpoise” when human beings begin to live fully along both the horizontal and the vertical axes. From the birth chamber they move toward the bridal

chamber into their full priesthood. There are many other mysteries encoded in this Psalm pointing toward a victorious conclusion that is little understood, but suggested as a personal release from bondage into a destiny where evil itself will be decapitated and injustices righted because political power will be subsumed into something greater.

Reflections on Image and Text:

1. *Note that this Psalm has been rendered as gender inclusive in a contemporary style of poetry. As you read through the Psalm, reflect on your first impressions. Journal them.*
2. *The reconstruction of this psalm help us to understand the ancient traditions of Jewish mysticism and the teachings of Yeshua and early Christianity. From your own reflection, how would describe this Psalm's teaching to a friend?*
3. *Research and draw a simple diagram of Solomon's first temple and describe the Holy of Holies and its furnishings.*
4. *Early Christianity understood this chamber to be both a birth chamber and be bridal chamber. How would you relate this to Yeshua's discussion with Nichodemus in John 3? Describe Yeshua's teaching from this chapter in your own words.*
5. *Do a biblical study on the figure of Melchizedek mentioned in Genesis 14:18-20, Hebrews 5:6, 10, 6:20, 7:1-28. Then gaze at the image that illustrates the Genesis passage. What do you find in it?*
6. *When you look at the other images created to illuminate this text and its mystical meanings, what strikes you? What do you see that gives you insight into the teachings related to this psalm?*

A Place for Notes and Reflections

—This reflection, text and its illuminations have been provided by Alison Hine and Lynn Bauman as a means of contemplative prayer.

LECTIO DIVINA

The Contemplative Reading of a Sapiential Text

PSALM 110

Divine Vocation in the Midst of Chaos

1. *A secret word was spoken to a king and queen by God,
 “Sit here at my right hand,” God said,
 “until your enemies are safely underfoot,*
2. *Then take this scepter from my hand
 and rule amid the chaos from this throne.*
3. *For since the day of your own birth your
 heritage was always royalty and beauty
Born in holiness,
 and fresh like dew arising in the morning.”*
4. *This is the vow God gave to us, an oath that’s kept,
 a promise made,
For you are also known as priests
 whose ancient order is Melchizedek, the “royal righteous.”*
5. *It is the Lord who stands at your right hand,
 who on this day of counterpoise will strike and slay with sword
 all royalties and loyalties that have dominion over you.*
6. *The bodies of the dead will pile high,
 and all their evil heads will roll,
 decapitated in defeat.*
7. *Then from the flowing stream that runs
 beside your path, the Royal One
Will deeply drink and stand refreshed
 with head held high above the chaos.*

—translated by
Lynn C. Bauman
*Ancient Songs Sung Anew:
The Psalms as Poetry*
Praxis Publishing 2000, 2008

Contemplating
THE ILLUMINATIONS





