

Source: Othmar Keel, *Jahwe-Visionen und Siegelkunst: Eine neue Deutung der Majestatsschilderungen in Jes, Ez 1 und 10 und Sach 4* ("Visions of Yahweh and Seal Art: A New Interpretation of the Majestic Portrayals in Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 and 10, and Zechariah 4"), Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, Stuttgart, 1984-85

Divine being with four faces

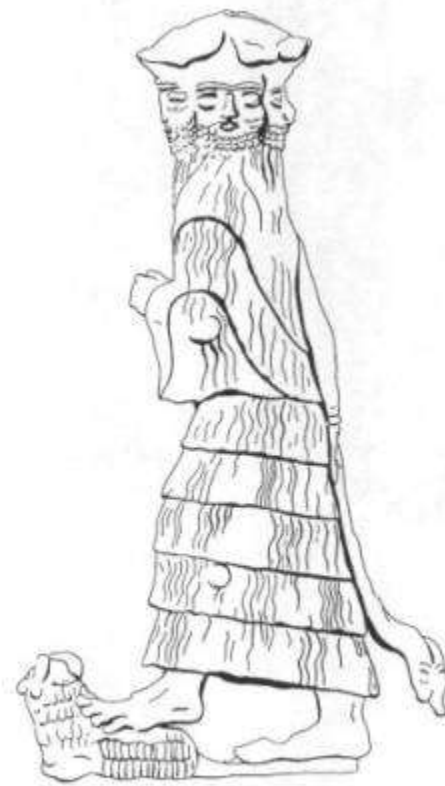


Figure 3. A four-faced deity

Divine beings with four wings and bovine legs/feet



Figure 2. Winged bullmen as skybearers

Divine beings supporting a throne pedestal with wings touching



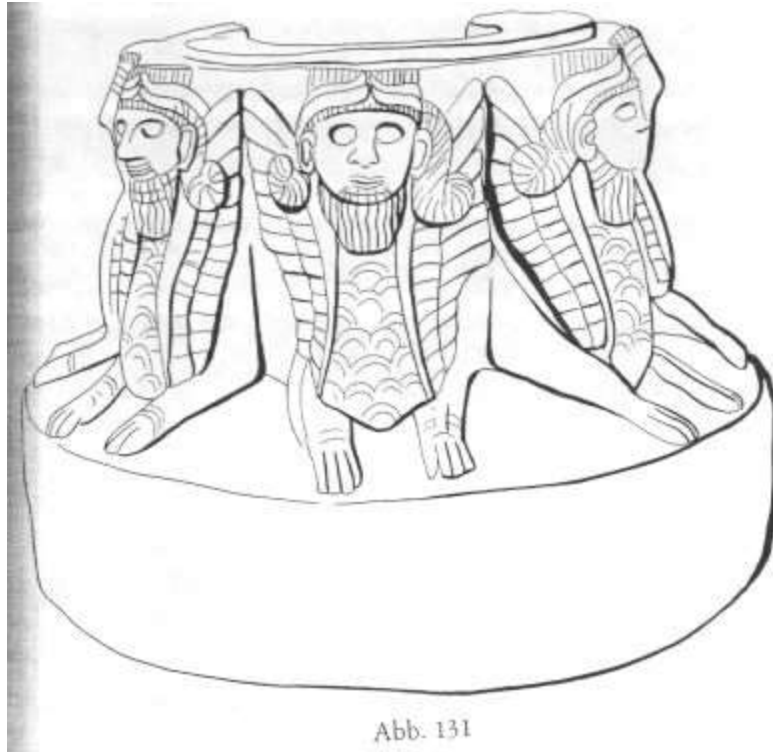
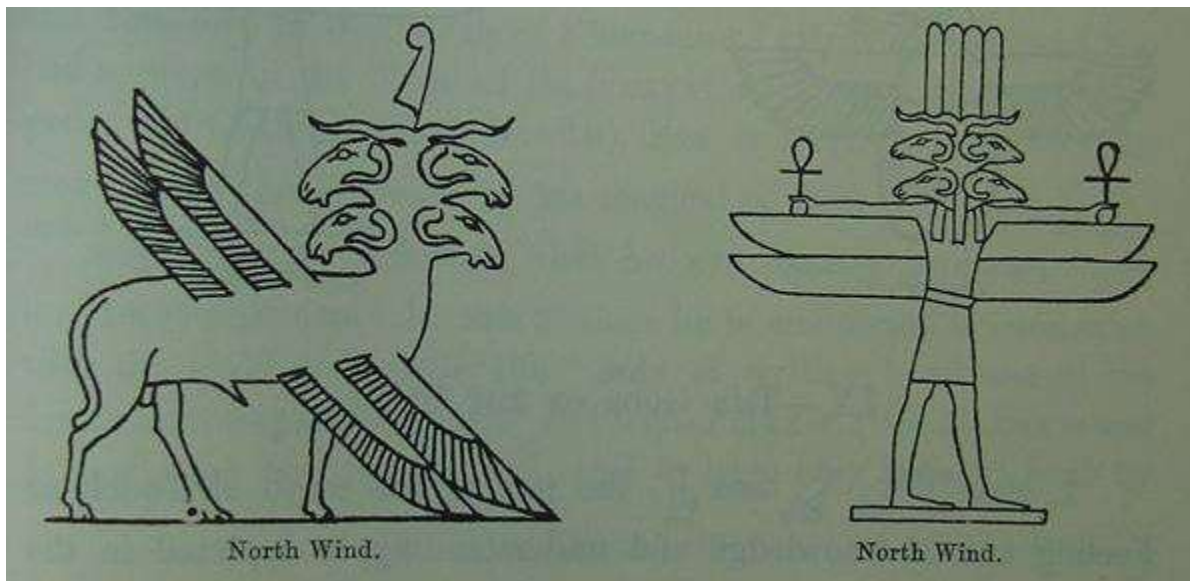
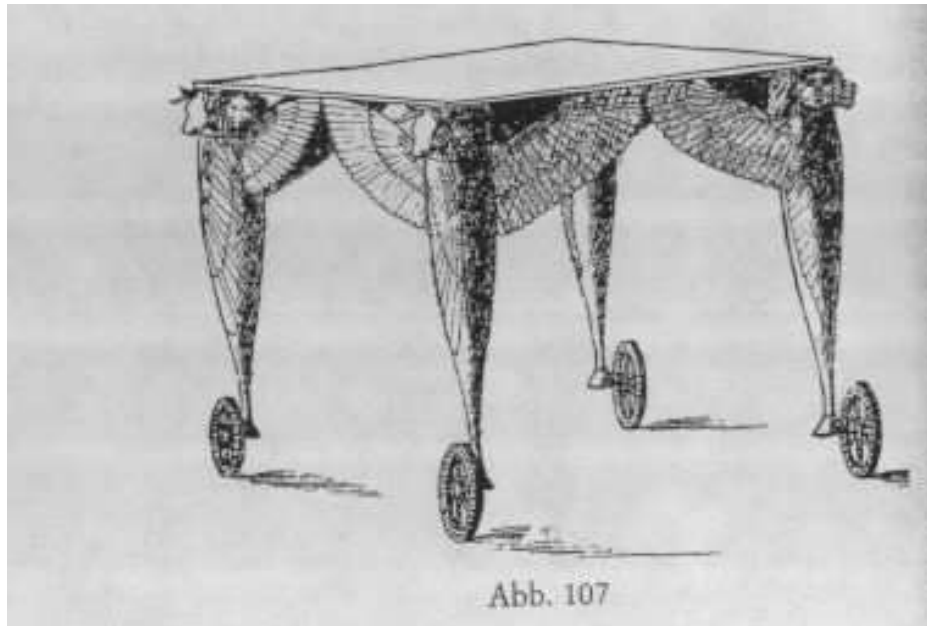


Abb. 131

Divine beings with four faces and four wings (associated with directional wind / sky):



Platform with winged, multi-faced cherubim, with bovine hooves and wheels



Deities in chariots pulled by cherubim (flying chariot) – do they look like flying saucers to you?



From Byblos:

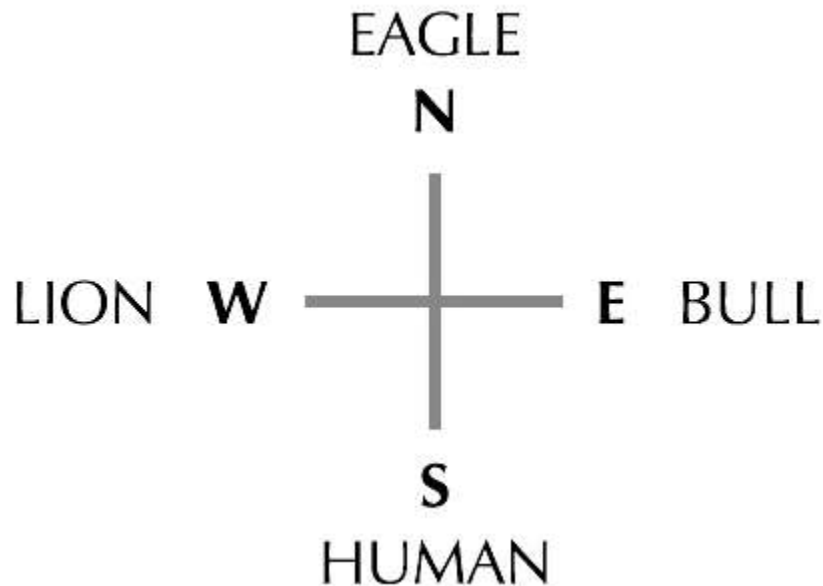


Dan Block on Ezekiel 10

. . . the description of the cherubim's faces differs significantly from the earlier account. Whereas 1:10 had ascribed four different faces to each of the cherubim, the plain reading of the Hebrew here points to four identical faces for each cherub, with each cherub having a different set. Whereas 1:10 had followed a human-lion-bull-eagle sequence, 10:14 lists them as cherub-human-lion-eagle. This reordering raises two questions. Why was the bull face displaced, and how is the cherubic face to be perceived? Any answer to the first is speculative. . . . While we cannot be sure how the ancients perceived true cherubic faces, some evidence suggests that they were not human. On the other hand, the contradiction at least in the order of faces is more apparent than real. Since the inaugural vision came to the prophet from the north, the frontal view (south) would have had a human face, with the other three being arranged as follows:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24* (The New International Commentary on the Old Testament; Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 325.



If the faces in 10:14 are also listed in clockwise order, the sequence is identical, and the cherub's is identified with the bull. Why the present enumeration commences with the cherub instead of the human face is unclear, but it may reflect the vantage from which the prophet observed the chariot. In order to witness the *kābôd* lifting from cherubim inside the temple, he must have been standing at the front of the building, perhaps at the eastern gate of the inner court. From this viewpoint, he naturally began with the creature facing him. Beyond these changes, the description of the chariot agrees with the earlier account and requires no further comment.<sup>2</sup>

Comments on the four faces and their relation to the zodiac:

Philip Carrington, *The Primitive Christian Calendar: A Study in the Making of the Marcan Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 2016; originally published 1952), p. 66

See Maunder, *Astronomy of the Bible*, 166 for basically the same information.

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.



## THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR

or rather living things (*hayyoth*), of the Revelation; the face (*prosōpon*) of the man is assigned to Matthew, the eagle to Mark, the calf or bull to Luke, and the lion to John.

A good deal of fun has been poked at this piece of mysticism by modern writers; but it may be worth the effort required to investigate its origin and meaning. Irenaeus, or rather his source, knew perfectly well that the four *hayyoth* of Hebrew liturgical symbolism were connected with the four quarters of the earth and the four principal winds or points of the compass; they thus suggested the whole cosmos, so that a fourfold gospel meant a universal gospel for the whole world. Fr. Boll in his commentary on the Revelation has shown that they have an astronomical origin, representing the four corner-points of the zodiac; the bull is the sign of the spring equinox, the lion of the summer solstice, the eagle of the autumn equinox, and the man of the winter solstice. The bull is the constellation Taurus, the lion is Leo, the eagle is Aquila (substituted for the nearby Scorpio because the scorpion is the sign of death), and the man is Aquarius, the water-carrier, the only constellation of the zodiac to be represented by the drawing of a man. These are the four *tekuphoth* or turning-points of the Hebrew year, which were represented in mosaic on the synagogue floor as simple winged figures without any distinction, at the four corners of the zodiac-figure; and if used thus for calendrical purposes in the synagogue, why not in the ecclesia?

Carrington quotes Franz Boll in the above, whose book is perhaps the major resource for an astronomical approach to the book of Revelation. See here for a short essay on Boll and his work:

<http://members.westnet.com.au/gary-david-thompson/page11-42.html>

As the author of the above notes, “Franz Boll was a renowned German classical philologist who specialized in ancient astronomy and astrology.” In other words, Boll was no hack. But he wasn’t a biblical scholar, either. Consequently, I agree with Thompson’s criticism of Boll at the above URL – and hence other astral-theological interpreters of Revelation. One simply cannot swap in astronomy/astrology as the correct hermeneutical filter for Revelation and remove all of its

(hundreds) quotations and allusions to the Old Testament and Second Temple Jewish literature. In other words, scholars like Boll and Malina drastically overstate their case to the neglect of what John was doing in Revelation. Nevertheless, the other side of the coin is also flawed – that interpreting Revelation has nothing to do with astronomical events and objects. It very obviously does in certain instances. It's not an either-or choice.