

## THE EXPOSITION OF ZECHARIAH

### I. CALL FOR FAITHFULNESS WITH RETROSPECTION | ZECHARIAH 1:1-6

#### A. 1:1 — Introductory Information

#### B. Purposeful Repetition

Your Fathers: 4x — 1:2; 1:4; 1:5; 1:6

Adonai Tzav'aot זְבָאוֹת יְהוָה: 5x — 1:3, 1:4; 1:6

Na'um Adonai נְאֻם יְהוָה: 2x — 1:2, 1:4

Repent: 4x — 1:3 (2x); 1:4; 1:6

Prophets: 4x — 1:1; 1:4; 1:5; 1:6

#### C. The Main Point of this Narration:

1. Who are the Fathers and what should the people learn from them?
2. Learn from the past so you can go on from the present because there is a great future ahead with the Lord.

## II. THE HORSEMEN AMONG THE HADASSIM |1:7-17

The series of visions carry us through God's dealings with Israel from the time of their chastisement by God under the Gentile powers until they are restored to their land with their rebuilt city and temple under their Messiah King. The first vision gives the general theme of the whole series; the others add the details ... When the world was busy with its own affairs, God's eyes and the heart of the Messiah were upon the lowly estate of Israel and upon the temple in Jerusalem.

Why did God speak in visions about these things? It is difficult to be dogmatic about this but at the very least we can say that as we study these nine visions, we see that they are largely illustrations—stories or visual pictures—by which the message of encouragement that dominates Zechariah is made memorable and vivid to God's people.

Charles Spurgeon says that visions are illustrations or “windows” that let in “light.” They illuminate, interest, enliven, and quicken attention.

### **A. Receiving and Explaining the Vision**

1. Zechariah received the vision.
2. An angel/messenger explained the vision.
3. The Dating of the Vision

### **B. The main components of the vision**

1. The Horsemen and their task
2. The Hadassim
3. The Location
4. The Angel of the Lord
5. The Interpretation given by God's angel/messenger
6. The Application to Zechariah's people

## C. The Interpretation

### 1. *The Horsemen and their task*

### 2. *The Hadassim*

- a. The hadassim trees of the vision probably represent Israel and are so interpreted by most commentators.
- b. The hadass is a small evergreen that never gets above eight feet tall. It has dark green leaves and white, star-like clusters of fragrant flowers, the petals of which emit a rich fragrance when crushed. It is frequently translated as “myrtle.”
- c. Hadassim are found especially besides streams or wadis in Israel.
- d. They were/are one of the trees used especially for Sukkot. — Sukkot seems to be a theme in Zechariah.
- e. Being an evergreen, the hadass can picture the people of Israel in that they managed to remain as a people through history, despite how vulnerable they have been.
- f. Being small, the hadass can illustrate the insignificant state of Israel when compared with the gentile world powers. Israel is not likened to a cedar of Lebanon, which is majestic, or an oak tree, which is strong.
- g. Having blossoms that emit a sweet fragrance when crushed, the hadass can illustrate the strange grace of Israel, even when they are afflicted.
- g. In **Isaiah 41:19** and they are included in a description of Messianic kingdom blessing. Perhaps, then, they speak of the hope and promise of the future, the restoration from Babylonian exile being but the initial stage in the progressive fulfilment of that promise.

3. ***The Location (in the ravine)***

- a. The “ravine” (*metzsulah*, מתצולה ) is a deep or steep valley.
- b. Since Zechariah is in Jerusalem, this might refer to the Kidron Valley, just east of the city, separating it from the Mount of Olives. Apparently, there was a garden there before the Exile (2 Kings 25:4).
- c. When Zechariah notes that the trees were in a ravine or low-lying area, he might have been pointing to the particularly low state of the Jewish people at the time of the vision.
- d. The Lord seems to have returned to the outskirts of the City, but because God’s House did not exist yet, God did not yet return to it.
- e. Picture the opposite of what Ezekiel saw when the Shekinah left the God’s House: Ezekiel 9:3; 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23.

3. ***The Angel of the Lord***

- a. There is an angel/messenger talking with Zechariah.
- b. The Angel of the Lord is the One who is conversing with the Horsemen.
- c. This “angel” occurs at strategic points throughout the Tanakh.
  - i. **Genesis 16:7** with Hagar: Identified as the Lord (YHVH, יהוה)
  - ii. **Genesis 18** with Abraham’s 3 visitors: Identified as the Lord (YHVH, יהוה)
  - iii. **Joshua 5:13–15** with Joshua: Commander of the Lord’s army and instructed Joshua to remove his shoes, as God did with Moses in God’s presence in Exodus 3.

4. ***The Interpretation of the Message of the Vision***
- a. The Horsemen told the Angel of the Lord that they found the earth “sitting” (at rest?).
    - i. This was both a good and bad thing.
    - ii. It is good in that there seems to be inactivity among the nations that affected Israel.
    - iii. It was not good in that Israel also was in active, while they should have been returning to the Land, rebuilding God’s House and restoring Jerusalem.
  
  - b. The result of this report was an expression of comfort to God’s people with a hidden message. How?
    - i. In 1:1–6, God said that they were to return to Him and then He would return to them. Perhaps the first part happened and now we see God returning to them.
  
    - ii. God spoke ‘gracious’ (*tovim*, טובים) and “comforting” (*nichumim*, נחומים) words to Jerusalem. **1:13**
  
    - iii. God was very jealous for Judah. **1:14**
  
    - iv. God was very angry with the nations. **1:15**  
— They were care-free, self-confident, undisturbed, while destroying Israel.
  
    - v. God has returned to Jerusalem. **1:16**  
— They were to return with Him. See Isaiah 40:3–11
  
    - vi. Rebuild the House for Him! **1:16**
  
    - vii. There is a great future for God’s people. **1:17**

#### **D. Summary**

We may say, then, that the import of the vision is this:

1. God instructed His people to return to the Land following the exile. Because of this Israel will have a future. Her calling and purpose remains intact. She will continue to be the host for the special presence of God on earth.
2. God's House is important. It is not man's doing, it is God's will to be there. Therefore, we need to know it, study it, and year for its return.

### III. THE FOUR HORNS AND THE FOUR CRAFTSMEN |1:18-21 (2:1-4 IN HEBREW)

In the first vision, God expressed how He was angry at Israel's enemies. In this, the second vision, He shows how He has raised up leaders of his own to terrify, overthrow, and scatter them.

#### **A. The Horns**

1. ***"Horn" represents strength.***
  - a. The people of the ANE have always been a predominantly pastoral people.
  - b. They knew that the strongest animals in a herd were furnished with horns, horns became for them a natural symbol of power and pride.
  - c. Hence, to lift up the horn was to be proud or even arrogant about one's strength and position.
  - d. Thus, the horn became a common biblical symbol for nations, i.e. the strength of nations.

2. *The Targum translates “four horns” as “four kingdoms”*
  - a. **Zechariah 2:1** “And I raised my eyes and looked and behold, four kingdoms.”
  - b. Many attempts to figure out which kingdoms are intended.
  - c. Perhaps none in particular: four could indicate the totality of everyone who came against God’s people.
  - d. Zechariah 1:19 states: “These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.”

## B. The Craftsmen

1. *Charashim*, חרשים— a word that means a craftsman of any sort: wood, stone, or metal
2. Possible play on words:
  - a. The Horns “scattered” God’s people. The word “scatter” is a farming term used to indicate the scattering of seed.
    - The nations scattered Israel like seeds all over the earth.
  - b. חרשים — looks like a word that means “to plough.”
    - The horns scattered Israel like seeds over the earth, as if Israel was nothing. The craftsmen will plough under those horns.
  - c. Their function was to terrify and throw down the powers that, in arrogant defiance of God, went beyond all bounds in punishing and scattering God’s covenant people.
3. These craftsmen use strong hammers to do their work.
  - Strength against strength. God’s strength wins!
  - a. One weapon that God uses to oppose His enemies is the Words of God.
  - b. Jeremiah 23:29 says: “ ‘Is not my word like fire,’ declares the Lord, ‘and like a *hammer* that breaks a rock in pieces?’ ”
  - c. This is a very mighty tool!
  - d. 2 Corinthians 10:4–5

4. If the horns are symbolic (representing any and all world powers), then the craftsmen are also symbolic. It would be Zechariah's way of saying that whatever the power raised against God's people, God also has His power and representative to oppose it and throw it down.

### C. The Summary

1. In **1:15, 21** the nations "feel secure" (or "are at ease"), now but they are to be terrified and overthrown by the God of Israel.
2. To terrify means to cause one to be so afraid that they will tremble (the meaning of the Hebrew word, לְהַתְרִירָה).
3. This is certainly in the future. However, it might have partial fulfillment during the time of the Maccabees.

## IV. THE MAN WITH THE MEASURING CORD | 2:1-13

Like the second of Zechariah's visions, the third vision builds on the earlier ones. In the first vision God had mentioned a measuring line, saying, "The measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem" (1:16). This is described in the third vision.

The vision and its accompanying message have two main parts. Part one is the expansion and prosperity of Jerusalem. It had a partial fulfillment, because Jerusalem did indeed expand and become a great city and became quite prosperous. in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Period.

But it is also clear, particularly from the final paragraph of chapter 2, that the fulfillment in view was to be more than what happened in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple Period. The ultimate fulfillment was to involve the expansion of God's eschatological city, and will include many nations and peoples. That is, the people of God were to be enlarged beyond Judaism to include the Gentiles.

## A. The Man with Measuring Cord

## B. The Size of Jerusalem

Zechariah speaks of a unique Jerusalem in 4 ways:

- Jerusalem will exist without walls.
- Humans and animals will populate the city.
- There will be many humans and animals.
- Yahweh will be a wall of fire around the city.

### 1. *No Walls*

No walls would be necessary for Jerusalem for two reasons:

#### a. The size of the city      **2:4**

**2:4** *Perazot* (פרזות)

— 1 Samuel 6:18 makes a distinction between large cities that are fortified, i. e. with walls and smaller towns or villages without such walls, calling them by the same term used here in 2:4.

- b. The population will be so large as to spill beyond the ancient and normal enclosures.
- c. For Ezekiel, Jerusalem was to be a fixed entity with clearly defined boundaries on all four sides. Both Ezekiel and Zechariah were seeing the same thing.
- d. Christian interpreters tend to see that the fulfillment was in the expansion of the Church to all parts of the world

### 2. *God's supernatural protection of the city 2:5*

#### **“A wall of fire”**

The royal city of the Achaemenid kings, Pasargadae, was built without benefit of walls. In and around it were a number of fire altars that symbolized the cosmic god Ahura Mazda.

Such a city, impregnable, symbolizing dynastic strength and the presence of the god, would have been well-known to the inhabitants of Israel, especially those in direct contact with the Persian authorities, as were, no doubt, the leaders of the nascent Judahite community.

The Lord as fire in an unwalled city can be beautifully illustrated by the Persian examples.

### C. The Fulfilment

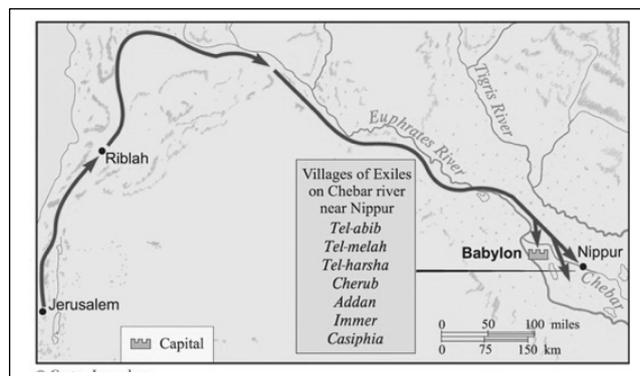
The Lord will be inside Jerusalem: He will be their “fire altar.”  
Another Exodus motif (pillar of fire)

### D. Zechariah’s Application

Beginning in 2:6, the rest of the chapter is poetry. However, there is not only a change of genre, but also of speaker and destination. Instead of the angel it is now *Zechariah* who speaks, first to the exiles in Babylon, then to the Jerusalem Jews, and there is nothing now to suggest a vision. His message is an application of the vision.

#### 1. *Leave Babylon and its suburbs* 2:6-7

- a. The “Land of the North”
  - i. Jeremiah indicated that Israel’s enemies would come from the north (Jeremiah 6:22; 10:22) and that it was from the north that the exiles would return (Jeremiah 3:18; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8).
  - ii. We can understand this apparent geographical problem when we understand geography.

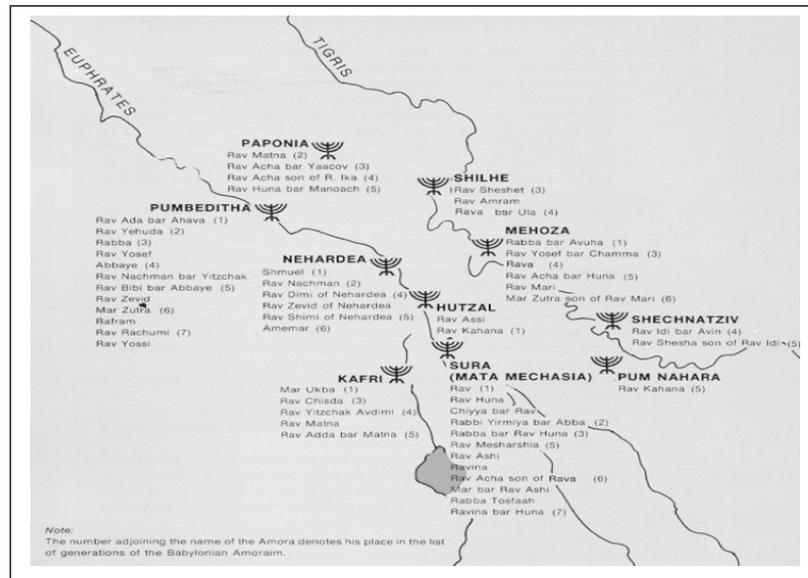


- b. “The Four Winds”
  - i. A geographic statement representing the far reaches of the earth
  - ii. Similarly, in Isaiah 43:5, 6; 49:12 they return from all directions.
  - iii. The Assyrian policy of deporting Israelites was to scatter them scattering them over an area from the Gozan River, 200 miles west of Nineveh, to Media 300 miles to the east (2 Kings 17:6).

- iv. Fugitives from Nebuchadrezzar’s deportations to Babylon, fugitives had taken refuge in Moab, Ammon and Edom (Jeremiah 40:11, 12).
- v. Jeremiah and others went to Egypt (Jer. 43:7).

c. “The Daughter of Babylon”

The entire area of Babylon, not just its city.



2. “Hoi! Hoi!” (הוי)

3. “After glory” 2:8  
Zechariah 2:8

“For thus says the Lord of hosts, “After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.”

- a. This is one of the most difficult verses in the book.
- b. “After his glory sent me” raises at least two problems.
  - i. The first concerns the meaning and usage of the word “after” (*aḥar*, אחר).
  - ii. The significance of the word “glory” (*kāvôd*).
- c. Three possible interpretations:
  - i. “After” is interpreted as a conjunction, and the sense could be expanded to “after the Lord in His glory sent me.”
    - The prophet would be making reference to a vision of glory at the time of his call to preach to the nations.

- ii. A preposition, “*after*” glory  
— “After the glory (vision) he sent me.”
  - iii. “Aḥar can also mean “with.”  
— See Ecclesiastes 12:2 and Psalm 73:24.
  - iv. By taking *kābôd* in its other sense “heaviness” the translation could mean: “with heaviness [or importance] He sent me.”
4. ***God’s special protection for Israel 2:8***
- a. The Hebrew word in question is *bavah* (בבה).
  - b. It is only used 2x in the Tanakh: here and Psalm 178.
  - c. KJV uses the term “apple,” but the Hebrew is more to the point: “pupil.”
  - d. The pupil is one of the most vulnerable and valuable parts of the body, so for Judah to be considered the “pupil” of the Lord’s eye is to raise her value to an incalculable price
5. ***A reversal of fortune! 2:9***
- a. *Ki* (כי) continues the same line of thinking as before.
  - b. There will be a reversal of fortune! The plundering gentile nations will be plundered. (Same language as the Exodus story in Exodus 12:36, but different words.

**E. Blessings to Israel 2:10–12**

Together the second and third visions guarantee the safety of Jerusalem. God is both dealing with potential enemies and protecting his people, in the same way and on the same covenant basis as He did at the exodus.

With the building of the new temple in progress this promise involving continuity of the covenant and the enthroning of the Lord in Zion was a major encouragement.

— Because of what God will do for Israel, there is every reason to rejoice. **2:10**

- 1. Even the suburbs of Jerusalem will rejoice because God is coming in a special way. He will be their protector. See the final chapter of Zechariah! **2:10**
  - a. *Shekinah* (שכין): “I will dwell.”
  - b. Used to refer to the dwelling glory of God in the Mishkan.

2. The Fulfilment of the Abraham Covenant — instead of plundering Israel, many will join Israel. **2:11**  
— A foretaste of Zechariah 8:23
3. God will certainly do this. He is coming! **2:13**
4. **The Holy Land 2:12**
  - a. Used only here in the Tanakh: אֲדָמַת הַקֶּיֶץ
  - b. Psalm 78:54 | holy territory
  - c. Psalm 2:6; 15:1 | holy mountain
  - d. Immanuel's Land | Isaiah 8
  - e. It looks beyond the city to the whole land.

#### F. Conclusion of the Vision 2:13

1. ***“Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord.”***  
— In the light of the prophet's two great disclosures, that the Lord is about to reverse the prosperity of nations and to appear in Jerusalem, it is appropriate that “all flesh” should react with awe and keep silence (cf. Habakkuk 2:20; Zephaniah 1:7).
2. ***“He has roused himself”***  
**Psalm 44:23:**  
“Rouse yourself! Why do you sleep O Lord? Awake! Do not cast us off forever!”  
**Isaiah 51:9:**  
“Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord.” The answer to such pleas was at hand.
3. ***“From his holy dwelling”***
4. The sense here is that God in heaven is about to undertake an occupation of his earthly realm (2:12) by restoring his people to the promised land.  
— And there is nothing that people can say against this. Mankind must keep quiet!