Zechariah 9:1-8

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 9:1–8***The oracle of the word of **YHWH** is against the land of Hadrach and Damascus is its resting place. For **YHWH** has an eye on mankind and on all the tribes of Israel, and on Hamath also, which borders on it, Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise. Tyre has built herself a rampart and heaped up silver like dust, and fine gold like the mud of the streets. But behold, **Adonai** will strip her of her possessions and strike down her power on the sea, and she shall be devoured by fire. Ashkelon shall see it, and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded. The king shall perish from Gaza; Ashkelon shall be uninhabited; a mixed people shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of Philistia. I will take away its blood from its mouth, and its abominations from between its teeth; it too shall be a remnant for our God; it shall be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites. Then I will encamp at my house as a guard, so that none shall march to and fro; no oppressor shall again march over them, for now I see with my own eyes.

1. Zech 9-14 is largely poetic, as opposed to the mostly prose first chapters of Zechariah. This chapter begins stating it is “an oracle of the word of YHWH”. What is an oracle? What would be a synonym for this word?

A message or proclamation from a deity. A good synonym here would be “pronouncement” or “proclamation” or even “message”.

1. The passage speaks of the judgment of YHWH which will come upon Israel’s enemies. Find out where all the places (or peoples groups) mentioned in this passage are located, and also look for anything about why these areas would receive YHWH’s judgment.

* Hadrach - probably an Aramean city-state, located in N Syria on the Orontes river S of Hamath and N of Damascus. The city may be identified with the present day Tell Afis, located about 20 miles (45 km) SW of Aleppo. (Anchor Bible Dictionary)
* Damascus – present day capital of Syria; used to be capital of Aramea and then key city of Assyria.
* Hamath – a prominent Syrian city, and provincial capital of Persian empire. Hamath is listed within the boundaries of the promised land (Num 13:21; Josh 13:5; Judg 3:3) and was at one time controlled by Solomon.
* Tyre – rich and powerful coastal city, capital of Phoenicia, located north of Israel in modern day Lebanon
* Sidon – coastal Phoenician city north of Tyre in modern day Lebanon. As with Tyre a very pagan place worshipping Melkart (and possibly Tanit as in Carthage).
* Ashkelon – one of 5 main Philistine cities on coast (of Israel’s promised land)
* Gaza – one of 5 main Philistine cities on coast (of Israel’s promised land)
* Ekron – one of 5 main Philistine cities on coast (of Israel’s promised land)
* Ashdod – one of 5 main Philistine cities on coast (of Israel’s promised land)
* Philistia – this is the name of the entire region of the Philistines, located along the coast to the west of Judah. It had 5 major cities, including the 4 mentioned above, plus Gath which we recognize as the home of Goliath.
* Jebusites – the original inhabitants of Jebus (renamed Jerusalem after David captured it).

1. What is common to all these places mentioned?

These are a list of Israel’s main enemies over the past several hundred years: the Philistines, the Arameans, and the Phoenicians (as well as Assyrians and Babylonians who also occupied these cities.)

1. Why do you think places like Egypt, Babylon and Assyria were not included?

The list of places are really only those that are within the Promised Land. Israel’s enemies outside the boundaries of the Promised Land are not mentioned. The focus of this oracle seems to be not just about punishment of Israel’s enemies, but also about restoration of the promised land to Israel

1. In Zech 9:1a, what does it mean that Hadrach and Damascus is “it’s / his resting place”? Who or what is resting there (or will rest there), and why?

Probably this refers the Word of YHWH which will “rest” there. In other words, his judgment will “rest” upon them, or land upon them.

1. In Zech 9:1b the ESV has a poor translation (in my opinion), although they have a footnote with a much better alternative. The Hebrew is literally translated “**For toward YHWH is the eye of mankind and all the tribes of Israel.**” What does that mean?

All mankind, not just the tribes of Israel, will see and know the power of YHWH, as the judgment of His Word rests upon the enemies of Israel who are living in their land.

1. Look at Ps 123:1-2 where the phrase “our eyes look to YHWH” is used. What is the result of mankind’s eyes looking to YHWH? How might this relate to our Zechariah passage?

***Psalm 123:1–2***To you **I lift up my eyes**, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, **so our eyes look to YHWH our God, till he has mercy upon us**.

The result of man’s eyes on YHWH is that we recognize who He is, and as we do so His mercy is upon us. So in Zechariah, while the eyes of man on YHWH see His judgment, the result of that is that man will know His power and recognize Him as God, and potentially receive His mercy.

1. It seems that Hamath, Tyre and Sidon are also included with Israel in the list of “all mankind” whose eye will be toward YHWH. In Zech 9:2a, what does “**which borders on it**” refer to? Also look at Num 13:21; Josh 13:5; and Judg 3:3 where Hamath is referred to as Lebo-Hamath.

***Numbers 13:21***So they went up and spied out the land from the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath.

***Joshua 13:5***and the land of the Gebalites, and all Lebanon, toward the sunrise, from Baal-gad below Mount Hermon to Lebo-hamath,

***Judges 3:3***These are the nations: the five lords of the Philistines and all the Canaanites and the Sidonians and the Hivites who lived on Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal-hermon as far as Lebo-hamath.

Hamath is located at the very northern boundary of the Israel’s promised land. It could be said that Hamath borders on Israel.

1. See what you can learn about what kind of a city Tyre was during the days of Zechariah. Also, look at Isaiah 23:8. According to our passage in Zechariah, what will happen to Tyre? Did this judgment ever take place?

***Isaiah 23:8***Who has purposed this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?

Tyre was a rich port city. Made wealthy first from the purple die from the murex snail, and then from ship commerce. Lots of silver and gold as evidenced from many historical documents of commercial exchange. They were militarily strong as well, once withstanding a half-year siege by Nebuchadnezzar.

Zech 9:3 speaks of Tyre’s might and riches. Then Zech 9:4 says Adonai will:

* strip her of her possessions,
* strike down her power on the sea
* devour her by fire.

It seems this was fulfilled, at least in part, with the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 BC who sieged the city for 7 months. He finally built a 200yd wide causeway from demolished buildings of the city in order to attack the island fortress. However Tyre was not totally destroyed but never regained its former glory. It remains today as a major city of Lebanon.

1. In Zech 9:3 there is some poetic wordplay going on in the phrase “Tyre has build herself a rampart”. A literal translation of the Hebrew would be “built Tyre fortification for her”. See if you can find the Hebrew for “Tyre” and “fortification” and figure out what the poetic wordplay is.

**Tsor ma-tsor** = Tyre fortification

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| wǎt·tiʹ·ḇěn |  | ṣōrʹ |  | mā·ṣôrʹ |  | lāhʹ |
| וְ · בנה |  | צֹר |  | מָצוֹר |  | לְ · הִיא |
| w · bnh |  | ṣōrʹ |  | mā·ṣôrʹ |  | l · hîʾʹ |
| and · built |  | Tyre |  | fortification |  | for · she |
| and · (she|it) has built |  | Tyre |  | a fortification |  | for · herself|itself |
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1. In Zech 9:5 the focus shifts from the Phoenicians to the Philistines, saying “Ashkelon shall see it”. What will Ashkelon see? How will they respond?

Probably this refers back to Zech 9:1. They like all mankind (and Israel, Hamath, Tyre and Sidon) will have their eye toward YHWH and see his power through his judgment upon them

They will be afraid, writhe in anguish, lose all hope. Many will die or at least flee the land.

1. In Zech 9:6a “a mixed people” is literally Hebrew מַמְזֵר **mamzer** meaning “one born of a forbidden marriage, illegitimate child, half-breed, bastard child”. How does this statement contrast with the last part of the verse (Zech 9:6b)?

A **mamzer** lives in shame. Shame is the opposite of pride, which YHWH says he will destroy. Their lineage will be destroyed. Their ancestral heritage will be gone.

1. In Zech 9:7a, what does it mean that He will take away “its blood from its mouth”? Refer also to Leviticus 17:12.

***Leviticus 17:12***Therefore I have said to the people of Israel, **No person among you shall eat blood**, neither shall any stranger who sojourns among you eat blood

YHWH will no longer allow them to “eat blood”. Since this is poetic and probably symbolic of something much more general, we could probably extend the meaning to say that God will no longer allow them to participate in idolatrous practices or live in disobedience to the commands of Torah. It may also refer to the sin of murder & war against the Israelites.

1. What does it mean that he will take away “its abominations from between its teeth”? The key Hebrew word is שִׁקּוּץ **shikkutz** “abomination”. Look at Isaiah 66:3, Jeremiah 13:27, and Jeremiah 32:34 as examples of other usages of this same word. Also look up Deut 14:3. Note however that a different Hebrew word תּוֹעֵבָה **to‘evah** “abomination” is used with food, although the context of eating fits well with the context of Zechariah.

***Deuteronomy 14:3***You shall not eat any **abomination**.

***Isaiah 66:3***He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog’s neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig’s blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and **their soul delights in their abominations**;

***Jeremiah 13:27*I have seen your abominations**, your adulteries and neighings, your lewd whorings, on the hills in the field. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will it be before you are made clean?”

***Jeremiah 32:34*They set up their abominations** in the house that is called by my name, to defile it.

YHWH is saying he will remove the unclean things from them. Poetically Zechariah is using symbols of food and eating unclean things. But it goes much deeper since the word **shikkutz** refers to all manner of idolatrous practices.

1. WHY does God want to “remove the blood from their mouth” and the “abominations from between their teeth”? Is this judgment? Is this purification? What is God’s purpose?

It is purification that comes through judgment. God desires to cleanse them. He wants to incorporate them into the covenant community with Israel. He wants to purify them so they can be His people!

1. And in Zech 9:7b, what does it mean that Ashdod “shall be like a clan in Judah” and “Ekron shall be like the Jebusites”? What happened to the Jebusities? For a hint, look at 2 Sam 5:5-10 and 2 Sam 24:16.

***2 Samuel 5:6–10***And the king and his men went to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, “You will not come in here, but the blind and the lame will ward you off”—thinking, “David cannot come in here.” Nevertheless, David took the stronghold of Zion, that is, the city of David. And David said on that day, “Whoever would strike the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack ‘the lame and the blind,’ who are hated by David’s soul.” Therefore it is said, “The blind and the lame shall not come into the house.” And David lived in the stronghold and called it the city of David. And David built the city all around from the Millo inward. And David became greater and greater, for **YHWH Elohe Tsava’ot**, was with him.

***2 Samuel 24:16***And when the angel stretched out his hand toward Jerusalem to destroy it, YHWH relented from the calamity and said to the angel who was working destruction among the people, “It is enough; now stay your hand.” And the angel of YHWH was by the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

David conquered Jebus (Jerusalem) but there is no record that he destroyed the Jebusites. Instead, it seems that the Jebusite people became a part of Judah.

So in Zechariah God is saying that the Philistines will be incorporated into the people of Israel! They will become part of the remnant. They will be LIKE a clan of Judah.

1. Has this happened yet? If not, when will it happen? What does this imply about Gentiles? How does this relate to John 10:14-16 and also to Romans 11:13-23?

***John 10:14–16***I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Yeshua is the coming King. He comes to gather His remnant, His flock. But not just the remnant of Israel. He has other sheep not of the same fold (not of Israel). He will incorporate the other sheep (Gentiles) into His flock. There will be one flock and one shepherd. There will be one King and one group of people serving him. Just as the remnant from the Gentile nations will be “like a clan of Judah”.

***Romans 11:13–24***Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order somehow to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again. For if you were cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, the natural branches, be grafted back into their own olive tree.

Zechariah talks about the Gentiles being included among God’s people. Those who were once foreigners become part of the covenant. This is also what Paul talks about in being “grafted in”. This has begun with the initiation of the New Covenant and will be completed when Messiah returns.

1. Look at the first phrase in Zech 9:8a “I will encamp at my house as a guard.” What does “my house” normally refer to? What might it also refer to in this verse? Look also at the contexts of Jeremiah 12:7, Hosea 8:1, Hosea 9:15, and Hebrews 3:6 where God’s “house” is used in ways that seem to mean something more general than usual.

***Jeremiah 12:7***I have forsaken **my house**; I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.

***Hosea 8:1***Set the trumpet to your lips! One like a vulture is over **the house** of YHWH, because they have transgressed my covenant and rebelled against my law.

***Hosea 9:15***Every evil of theirs is in Gilgal; there I began to hate them. Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of **my house**. I will love them no more; all their princes are rebels.

***Hebrews 3:6***But Christ is faithful over **God’s house** as a son. **And we are his house** if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope.

Normally the “house” of YHWH refers to the tabernacle or the temple, but in this verse (like the other references) it seems to refer more generally to the land of Israel – to the entire promised land.

1. Given the above, what is the meaning of the phrase “I will encamp at my house as a guard”? Has Zechariah talked about this before? Recall Zech 2:5.

***Zechariah 2:5***And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares YHWH, and I will be the glory in her midst.

In the future, after His judgment of Israel’s enemies, God purifies them and incorporates them into His people, He will then watch over the land of promise so it will belong to his people forever. This will be the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham made so long ago.

We will be His people, and He will be our God. He will dwell with us, and protect us as His own.

1. In Zech 9:8a we read “**so that none shall march to and fro**”. The exact same Hebrew phrase was used in Zech 7:14, there translated “**so that no one went to and fro**”. Who is not going to and fro in each case? What is the contrast God is communicating?

In Zech 7:14, Israel is being punished for disobedience and sent into exile so they can no longer walk to and fro on their land, which will be left desolate.

In Zech 9:8, God has restored Israel to the promised land, and promises to protect Israel from her enemies, and not allow any of her enemies to walk to and fro over Israel’s land again.

With this contrast, God is reminding Israel that there will be a new era. Things won’t be like they used to be. He is going to work with the differently. He is establishing a New Covenant, not like the covenant that there fathers broke.

1. In Zech 9:8b, the passage closes with the phrase “for now I will see with my own eyes”. What does this mean? Also recall Zech 4:10 and the context of that verse. What is the common point of these two verses?

***Zechariah 4:10***For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. “These seven are the eyes of YHWH, which range through the whole earth.”

In chapter 4, the eyes of YHWH range the entire earth, seeing all and controlling all. The common point of these two passages is that the eye of YHWH sees all in order to protect and provide for His people. He sees all in order to ensure that His will be done throughout the entire earth.

It seems like the implication of the verb “see” is that He will also take appropriate action based on what he sees. It is not just observation, but also doing, so that His will shall be done in all the earth.

1. Notice that Zech 9:1 starts out with the eyes of men upon God, and now the final verse of this passage (Zech 9:8) ends with the eyes God upon the earth. What is being communicated through this contrast? It reminds me of Gen 1:31. Why?

At first, the eyes of man are upon God, waiting expectantly for His actions of judgment and display of power. He is going to avenge Israel’s enemies and at the same the purify them so they will also know Him and be integrated with His people. He is also going to restore the Promised Land to Israel. Man’s eyes are upon God, watching and waiting for him to act.

***Genesis 1:31***And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

In the end (Zech 9:8), God has acted. He has done all that He has set out to do. The restored remnant has gathered in the restored Promised Land, with YHWH dwelling in their midst, protecting and providing. He looks upon this finished work and says “It is good”, just as he did after Creation.

1. What is the main point of this passage? How would you summarize the message here?

YHWH will both punish and purify Israel’s enemies who have occupied the Promised Land. He will then gather the remnant from ALL peoples (both Israel and her former enemies), and dwell with them in the promised land, protecting them from future oppressors.

1. What do you personally take away from your study of this passage?

I see how God’s judgment and his punishment is His way of bringing people to know Him. The incorporation of gentiles into the covenant community is prophesied here. His desire is for the enemies of Israel to be joined as one with Israel, and He is working for that purpose. I am part of that process.