

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Lesson 19, Chapters 9 and 10

As we continue today in Zechariah chapter 9, the first chapter in that part of the prophet's book that for some time has been labeled "Second Zechariah", we need to keep the bigger picture in mind otherwise we'll get lost in the complex nuances of these passages. The chief characteristic of Chapter 9 is that it is nearly all Hebrew poetry. Therefore, many words are chosen for their poetic value, which in many ways can make it more difficult to ascertain its meaning in the minds of people who lived so very long ago.

From that larger picture, we also see that chapters 9 - 14 deal primarily with the future, from the vantage point of Zechariah's time. These chapters were written several years after chapters 1 - 8. And while chapters 1 - 8 mainly dealt with Judah and the Judeans of the Babylonian exile returning to the land, chapters 9 - 14 have much to do with what we call The 10 Lost Tribes who formed the Kingdom of Ephraim, also known as the Northern Kingdom, what had yet to return to their land.

An additional needed part of our perspective is that when God uses the human hand and mind to describe the far future (and the human hand and mind is what God uses in all books of the Bible), then all that can be said necessarily uses words that must exist in *their* current vocabulary and concepts that must exist in *their* current culture at the time it was written. That is hardly a primitive conundrum; we do exactly the same thing today, because we face exactly the same situation, when even our futurists attempt to look far ahead. Our challenge, then, is to try to understand what those words and concepts meant to convey those thousands of years ago, because that is what God intended and it is what we need to know in our day and beyond.

Therefore, we'll continue to look pretty deeply into the nuances and technicalities behind these passages so to get it as right as we can. Even so, some things we're going to have to be satisfied with knowing there may be more than one way to properly understand those words. After all, we are likely studying ancient words meant to describe something that is only happening now, or will happen in but a few years ahead of us. Better to know

what was intended... even if it flies in the face of long-cherished doctrines... than to believe and expect something that is far off track.

Let's reread just a small section of Zechariah chapter 9.

RE-READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 9:11 – 17

We've already looked closely at verse 11, however I want to highlight a single word to speak about just for a moment. That word is "covenant", in Hebrew **berit**. While much (maybe most) of the time in the Bible that the word covenant is used, in the times when it speaks about those covenants in which God offers it and is directly one of the parties to that covenant, it has a legal and spiritually binding aspect to it that rises above any agreements that humans enter into between one another. And that is the case even when the oath that is sworn to seal that covenant invokes Yehoveh as the guarantor. So, on the other times when the term "covenant" is used, it is automatically less forceful and unbreakable. Any good Hebrew lexicon will inform us that the term **berit** (covenant) also means allegiance or agreement, and those "other" covenants fall more in line with earthbound and standard allegiances and agreements. I'll leave that unfinished topic there, for now. In chapters 10 and 11 that matter becomes much more of a challenging issue. But here in chapter 9, this "blood covenant" no doubt is referring to a God-offered, God as one of the direct parties, type of covenant. The most forceful and unbreakable kind. Which necessarily leads us to one more important nuance we must get firmly squared away in our minds.

When we read the word "unbreakable" or "break" in the Bible, or we assign that term to a covenant even if a passage doesn't actually have it there, it usually doesn't mean how it most often is taken. Most Bible commentators say that to "break" a covenant means to terminate it. That isn't always correct; to get to the correct meaning it must be taken in context. For instance: in modern times a common phrase is "you broke the law". That certainly doesn't mean that a law, or even the entire law code, has been terminated. It simply means that you broke the terms or the instruction of a law. When that happens, there are prescribed consequences... penalties... for the party that has broken it. In Bible speak, when one breaks a covenant (especially one with

God), then "curses" are invoked. We need to simply see this ancient word as meaning "penalties".

So, in the Bible when we read of God telling the Israelites that the covenant has been broken, it does NOT mean that the covenant has been terminated. Such a termination is NOT one of the prescribed consequences for breaking its terms. To be clear: there is no action serious enough for God to abolish the substance of the Abrahamic or Mosaic Covenants, nor the so-called New Covenant (which is really but a re-location of God's laws and commands from a sheep-skin scroll to the God worshipper's own mind and spirit... a kind of renewal of the Mosaic Covenant). I fully realize I'm in the minority on this matter. But, I also realize that the majority that insists otherwise, bases that on the unyielding belief that Yeshua abolished the Covenant of Moses... meaning, therefore, that all covenants with God... even if we are told they are "forever"... can be ended if there is sufficient cause. In other words, a Church doctrine was established about covenants that allows God to abolish them, and then it has been used retroactively to redefine what "breaking a covenant" actually means in the Bible.

What is so nefarious about this is that it then makes the liar out of Prophets like Zechariah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and others. They bring us God's message that He will never abandon His children Israel, nor will He ever abolish His covenant with them...but, according to that Church doctrine, He then turns around and does it anyway. Please keep all this mind as we go forward because that is the basis from which I will speak.

Let's jump to verse 13. This verse begins with using a war implement... the bow and arrow... as metaphor for how He intends to use Israel to defeat gentile nations who come against them. Notice how the Prophet breaks Israel down into two entities: Judah and Ephraim. That is, the people who come from the Kingdom of Judah and the people who come from the Kingdom of Ephraim, who together form the whole Kingdom of Israel. Judah is illustrated as a war bow, and Ephraim is its arrow. What this means is that God will not be fighting the gentile nations by Himself... supernaturally defeating as He did with Sodom and Gomorrah... but rather will use Israel as His proxy. This of course is a

standard pattern as God uses other proxies like Babylon and Assyria to punish Israel by making war on His own people.

I want to highlight that using Judah and Ephraim as a couplet is meant to convey exactly the same thing as using Jerusalem and Ephraim or even House of Judah and House of Joseph as couplets. Used together, these all mean the entirety of Israel... all the tribes.

The Prophet says that God will stir up the sons of Zion. Here we see how Zion can be such an elastic term in the Bible. Zion (which most often means Jerusalem, and sometimes an End Times Jerusalem that is trending towards a restored spiritual condition), here means all of Israel. And yet, at the same time we're told that this stirred up Zion will make war against Javan... in later times called Greece. Therefore, this itself stirs up a debate about whether this is speaking about an End Times Zion, or it is referring to Israel resisting Alexander the Great. Others think this is referring to the Maccabean era when in 164 B.C. the Jews gained their independence from the Syrians and Antiochus Epiphanes. In fact, we even have scholars that dislike this conundrum so much that they would prefer to just eliminate the part about Israel coming against Greece, claiming it had to be an after-the-fact addition that happened subsequent to Greece attacking the Holy Land in the mid-late 4th century.

I see this as merely predicting a prophecy to happen in the way that nearly all prophecies usually do: they are fulfilled at least twice, and often three times. Each time, their fulfillment expands in scope and scale from local to universal. In later times, Greece (Javan) became a catch-word among the Jews to speak of all unfriendly gentile nations to Israel, just as Canaanite became a catch-word meaning merchants. This because to the Jews, merchants were pretty much relegated to the same derogatory societal status as tax collectors. It was a pretty nasty epithet.

While it may be that this prophecy includes as a partial fulfillment Israel fighting against Alexander's Greek army, this was not a case of an independent Israel fighting to stay independent. At this time Persia still controlled Israel. And, it was mainly the Persian army that fought the Greek

army over Judah. So, as victors, Greece merely usurped Persia as rulers over Israel (over Judah, in reality). The Maccabean led victory that gave Judah its independence back for about a century might be it; although it certainly is not a victory of Israel over the Greeks as the prophecy states. Further, this use of the term Zion meaning all of Israel is a bit strange. So, I think that it is not likely that the Greek war had anything to do with this prophecy, and probably not the Maccabean rebellion either, because the Zion described in this verse consists of BOTH Judah and Ephraim. Ephraim had yet to return to the land, and only now in the 21st century are they returning to their homeland in any recognizable way. Rather, it is that the mention of Javan was more meant as Javan symbolizing the entire gentile world who comes against Israel in the End Times. Babylon is used that way in the New Testament. Zion, most often meaning Jerusalem in a redeemed condition, but then in this passage adding the element of a reunited Israel, makes more sense. Bottom line: I see this ONLY as an End Times prophecy because it has yet to happen.

Verse 13 ends with words that the army of Zion will be like an army made up of elite warriors... ***gibborim***.... mighty men. That is, Israel is going to be militarily very strong when they go to war with gentile nations. I cannot ignore what is happening now, as we open the new year of 2025, at the now fully revealed strength of Israel's army in defeating their enemies Hezbollah and Hamas (and soon, I suspect, the Houthis of Yemen). In doing so, they have greatly degraded Iran, and has even caused the Assad monarchy of Syria to fall. This all occurring while the nations of the gentile world sat back, timidly wringing their hands. The world now knows... and this is NOT good news to them... that Israel is a very formidable armed force. Sounds a great deal like this prophecy of Zechariah 9:13, doesn't it? Only time will tell if this is the case.

The first words of verse 14 again obscure a reality in virtually all English Bibles. It begins, "And the Lord". That is not what the Hebrew says. It says "And Yehoveh". This is important. This is speaking of The Father. Yeshua is not Yehoveh and many Bible commentators attempt to say that this is speaking of Christ. And they do it because the English Bibles say "The Lord". And we all know that within the Church, "The Lord" has become synonymous with "Jesus

Christ". Replacing that with the original Yehoveh proves that The Lord is a poor translation that misleads.

Saying that Yehoveh will appear over them (meaning over Zion), seems to indicate a theophany... an appearance of God. How that looks to the eye is hard to say. We read in Exodus that God appeared in a Burning Bush. He also appeared as a dark cloud and lightening over Mt. Sinai. So, exactly *how* He will be perceived... *how* He will be seen... is left open to the imagination.

Then it speaks of God sending forth His arrow. Even though nothing is said of a bow, because in the previous verse bow and arrow were used together to describe a common instrument of war, we should take the term "arrow" when used all by itself as meaning the same thing. In this case, God is the metaphorical bow. That said, then what is God's instrument of war (the arrow) in this case? I have a hard time believing this means a militarily strong Zion because that has already been addressed. So, a reasonable question is: who or what is God's arrow? Could that be symbolizing the returning Messiah? Or maybe that is too specific. What makes me suspect that the arrow is the Messiah is the mention of lightening (the sudden return of Yeshua coming in the clouds, a true theophany), and then the blowing of the shofar (which is a battle cry) that also is said to herald the return of Yeshua, and then finally the idea of the whirlwind which indicates an unstoppable force that disrupts. I cannot say with certainty that the arrow is Yeshua, but I don't know of a better candidate, all things considered.

In any case, storms are the metaphorical backdrop for a theophany, and as we think about prior theophanies they usually include dark clouds, lightening, the blasting of a horn or shofar, and wind. The mention of "winds of the south" to end verse 14 is like saying hurricane (if you live in a coastal city), or Santa Ana winds (if you live in Southern California). In the Holy Land region, it was the southern winds that brought the most intense and destructive storms. So, south doesn't seem to have any special spiritual significance, here... it only reflects intensity.

Moving on to verse 15, we read "Yehoveh of hosts", which cements that it is Yehoveh that is the figure of the theophany that appears over Zion, and not

Yeshua. Here it is not only that God will use Israel as His instrument of war, but also that He will protect them. This merely doubles-down on whose side God is fighting. From Genesis to Revelation, God's people and God's covenant people, are always Israel. He may remove His presence from them for a time; He might open the door to foreign invaders; He could bring bad weather and drought to the land. But these are all penalties set down in the Mosaic Covenant should Israel break certain rules and laws of that covenant. No matter, His bottom-line promise is that He will never permanently abandon His people, nor will He make some other people His replacement of Israel.

Rather, because God defends Israel, then they will simply overwhelm their attackers. They will roar like lions and devour their enemies. While there are varying views on exactly what the Hebrew word **abneh qela** means (it seems to be a combination of stones and slings so sling stones is suggested), yet the point is pretty clear: these are the enemy warriors. The enemy warriors will be well armed, but they still will lose decisively. To drink and be boisterous is to have great confidence. This is not about drunkenness or partying.

When we read that they will be filled like basins, like the corners of the altar, this now takes on a spiritual aspect. The Hebrew word used here for basins is **mizraq**, and it is referring to the ritual basins used in Temple ceremonies. I'm not sure what the intent is of the speaking of the corners of the altar (of which there are 4), beyond the fact that this obviously speaks of the Temple Altar of Burnt Offering. Basins are filled, and the altar is used to present sacrificial offerings to God. So, it seems that the warriors are being held up sacrificially to God. This doesn't mean sacrificially in the sense of being slaughtered and burned up, but rather in dedicating their warrior service to God. They are fighting not so much in the name of their nation, but rather in the name of their God. So, when you include the idea that Israel's army is an army of Zion (a redeemed army), then it seems to indicate a spiritual revival has occurred among the people and warriors of Israel, such that they recognize who it is they are fighting on behalf of. And, because they do, they fight ferociously and unafraid.

I cannot bypass this without a brief allegorical mention. As Believers in Yeshua; knowing who we are living and fighting on behalf of; then ought we

not be determined and unafraid? We are not to be timid and fearful; hiding behind the closed doors of our homes and sanctuaries. We have a duty to the God who called us and who saved us. We need to respond and not think we have something to be afraid of.

Fear will curtail nearly any worthy task. Fear in a group is a like a deadly virus; it is contagious and it spreads. Fear snatches defeat out of the jaws of victory. Countless novels have been penned, and Hollywood films made, about those who are so near to victory and overcoming, but then simply cannot push themselves over the finish line and they quit. But, sometimes others face the worst opposition, remain determined, and are carried over that finish line nearly miraculously. Over and over in the Bible we are encouraged to "fear not". Stick to your convictions. Speak the truth even if it brings a cost with it. Carry out your God-given purpose even though you surely will be opposed, sometimes by those closest to you. These is not Tom Bradford's instructions to you: they are God's.

Verse 16 opens with "on that day". This is a phrase nearly always meaning the End Times. The Day of Judgment. The Day of the Lord. It also includes the idea that Israel will finally receive its Davidic King (that is, a king descended from David's royal line). Israel is already an independent nation in our time. So, all that is left is for it to change from a Democracy to a Theocracy. As regards the End Times, we are to understand Yeshua's rule as a king over Israel (and the entire earth) NOT as a typical monarchy... but rather as a Theocracy. A nation and a planet ruled by God and His laws and commands. Israel is the primary subject of this deliverance and they are described as a flock. In other words, as sheep. This, of course, plays in with the standard Shephard/Sheep metaphor for God and His people as is used nearly throughout the Bible.

The "flock" is said to be as gemstones of a crown. The Hebrew for gemstones is **abneh nezer**. Notice the play on the word **abneh qela** from the previous verse that meant stones of a sling or slingstones. So, the enemy will be the trampled **abneh qela**, but Israel will be the glorified **abneh nezzar**. These two words were chosen so as to play off of one another as poetry. Slingstones versus gemstones. Gemstones, which is symbolic of the great value God has

for His people and the honor He gives them by being figuratively made part of His king's crown. Because Zechariah draws upon other prophets from beginning to end, then it ought not to surprise us that we read this in Isaiah, which he no doubt had in mind.

CJB Isaiah 62:3 *You will be a glorious crown in the hand of ADONAI, a royal diadem held by your God.*

We probably shouldn't attempt to make anything much deeper than that out of it since the plain meaning is apparent, otherwise we venture out into allegory.

The CJB version of the final verse of chapter 9 is a head scratcher, and frankly shouldn't be considered as accurate. Rather, here is a far better and more literal translation.

TNK Zechariah 9:17 *How lovely, how beautiful they shall be, Producing young men like new grain, Young women like new wine!*

This is nothing less than the announcement of an entrance into a new age. The Golden Era of Israel has come. Abundance and peace will be the order of the day. This prophetic hope for Israel is found in a few other places in the Bible, but few as memorable as that in the Book of Numbers.

CJB Numbers 24:5 *"How lovely are your tents, Ya'akov; your encampments, Isra'el!*

Speaking of young men as abundant as new grain, and young women as plentiful as new wine represents all the elements of fertility and prosperity. This is a kind of summation statement of what has come in the earlier verses, telling Israel that the day will come not only for their physical deliverance but also their spiritual salvation. And, how can we not see the enduring love that God has for His people? I can never quite decide whether it makes me more sad or more angry that the same Church that led me to salvation slanders and belittles God's people Israel, as well as God's Word the Bible, and adds further insult to injury by claiming that the gentile Church now holds all these blessings and rights and honors that God formerly gave to Israel, but He has

gone back on His word and now has transferred them to the Church. Shameful.

Let's move on to chapter 10.

READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 10 all

As poetically based as chapter 9 was, chapter 10 is only slightly less so. Therefore, those same challenges we faced in chapter 9 we'll face here. These two chapters are closely related and connected. All the wonderful things promised as the summary of Israel's wonderful destiny given in chapter 9:17, continues in chapter 10. This means that the emotional weight of its words matters as much or more than the historical fact; that is the nature of poetry no matter which culture writes them.

There is no additional promise made in chapter 10. Rather only an expanded vision of the promises previously given is made. But, as with all covenants, there is a condition. And although it is a little hard to see it, it appears in the first 2 verses. It is that the people must approach God in prayer for the blessings to be actualized. To be clear, this means regular prayer; not just a prayer service to begin the new age of abundance and peace and then such a practice can be set on the shelf as accomplished and completed. This is meant to impress upon the people that all the goodness the Lord wants to give His people first begins with obedience and continual communication with Him. Praise and thanksgiving are to be ever present. Seeking wisdom and God's will is to be without end. And, the only place this knowledge can come from is Heaven, and never from idols or magical formulas or pagan seers.

"Ask of Yehoveh", are the words to begin verse 1. Clear and concise. He is the source of truth and blessing; none other. There is nothing different here than there ever has been. Humanity has just been so slow and resistant to take it up and follow it faithfully. And while this will be Israel's lot in the Millennium it is there for them, and for us all, now. Let's take a lesson from this. It is not that ancient Israel had stopped believing in God (although, it is true that as a modern phenomenon, many Jews have stopped believing in God), it's that they stopped approaching Him and Him alone for their needs. And they

stopped being obedient to the moral law code He gave them through Moses. Rather, many turned to some hybrid code of men's wisdom, the wisdom of other faiths and gods, and simply what seemed right in their own eyes, along with an ever-growing trove of traditions their religious leadership created for them to follow. It doesn't take a genius to see what happened to Israel and the Jewish people as a result over the centuries.

The Constantinian Church has done no different, and with the same sorts of outcomes. To "ask Yehoveh" means to seek the truth only from Him. And, that means to seek our morality only from Him, and that means there is but one objective morality code for all. He gives us the means to find it in writing in the form of His Bible, and also in the form of prayer. Judaism and the Church have often sought it elsewhere and paid an enormous price for our folly. So, to all who are Believers, I urge you to heed the motto of the Pilgrims and do what is necessary.

CJB Revelation 18:4 Then I heard another voice out of heaven say: "My people, come out of her! so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not be infected by her plagues,

Do as the venerated Pilgrims: reject human made doctrines and instead ask Yehoveh, even though it is likely to come at great cost. Ask Him in prayer, and ask Him in learning and following His Word... all of it... not just the part that is to the right of the blank white page.

One of the really interesting aspects of this "Ask Yehoveh" command, is that there is no suggestion of any kind of intermediary needed. A worshipper of the God of Israel can go directly, privately, to God. One doesn't need a priest or some kind of religious leader as a go-between. In other words, just as the Prophets can go directly to God, so can all the people of Israel do the same.

Realizing that Israel, along with virtually all human societies in the Middle and Far East, were agriculturally based, then the need for rain at the right times was critical. Those societies that lived along major rivers (like the Nile or the Euphrates) used irrigation to water their fields and so were less dependent on rain. But, Israel was totally dependent on it, and thus even had two words for

it in their vocabulary: **matar** and **malqosh**. **Matar** is used for the rains that come in the Spring, while **malqosh** is for the later seasonal rains. Thus, verse 1 urges Israelites to ask Yehoveh for the rains of Spring to come on time for this is when the grain is ripened for harvest. The reality is that what we might call the "rainy season" begins in the Fall. The Spring rains are the last rains of the rainy season.

Why ask Yehoveh? Because despite the scientific belief that climate variation alone, and the hydrologic cycle that comes from it, is the determiner of the very existence of rain, Israel is reminded that Yehoveh is actually the maker of the clouds from which falls the rain. Now, it is interesting that the Hebrew word used here that is usually rendered as "clouds" is **chaziyz**, which more usually indicates lightening. Probably because most of Israel's rains (not all) result from storms that produce lightening in the clouds, this word is chosen. And, because God's actions are often depicted as being preceded with lightening and thunder, then this term binds the idea of clouds and an act of God together.

So, God forms the clouds, that produce both lightening and rain showers, and the result is that everyone gets the resulting vegetation. Some versions such as the CJB uses the word "grass" instead of "vegetation". The Hebrew word is **eseb** and it is a broad term that pretty much means green plants in general. The Hebrews didn't farm grass; they farmed edible vegetation... grains and the like. So, translating **eseb** to grass is very much out of context.

I think we'll pause here for today, and begin with verse 2 next time.