

## THE PURIFYING POWER OF GOD'S WORD AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF ZECHARIAH 5

### Translation

1 Then I lifted my eyes again and I saw--behold!--a flying scroll.  
2 Then he said to me, "What are you seeing?" Then I said, "I am seeing a flying scroll, twenty cubits in length and ten cubits in width." 3 Then he said to me, "This is the curse going out upon the face of the whole earth, that everyone stealing will be purged out according to the one side, and everyone swearing will be purged out according to the other side.

4 "I will bring it out," declares the Lord of Hosts, "and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely in My name. It will lodge there, in the middle of his house, and it will consume its wood and its stones." 5 Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and he said to me, "Lift up your eyes and see this that is going out." 6 Then I said, "What is it?" Then he said, "This is the ephah going out." Then he said, "This are their eye in all the earth, 7 (behold--a round weight of lead was lifted up!) and this is a women dwelling in the middle of the ephah." 8 Then he said, "This is wickedness!" Then he threw her into the middle of the ephah, and he threw the lead stone into its mouth. (selah) 9 Then I lifted up my eyes and saw, and behold! two women going out, (with) wind in their wings, and behold! (they had) wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. 10 Then the angel who was speaking with me said, "Where are they taking the ephah?" 11 Then he said to me, "To build for her a temple in the land of Shinar, and it will be prepared and placed to rest upon a base there."

### Textual Matters

There are several minor textual emendations which do not materially impact the sense of the text. In verses 3, *mizzeh* is proposed to be read as *me zeh*. The MT reading *mizzeh* (*min + zeh*)

makes better sense left as it is, indicating the position of the curse, according to each side of the scroll.<sup>1</sup>

In verse 3, we might insert "falsely" after "everyone who swears," so that the reading conforms to the wording of verse 4. This might be a good clarification, although the context leaves no doubt that "the one who swears" in verse 3 is also "the one who swears falsely" in verse 4.

In verse 6, "the ephah going out" should probably be deleted and inserted in place of "what is going out" in verse 5. The phrase "then he said" occurs twice, with the second being perhaps an addition. These differences are not material.

Verse 11 presents us with the unusual hophal pattern, used twice, and a proposed variant word reading wherein the first hophal becomes a hiphil, and the second becomes the word for "base" used again at the end of the verse. The hophal pattern of *coon* may mean either to establish a throne, or to be prepared, with BDB preferring the latter.<sup>2</sup> Since this is the *passive* pattern of the hiphil, and we are dealing with an object that is being carried, the text is best taken as is. Also, there is no good reason to delete the verb *nooach* and substitute a repetition of the noun "base," as this verb brings out the fact that the ephah is to *remain* in the land of Shinar, like a lifeless idol.

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<sup>1</sup> BDB, p. 578.

<sup>2</sup> BDB, p. 466.

These variations are not generally cited by commentators. However, there is one major textual question in this passage that has sparked numerous discussions, with commentators divided. In verse 6, a stroke of the pen could change "their eye" (sometimes translated "appearance") to "their iniquity." The MT retains the former, while the LXX and Syriac witness to the latter. The manuscript support for the change is fairly weak, yet some have chosen it in view of the connection with "wickedness" in the next verse.<sup>3</sup> Others object; perhaps such repetition would constitute merely a "lame tautology."<sup>4</sup>

"Eye" is the more difficult reading, yet not so difficult as to be incomprehensible. Considering the "eye" imagery of earlier visions, along with general hesitation to emend the MT, it is probably best to retain "eye." The man with the measuring line, described in 2:1-2, was to see the width and length of Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> In chapter 5, we have a scroll with specific measurements going forth to execute God's judgment. In chapter 3, the stone on Joshua's forehead has the seven eyes of the Lord; as God fastens His gaze on that stone, He promises removal of iniquity from the land (3:9).<sup>6</sup> The compound vision of chapter 5 is a description of that removal. In the immediately preceding lampstand vision, it is the "eyes of the Lord" which "range to and fro throughout the

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<sup>3</sup> Calvin, p. 138; Baldwin, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> Leupold, p. 104.

earth" (4:10, NASB). This language has a vivid similarity to 5:6, along with the theme of this sixth vision; God's all-encompassing vision leaves the covenant breaker no hope of escape from His gaze. If the text is emended to read "iniquity," these interesting connections are lost.

## **Introduction and Historical Background**

The name of the prophet may either mean "Jehovah remembers" or "he whom Jehovah remembers."<sup>7</sup> God *remembers* His covenant and His promises, both to curse the covenant breaker and to bless His elect. Zechariah describes both in dazzling prophetic imagery. His prophecies are concurrent with those of Haggai, both occurring during post-exilic times while work on the reconstruction of the temple has temporarily ceased, triggering a national crisis (about 520 BC).<sup>8</sup> Specific messages address both Zechariah's own people and time, as well as distant times of future glory when God's kingdom is culminated. In each instance, restoration is necessarily preceded by a divinely engineered purification, a complete cleansing of both individual sinners and sin itself, either by grace or by judgment.<sup>9</sup> The sixth vision highlights this sanctifying process within the covenant land.

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<sup>5</sup> Kline, "Evangel" (Part I), p. 18.

<sup>6</sup> Kline, "Servant and Serpent" (Part II), p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Feinberg, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Baldwin, p. 13-17.

<sup>9</sup> Baron, p. 143-144.

## Structure of Zechariah

The book of Zechariah demonstrates intricate chiastic design, as discerned by Meredith Kline and pictured in Appendix 1.<sup>10</sup> This helps orient the place of vision 6 within the overall structural framework of the book. Although the stylistic difference between the visions in 1-8, and the prophetic-apocalyptic genre of 9-14, have encouraged some to question the unity of authorship, the structural correspondences assist the reader in discerning the "connecting links" of repentance, judgment, mercy, and the Messianic figure who accomplishes God's purposes.<sup>11</sup>

The sixth night vision corresponds to the second. Both are compound, and both utilize secondary agents of divine judgment to effect "the removal of aliens and apostates from the covenant land."<sup>12</sup> They share "the motif of lifting up and casting or setting down."<sup>13</sup> While these two visions focus specifically on the covenant community of Judah, visions 1 and 7 concern the world, while visions 3 and 5 move right to "the heart of the theocracy" in Zion.<sup>14</sup> God's kingdom plan leaves no one untouched!

There is also correspondence with the burdens section, specifically 13:2-9, which again concerns the removal of sin from

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<sup>10</sup> Kline, "Structure."

<sup>11</sup> Baldwin, p. 81.

<sup>12</sup> Kline, "Structure," p. 187.

<sup>13</sup> Kline, "Structure," p. 188.

<sup>14</sup> Kline, "Structure," p. 187.

within covenantal boundaries, the specific mention of swearing falsely, and the theme of uncleanness.<sup>15</sup>

## **Commentary**

**Verse 1.** The beginning of a new prophetic vision is indicated by the recurrence of the prophet's words, "Then I lifted up my eyes *again* and saw" (1:18, 2:1, 5:9, 6:1). This lifting of the eyes to see is a repeated action, having introduced two earlier visions (and one later one).<sup>16</sup>

What Zechariah sees is quite unusual. The scroll, normally "rolled up" and "stacked in archives," reserved for the use of priests and scribes, is opened wide and flying in clear public view.<sup>17</sup> A similar display is presented at the outset of Ezekiel's prophetic call (2:9-10).<sup>18</sup> In both cases, the scroll is a threat of impending divine judgment, unfolded and rapidly approaching, flying like a large bird.<sup>19</sup> Several significant features of the scroll are brought out in 5:1-4: its position (5:1), its specific measurements (5:2), its two-sided message (5:3), and finally the execution of that message (5:4).<sup>20</sup> None are without significance.

**Verse 2.** Here we encounter, for the first time in this vision, the Angel of the Lord. Earlier visions make clear His identity. He is the "agent of the Glory-Spirit," the One who

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<sup>15</sup> Kline, "Structure," p. 192.

<sup>16</sup> BDB, p. 998.

<sup>17</sup> Baldwin, p. 126.

<sup>18</sup> Baron, p. 145.

<sup>19</sup> Feinberg, p. 84; Deddens, p. 34.

executes the sanctions of the covenant, both blessing and curse.<sup>21</sup> In this sixth vision, it is obviously the curse which He executes. His question, and the prophet's answer, serve to reinforce the image of the flying scroll, now with added detail. The sequencing of question/answer/interpretation throughout the visions may indicate that Zechariah is to continue seeking God's truth.<sup>22</sup>

The precise measurements of the scroll, 20 cubits in length by 10 cubits in width, correspond to the wilderness tabernacle (Exodus 26:15-25) and also to the porch of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:2-3). It is worth noting that the fifth, sixth, and seventh visions all contain temple imagery.<sup>23</sup> Thus it is important to consider the specific connotations of these dimensions. While a few commentators question whether there even *is* such significance,<sup>24</sup> we ought to agree with the majority who recognize a relationship to the theocracy. The scope of divine judgment in this vision in God's covenant people,<sup>25</sup> as it is also in vision 2 (1:18-21). Other Scriptures confirm that God's judgment begins in His own house (Ezekiel 9:6; Jeremiah 25:29; Amos 3:2; Romans 2:9; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 4:17). Perhaps, too, "the measure of the judgment will be meted out according to the measure of the holy place...according to the measure of the holiness of the house

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<sup>20</sup> Feinberg, 83-84.

<sup>21</sup> Kline, "How Long?", p. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Leupold, p. 99.

<sup>23</sup> Kline, "Structure," p. 186.

<sup>24</sup> Calvin, p. 128; Baldwin, p. 126.

of the Lord."<sup>26</sup> Certainly, it is God's absolutely holy standards that determine the measure of divine judgment. The role of measurer in the first and third visions foreshadows that of Christ, who in Revelation holds the measuring rod of divine authority over God's house.<sup>27</sup> Also significant is the observation that sin is judged according to God's measure, rather than the false standards of man, "in strict correspondence with the majesty and holiness of the law which has been broken."<sup>28</sup> The stage is thus set to explore more specifically *what* is being judged, and *how* the judgment is to be executed.

**Verse 3.** The Angel of the Lord has the role of both Judge and Intercessor/Advocate.<sup>29</sup> This vision clearly portrays Him in the role of Judge, sending forth God's curse to consume the covenant breakers. This typological scene parallels the role of Christ portrayed in Revelation, when God's spiritual and human enemies are faced with their final destiny in the lake of fire.

The word chosen for "curse" is one used to describe a solemn oath: between men (Genesis 26:28), in courtroom testimony (Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 29:24), and before God (Numbers 5:21 and elsewhere). In the classic covenantal language of Deuteronomy 29, the word is encountered in this sense in verses 12 and 14 (H 11

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<sup>25</sup> Feinberg, p. 84.

<sup>26</sup> Feinberg, p. 84.

<sup>27</sup> Kline, "Evangel," p. 19.

<sup>28</sup> Baron, p. 148.

<sup>29</sup> Kline, "Servant and Serpent" (Part I), p. 24



and 13), but is later used to specifically describe the *curse* resulting when the oath is *broken* (verses 19,20 [H 18,19]).<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Daniel 9:11 utilizes this word in the clear sense of *curse*. It is a choice that brings to mind God's covenantal faithfulness, as outlined in the historical prologue of the covenant. In addition, this particular word correlates perfectly with one of the specific sins mentioned in this verse, that of swearing falsely.

Two sins are specified in this text. The first is stealing, taken from the second table of the law and breaking down relationships between people. The second is that of swearing falsely, taken from the first table of the law and breaking the relationship between man and God.<sup>31</sup> In each case, it is the *middle* commandment that is chosen, perhaps intended as a representation of the whole law.<sup>32</sup> As noted in James 2:10, the person who offends at one point of the law has broken it *all*.<sup>33</sup> The all-encompassing nature of God's judgment, as so graphically described in the remainder of this vision, certainly leaves no room for escape. Similar sins are addressed by contemporary Haggai, who rebukes the people for ignoring the Lord's house in order to pursue their own building ventures. Zechariah's oracular instructions include a call to justice, kindness, and compassion toward the widow, the

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<sup>30</sup> Blank, Sheldon H., TWOT, Volume I, p. 94.

<sup>31</sup> Deddens, p. 36.

poor, the orphan, and the stranger (7:8-10), with a continued emphasis on *truth*, the opposite of the specific sin being judged in this vision (8:3, 8, 16, 19). The burden section corresponding to vision 6 denounces false prophesy (13:3).

It can also be observed that God's anger, in the Old Testament, is most frequently against "those who violate their *sworn commitment* by worshipping some creature-thing."<sup>34</sup> Thus we dare not agree with those who claim that Israel has left her idolatry behind in Babylon, engaging primarily in lesser sins after the exile.<sup>35</sup> Idolatry is a fundamental root of other sin, as Paul so elegantly declares in Romans 1:18-25. It is in the exchange of God's truth for a *lie* that man has begun his descent into idolatrous living (Romans 1:25).

The *mizzeh k-modah...mizzeh k-modah* is a phrase used to describe the fact that writing occurs on both sides of the scroll. According to the writing on the one side, thieves are judged; according to the other, those who swear falsely.<sup>36</sup> Again we are reminded of the two tables of the law.

The word for "purge" or "destroy" can be used in a positive sense to be cleansed from guilt, to be innocent or punished. Here, however, the covenant breaker is hardly declared innocent;

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<sup>32</sup> Feinberg, p. 85.

<sup>33</sup> Calvin, p. 130.

<sup>34</sup> Kline, "How Long?", p. 29 (emphasis added).

<sup>35</sup> Wright, p. 109.

<sup>36</sup> BDB, p. 555 and 578.

rather he is purged from God's covenant land. Similar usage is found in the plundered city of Isaiah 3:26 which is cleared out, deserted.<sup>37</sup> Still, we can hardly overlook the fact that God's *elect* are cleansed and set free of their guilt by Christ, in contrast to the fate of the covenant breakers, who are cut off.

**Verse 4.** The opening phrase leaves no doubt that it is the Lord Himself who causes the curse to go forth swiftly throughout the covenant land.<sup>38</sup> His Word has the inherent power necessary to accomplish the purposes He intends (Isaiah 55:11; Psalm 147:15), administering justice in the most private of places, including those inaccessible to man's judicial administration.<sup>39</sup>

The curse's action is one of lodging or abiding, remaining, even spending the night, right in the middle of the covenant breaker's house, until its task of destruction is complete. This residential action is one that underscores the certainty of God's judgment. Perhaps the judgment of other men may be escaped, but no sin escapes the knowledge of God.<sup>40</sup> As leprosy destroys the body, so sin destroys the soul; as sinners we are either "cleansed away *with* our sins," as happens here, or "cleansed *from* our sins."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> BDB, p. 667.

<sup>38</sup> Baron, p. 146-7.

<sup>39</sup> Baldwin, p. 127.

<sup>40</sup> Baron, p. 149.

<sup>41</sup> Baron, p. 150.

It is important to note the impact of God's presence in the *midst* of His elect, which is always a blessing and protection (Zechariah 2:5, 2:10-11, 8:3, 8:8). The same holy presence, however, is a frightening prospect in the *midst* of the covenant breaker's dwelling, as portrayed so dramatically in this passage. Sinners are singled out for a thorough work of judgment,<sup>42</sup> just as God had threatened in Deuteronomy 29:21.

The work of divine judgment picture here is indeed thorough, as highlighted by the choice of the verb *chalah*. It includes the nuance of completion, here in the sense to destroy, consume, annihilate, or exterminate.<sup>43</sup> "Our God is a *consuming* fire" (Hebrews 12:29). Just as He displayed His power in consuming the altar--stones, timber, and all--before the eyes of the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:38), here he consumes the stones, timber, and all that constitutes the house of the covenant breaker.

**Verse 5.** The Angel again approaches the prophet, instructing him to once more lift up his eyes to see what is going forth. In view of these circumstances, some would urge us to consider the rest of the chapter a distinct vision.<sup>44</sup> However, the expulsion of sinners does not fully accomplish the removal of *sin itself* from the covenant realm; a "further sequel" is necessary.<sup>45</sup> In addition

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<sup>42</sup> Leopold, p. 102.

<sup>43</sup> BDB, p. 478; Holladay, p. 158.

<sup>44</sup> Leopold, p. 103.

<sup>45</sup> Wright, p. 111.

to earlier comments regarding the structure of this book, we ought to regard chapter 5 as one compound vision. Thus is effected the full and final removal of sin, "from the 'holy land,' and from the very presence of His redeemed and purified people."<sup>46</sup>

**Verse 6.** Just as the flying scroll went forth, now the ephah is the instrument of God's judgment that goes forth through a land dominated by lawlessness. Again we have a portrait of swift action. At times God allows sin to run its course and bring judgment on itself (Romans 1:24, 26ff), but in the present case He intervenes in a manner that foreshadows His final judgment. Like the scroll, the size of the ephah is enlarged beyond normal dimensions.<sup>47</sup>

In ancient times, the ephah was the greatest dry measure used by the Jews.<sup>48</sup> Thus we encounter measuring imagery again, as discussed in regard to verse 2 and other corresponding passages. In view of the ephah's contents (verses 7-8), it most likely symbolizes "a certain *measure of sin* beyond which the people cannot go with impunity."<sup>49</sup>

One dispensational commentator (Baron) develops the thought that the ephah indicates development of a new and evil commercial power, as Israel is transformed from an agricultural nation to one that engages in merchandising. While he acknowledges that

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<sup>46</sup> Baron, p. 155.

<sup>47</sup> Baldwin, p. 128.

commerce is not inherently sinful, he points to Revelation 18 as teaching that an evil system of commerce will characterize the last days before Christ's return. Thus the ephah is claimed to represent a growing commercialism characterized by greed, theft, and perjury.<sup>50</sup> Such sins do exist. This interpretation, however, imposes an inappropriate literalism on Revelation, whose symbolic language cannot be fully denied even by the most adamant dispensationalists. Zechariah does indeed present clear prophecy about the final inauguration of God's kingdom, but he does so using typological scenes from his own time. As the Jews are literally regathered after the Babylonian exile and restoration takes place, so in the last days God's elect, of all nations, will be gathered to enjoy eternity in His presence.

The phrase, "their eye in all the land," chosen over the possible textual emendation, is admittedly a difficult one to interpret. Calvin, despite his vote for "iniquity" in place of "eye," comments that:

"...the ungodly cannot be carried away at their own will, but God restrains them as He wills, and they cannot escape His sight."<sup>51</sup>

An alternative suggestion is that the thieves and perjurers of the land look longingly at the ephah, focused on material gain.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Feinberg, p. 88.

<sup>49</sup> Moore, p. 82 (emphasis added).

<sup>50</sup> Baron, p. 156-163.

<sup>51</sup> Calvin, p. 134.

<sup>52</sup> Wright, p. 115.

Clearly, the covenant land is dominated by corrupt practices. However, in light of the significant "eye" imagery found in other visions (discussed under textual variants), Calvin's comment is most appropriate. God's vision is all inclusive, as is His execution of judgment.

**Verse 7.** Our attention is abruptly called to a round lead covering, or lid, being lifted from the ephah and revealing the presence of one woman sitting in the middle of it. The word *chichar* is a round, lead disk, a cover. The same word is used to denote a "talent," a gold or silver unit of weight or value (1 Kings 9:14, 10:10, 20:39).<sup>53</sup> Since the talent is one of the two chief emblems and instruments of trade, commentator Baron utilizes this meaning to support his theory concerning a system of evil commercialism.<sup>54</sup> However, he appears to be reading more into the text than is warranted by the context, although there is perhaps some allusion to the sins of theft and lying, and to false weights (Amos 8:5). The simple idea of a round lead covering is sufficient; its removal exposes the presence of a woman whose identity is initially mysterious. As the curse lodged in the *middle* of the covenant breaker's home, so the woman is seen dwelling in the *middle* of the ephah. Normally a person wouldn't fit inside an ephah, but like the scroll, the ephah is enlarged

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<sup>53</sup> Holladay, p. 156.

<sup>54</sup> Baron, p. 159.

for the vision. Most of her body is hidden from view, "like the evil she represents."<sup>55</sup> Questions emerge. Who is this woman? Why a woman? The first question is addressed in the next verse, where we identify her with "wickedness." Female imagery is used elsewhere in Scripture for evil; Babylon in Revelation 18 is portrayed as a woman, and it is to this particular region that our ephah is destined to travel (5:11). One commentator speculates that a woman is chosen as imagery because of her power over men as a temptress.<sup>56</sup> This does sometimes happen (Proverbs 7; 9:13-18), and it was the first woman, Eve, who was initially deceived by Satan (1 Timothy 2:14). However, female imagery is also used for wisdom (Proverbs 8:1-9:12), and for the church as the glorious bride of Christ (Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2, 9). Perhaps the woman of wickedness here, so much like Babylon the harlot, is meant to contrast with the Bride of Christ, purchased with His blood. Similar imagery is used in Hosea 2 and Jeremiah 3, in addition to Revelation, where sin is portrayed as a woman who is unfaithful to her husband.<sup>57</sup>

**Verse 8.** "Wickedness" is a broad term used in civil relations as well as the ethical and religious spheres of life; it is translated *anomia* (lawlessness) in the LXX. Here it is

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<sup>55</sup> Baldwin, p. 128.

<sup>56</sup> Baron, p. 160.

<sup>57</sup> Deddens, p. 38.



personified as an enemy.<sup>58</sup> It is the antithesis of righteousness, justice, and truth. But is this the wickedness of enemies, such as those used by God to chastise His own people, or sin existing within the covenant community? Is it specific sinners in the covenant realm, or sin itself?

Reviewing the structural framework of the book, we remember that this vision is concerned specifically with the covenant land. In the earlier portion of this compound vision, individual sinners were consumed by God's curse. This leaves us with the conclusion, strengthened by the presence of the definite article, that sin itself is being removed to regions far beyond the bounds of the covenant realm, effecting a purification in anticipation of God's holy reign. In addition, we recall that God has driven away the enemy nations, unlawfully occupying His territory, in vision 2.<sup>59</sup>

The motif of casting down occurs twice, recalling the casting down of the horns in the first two visions, foreshadowing Christ's casting down of the dragon.<sup>60</sup> The woman is thrust into the middle of the ephah; since this was her original position, an attempted escape is implied. Sin is powerful, wanting to escape and perform its evil work among God's people.<sup>61</sup> The heavy cover of lead is thrust, like the woman, into the opening of the ephah. The fate of sin is sealed. Its removal is an indication that God will no

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<sup>58</sup> BDB, p. 958; Holladay, p. 347.

<sup>59</sup> Kline, "Messianic Avenger," p. 32.

<sup>60</sup> Kline, "Messianic Avenger," p. 31.

longer allow the devil to lead His people astray as in the past.<sup>62</sup> The sealing of sin with a *stone* of lead, as contrasted with the *round* of lead in the previous verse, perhaps alludes to the *stone* on the forehead of the priest, "acknowledging him as his own personal possession, sanctified unto him,"<sup>63</sup> "the supreme sign of renewal in the glory-image of the Spirit."<sup>64</sup> Engraving His inscription on that stone, the Lord declares His promise that He "will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" (3:9). This powerful imagery anticipates the work of Christ and the coming of the new covenant.

**Verse 9.** As the prophet once more lifts his eyes to behold the continuing prophetic vision, he encounters two winged women, placed on the scene as God's moving agents. Some have suggested that these two are cohorts of the wicked woman inside the ephah, delaying her fate; perhaps they are two evil worldly systems in the last days, or an apostate combination of Christianity and Judaism.<sup>65</sup> Such interpretation is hardly consistent with the context, in this and the other visions, where it is clearly *God Himself* who is engaged in a thorough work of purification. *God* sent forth the scroll and caused the curse to consume the covenant

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<sup>61</sup> Deddens, p. 38.

<sup>62</sup> Calvin, p. 136.

<sup>63</sup> Kline, "Serpent and Servant" (Part II), p. 28.

<sup>64</sup> Kline, "Serpent and Servant" (Part II), p. 30.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, p. 116; Baron, p. 165-166.

breaker and his home (5:1-4); surely it is God who also sends forth the ephah and assures its scheduled departure.

Storks are common in Palestine, particularly during migratory season. They fly at high altitudes over long distances. The use of their powerful wings is an efficient means of removing the ephah.<sup>66</sup> God uses them despite their status as unclean creatures (Leviticus 11:19), much as He used pagan nations as instruments to discipline His own people (Habakkuk 1:5-11), and as He foreordained the actions of wicked men to remove sin on behalf of His elect (Acts 2:23, 4:27-28). We can view this action of God as one rooted in His grace, much like the removal of Joshua's filthy garments (3:4).<sup>67</sup> The double meaning of *ruach*, for either wind or spirit, illustrates the imminent swift flight of sin to faraway places, along with the emphasis that God's *Spirit* is the ultimate power driving the excursion<sup>68</sup> (4:6).

**Verse 10.** "The angel who was speaking with me" is a recurrent phrase (1:9, 1:13, 1:14, 1:19, 2:3, 4:4, 4:5, 5:5) emphasizing the continued presence of the Angel of the Lord, whose identity was discussed earlier. The prophet's question alerts us that the intended destination of the ephah is significant. The picture presented in verse 9 alludes to a remote place, yet leaves

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<sup>66</sup> Leupold, p. 107.

<sup>67</sup> Baldwin, p. 129.

<sup>68</sup> Baldwin, p. 129.

the reader in suspense as to specifics, which we learn in the closing verse of this vision.

**Verse 11.** Shinar is the general region which encompasses the city of Babylon, doomed and fallen in Revelation 17-18. It is first mentioned in Genesis 10:10 as the land where Nimrod, descended from the reprobate line of Ham, established the beginnings of his kingdom. A few verses later, it is the home of the infamous Tower of Babel, wherein man's rebellion escalates and reaches a climax. God gathers His exiled elect from Shinar and other similar lands in Isaiah 11:11. When King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, he took vessels from the house of God and placed them in the idolatrous temple of his own god, located in Shinar (Daniel 1:2). Much like Babylon, this terrifying place is the epitome of evil. There is hardly a more appropriate place for the permanent residence of sin. When the Final Judgment occurs, there is to be a "total reversal in the power relationships of 'Jerusalem' and 'Babylon'."<sup>69</sup> God's dwelling in His temple, among His covenant people, contrasts sharply with the dwelling place of sin in the land of Shinar. In similar fashion, Zechariah employs the mountain motif to symbolize worldly opposition to His chosen place of dwelling (4:7, 6:1).<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Kline, "How Long?," p. 37.

<sup>70</sup> Kline, "Messianic Avenger," p. 27.

The images of "temple" and "base" (or pedestal) serve to portray sin in terms of idolatry. The intensified passive form (hophal) is used to describe the preparation of the ephah for its final resting place, and serves to emphasize its utter helplessness.<sup>71</sup> We are reminded of other descriptions of idolatry in Scripture, notably Psalm 115:1-8 and Jeremiah 10:3-5; idols must be carried and fastened in place by the hands of others, unable as they are to speak, to hear, to see, to smell, or to move. Further emphasis is gained in the second hophal form, wherein the ephah is forcibly thrust down and caused to rest permanently upon its base. In all of this there is a glorious picture of God's covenantal faithfulness, removing our transgressions "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12).

### **Conclusion and Summary**

Zechariah's theme, throughout both his visions and burdens, is the restoration and consummation of the kingdom of God.<sup>72</sup> The typological restoration experienced in the post-exilic community points toward the ultimate establishment of God's eternal reign. Zechariah emphasizes the necessary destruction of evil which must pave the way for the redemptive reconstruction of God's community, where He will dwell in the midst of His elect people. His vision

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<sup>71</sup> Baldwin, p. 129.

<sup>72</sup> Kline, "Rider of the Red Horse," p. 2.

of the ephah is a prelude to the final priestly offering for the removal of iniquity, when Christ would come to offer Himself as the sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12-14). Similarly, the destruction of covenant breakers, the thieves and those who swear falsely, points toward the renewal of the Glory image in righteousness and *truth* (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). The thorough nature of this work anticipates the events of Revelation, when Christ shall return in glory to effect the final overthrow of both spiritual and human enemies, ushering in the eternal state of God's glory.

## APPENDIX 1 Structure of Zechariah

### Structure of the Book

1. <b>INTRODUCTION</b> - Oracular Exhortation	1:1-6
2. <b>Visions</b>	1:7-6:8
3. <b>HINGE</b> - Symbolic Action of Prophet	6:9-15
4. <b>INTRODUCTION</b> - Oracular Instruction	7 - 8
5. <b>Burdens</b>	9 - 14

### Correspondence of the Visions and Burdens

		Visions		Burdens
<b>A</b>	<b>A</b>	1:7-17		9:1-17
<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>	1:18-21 **		10:1-4
<b>C</b>	<b>A'</b>	2:1-13		10:5-12
<b>D</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>3:1-10</b>	<b>HINGES</b>	<b>11:1-17</b>
<b>C'</b>	<b>A'</b>	4:1-14		12:1-31:1
<b>B'</b>	<b>B</b>	5:1-11 **		13:2-9 **
<b>A'</b>	<b>A</b>	6:1-8		14:1-21

\*\* Sections corresponding to the sixth vision of 5:1-11.

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