Rebuilding Jerusalem: Zechariah's Vision Within Visions

Kenneth A. Ristau

Chapter 12

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Kenneth A. Ristau (Pennsylvania State University)

1. *Introduction*

While the temple in Jerusalem and the administration of the new community forming around it are at the centre of Zechariah 1–8,[1] references to the physical city of Jerusalem are concentrated as book ends in the sections 1.8–3.10 and 7.1–8.23. Jerusalem or Zion is explicitly mentioned 23 times in these sections: in the first vision (1.8-17), the second vision (2.1-4), the third vision (2.5-9), the first set off exhortation (2.10-17), the fourth vision (3.1-10), and the prophet's reply to a question sent to Jerusalem (7.1–8.23). These visions and exhortations contain motifs or literary–ideological tropes of restoration and reconstruction, election and holiness, and the city as an *axis mundi*, which develop and bring to expression a vision or idea of Jerusalem as well as point to a reality behind the text in tension with that vision.

2. *The First Vision (1.8-17)*

The first vision in Zechariah 1–8 presents Jerusalem and the towns of Judah as the object of Yahweh's wrath and the angel of the Lord's implicit rhetorical appeal for compassion: 'O Yahweh of Hosts, how long will you not be compassionate to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah, which you cursed these seventy years?' (v. 12). This early complication of the prophetic book, therefore, centres on the condition of Jerusalem and the

1 Following convention and consensus, this paper treats Zechariah 1–8 as a discrete unit, probably written earlier and possibly by a different author than Zechariah 9–14. Although I typically specify chapters and verses, any undetermined references to Zechariah or the book of Zechariah in this paper refer to the first eight chapters only. Curtis (2006) recently put forward a systematic, comprehensive defence of unitary authorship for Zechariah and, in the course of doing so, provides an excellent overview of the state of research on this problem (see esp. pp. 231–76). Boda (2003a) provides an excellent survey of recent research and bibliography on Zechariah (and Haggai), including the questions of authorship and redaction.

towns of Judah; it is their plight at issue and the resolution of their negative situation that is the principal subject of the first vision, and arguably it remains one of the primary concerns of the whole prophetic book.

Certainly, the author of Zechariah 1–8 employs the literary device of synecdoche: Jerusalem and the towns of Judah are metonyms for the people who (should) inhabit them. The restoration of Jerusalem and the towns of Judah imply, even demand, the restoration of the people. Yet, the emphasis in Zechariah, after the initial call to moral penitence (1.1-6), through most of the next two chapters, is the physical Jerusalem, which the prophet personifies as a participant in the experience of exile and return. In the second and third visions, the city experiences the exile ('these are the horns that scattered … Jerusalem', 2.2) and is summoned to return from Babylon ('Now Zion escape, you who dwells with daughter Babylon', 2.11), which, while implying the people as the referent, unmistakably promotes the importance and centrality of the city for the cultural and religious identity of the people. Similarly, in the first vision, the oracles and exhortations address the physical city, not the people: Yahweh burns with jealousy for Zion and Jerusalem (v. 14) and, answering the angel's appeal, he announces his return to Jerusalem with 'compassions' (רחמים): his house will be built in her and the measuring line applied to her (v. 16). The pronouncements continue with declarations that Jerusalem and the towns of Judah will prosper, Zion will receive comfort, and Yahweh will again choose Jerusalem (v. 17). So, the city is a subject of concern in its own right.

The language of the first vision addresses this subject with a mix of ideology and pragmatism. The vision answers the angel's rhetorical appeal in v. 12 for compassion to replace indignation with a notable flourish. The use of the plural absolute רחמים in v. 16 counters the appeal for 'compassion' with 'compassions'. The vision also situates the text within the stream of biblical thought that identifies Jerusalem as the place 'chosen' by Yahweh.[2] In the context of a competition among cult places, the language is exclusive as is the claim concerning the house in v. 16, which is by inference a singular house.[3] Arguably too, looking back at v.

2 1 Kgs 8.16, 44, 48; 11.13, 32, 36; 14.21; 2 Kgs 21.7; 23.27; Pss. 78.68; 132.13; 2 Chron. 6.5, 6, 34, 38; 12.13; 33.7.

3 See especially. the recent contribution of Knowles (2006), who examines archaeological and biblical evidence of and problems with centrality or (competing) centralities in the popular worship and religion of the Persian period. Notably too, Knoppers (2003: 314–21) presents and evaluates evidence for Persian-period Yahwistic temples and sanctuaries and the influence competition among them may have had on the Chronicler's portrait of Jerusalem while Frey (1999), whose focus is the Hellenistic period but whose insights are still relevant for the Persian period, provides a useful, if in parts problematic, survey of potential rivals to the Jerusalem temple.

12, there is implicit political rhetoric embedded in the phrase 'Jerusalem and the towns of Judah'. The expression suggests continuity with the pre-exilic southern polity of Judah and, by the conspicuous absence of 'Israel', discontinuity with the Israelite state.[4]

The mix of ideology and pragmatism also comes through in the depiction of the harsh realities of the Neo-Babylonian conquest (v. 15), the alienation of the patron deity from the land (vv. 12, 16), and the divine authorization for reconstruction (vv. 16–17). Throughout these verses, there is simultaneously an admission of Jerusalem's abject condition as well as interaction with an ideological discourse that invites utopian expectations.[5] In v. 12, the messenger's appeal for compassion and reference to a curse (זעם) upon Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and, in v. 15, Yahweh's admission of anger, which had been compounded by the evil of the nations, and even the announcement of Yahweh's desire and intent to return and bless Jerusalem in vv. 16–17 highlight a real situation of destruction and distress. Notably, the threefold repetition of 'again' (ודע) in v. 17, which intensifies Yahweh's promises of prosperity, divine comfort and election for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, also inescapably highlights the absence of these conditions in the past and the implied present. However, the allusion to seventy years, which likely draws on the seventy-year prophecy in Jer. 25.11-12; 29.10 (Orr 1956; Fishbane 1985: 479–85; Winkle 1987a; 1987b; Tollington 1993: 184–85; Applegate 1997) and the proclamation of divine authorization to rebuild the temple and the city – announced in the first-person voice of the deity – brings the text into dialogue with ideologies embedded in prophetic literature and ancient Near Eastern building and restoration texts and so evokes the utopian expectations for restoration and reconstruction that

4 Although references to Israel in 2.2 and especially the 'House of Israel' in 8.13 show that the author perceives northern Israel as sharing a common heritage, Judah and Jerusalem are undeniably at the centre of the author's hope for restoration (see esp. 2.16; 7.7; 8.15). The reference in 8.13 perhaps belies that exclusivity but I would argue that the reference to the 'House of Israel' – if it is meant to denote a political entity rather than an ethnic/tribal one – is primarily retrospective; its future salvation and blessing, given the context, presume its political and cultic subordination to Jerusalem. On Israel in Zechariah 1–8, see the brief discussion by Danell (1946: 266–67). For a more thorough analysis of postexilic thought concerning the concept of Israel, see Williamson (1977) and, more problematically, the recent contribution of Davies (2005).

5 Boda (2006) traces this theme throughout Haggai and Zechariah 1–8, concluding of the authors that 'by doing this they were imposing a temporary myopia on their community as a strategy for dealing with life under the hegemony of a great power. Such short-sighted focus on the temple project enabled the community to concentrate and combine their efforts in the midst of the present dystopia in hopes of the inauguration of their utopia.'

often typify these texts (Boda 2006).[6] Still, that there is no reference to Jerusalem's place at the centre of the nations (at this point in the text) and reference to the 'measuring line' in v. 16, which places a pragmatic invitation and plan for reconstruction at the centre of the ideological messages concerning the return of Yahweh on the one hand (v. 16a) and Yahweh's promises on the other (v. 17), keeps the whole vision anchored in a tangible reality.

3. *The Second Vision (2.1-4)*

In the second vision, an angel identifies Jerusalem, with Judah and Israel, as having been 'scattered' by the 'four horns' (v. 2).[7] There is a certain incongruity in the images of the vision, which either evokes an industrial or agricultural motif (Love 1999: 179–96). The verb 'scatter' (זרה) is often an agricultural motif, reflected in its alternative connotation 'to winnow' (e.g., Isa. 30.24; Ruth 3.2). It is common as a prophetic metaphor or motif for the exile, especially in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, with the people as the explicit or implicit object.[8] It is, however, also used in industrial settings with reference to scattering the remains of images or idols (Exod. 32.20; Isa. 30.22) and, in another case, the burnt coals from a fire (Num. 16.37), though, notably, this industrial image never reinforces a prophetic metaphor of the exile. Still, expected accompaniments of the agricultural motif are images of threshing floors, winnowing forks, wind or gathering;[9] by contrast, this vision features images of קרנות (vv. 1–2, 4), either evoking the metal or stone horns of an altar, the metal horns of a soldier's helmet or the horns of oxen, and חרשים (vv. 3–4), which can denote a craftsmen or plougher.

Horns are frequently a politico-cultic motif to symbolize authority and sovereignty (see 'Horn', in Ryken, Wilhoit and Longman 1998: 400; Love 1999: 179–96; Meyers and Meyers 1987: 135–37; Niditch 1983: 122–24;

6 Boda (2006) is perhaps the most recent scholar to draw parallels between Zechariah 1–6 and Mesopotamian building and restoration texts but see also Lipinski 1970; Petersen 1974; 1984; Halpern 1978; Laato 1994; and more generally on such parallels in the Bible, see esp. Bedford 2001 and Hurowitz 1992.

7 The Freer-Washington papyrus and the Alexandrinus and Marchalianus codices omit 'Jerusalem'. One Greek witness omits 'Israel' but preserves 'Jerusalem'. Many Greek texts, including a probable reconstruction of the Naḥal Ḥever Minor Prophets scroll (Tov, Kraft and Parsons 1990: 71), as well as the Vulgate and the Peshitta, however, support the Hebrew in listing all three. For discussions of the problem, see Hanhart 1998: 97–98 and Meyers and Meyers 1987: 138.

8 Lev. 26.33; 1 Kgs 14.15; Isa. 41.16; Jer. (4.11); 15.7; 31.10; 49.32, 36; Ezek. 5.2, 10, 12; 6.8; 12.14, 15; 20.23; 22.15; 29.12; 30.23, 26; 36.19; Pss. 44.11; 106.27. Similarly, in Jer. 51.2, the Babylonians are the subject while in Ezek. 29.12; 30.23, 26 the Egyptians are the subject.

9 The wind motif appears later in Zech. 2.10 and 6.5.

Süring 1980). Often ancient Near Eastern iconography, myth and prophecy employ oxen or the bull – potentially the horned animals symbolized by the metonym – as a destructive force. Symbolic of the nations or rulers who effected the exile(s), namely Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian kings, horns are an appropriate image, and as indicative of oxen, fall within the agricultural domain (Boda 2005: 63). Oxen are probably preferable to an altar or a soldier's helmet as the thing symbolized by the horns because the former can not execute the action that the horns of this vision perform, namely 'scattering' Judah, Israel and Jerusalem, and the latter ultimately points to the image of oxen in any case (Boda 2005: 61–63; cf. Good 1982: 59).

The reference to the חרשים presents greater difficulties for an agricultural motif because it is not typically taken to refer to an agricultural occupation. More often, it is translated as 'artisans' or 'blacksmiths', though another, often neglected, possibility is 'ploughers', which would alleviate the tension in the images (Good 1982: 56–59; Boda 2005: 62). Certainly, the nominal form חָרָשׁ always refers to an artisan or blacksmith[10] and the LXX reads τέκτονας ('carpenters' or 'artisans'), which assumes the former reading. Significantly though, the meaning 'plougher' is attested three times in the Hebrew Bible and in every case it is a substantive participial form of חרש (Isa. 28.24; Amos 9.13; Ps. 129.3) as here. The context, established by the verb 'scatter', also strongly favours this translation and, when read as 'ploughers' rather than 'artisans', all of the imagery is actually quite consistent (Good 1982).

The vision, therefore, probably captures an agricultural scene where two oxen have trampled unrestrained over the fields and scattered the harvest. In response, Yahweh sends ploughers to 'throw down the horns', that is, the ploughers round up and harness or domesticate the oxen (Good 1982: 58–59). The vision, therefore, portrays the reinstitution of order in the lands of the Near East and the domestication of foreign powers to Yahweh's rule. It is undoubtedly significant that this reading resonates with Yahweh's exasperation at the nations for their unbridled destruction (v. 15). In this way, there is also a logical progression from the first vision through this vision and into the third vision. As Good observes, this vision portrays a critical step in the reconstruction of Jerusalem; it envisions the removal of Israel's enemies from its lands, presumably by the Persian kings (1982: 59). There is progress, therefore, from a declaration of Yahweh's return and divine authorization to rebuild in the first vision to the recovery of the land in this vision to the third

10 Exod. 28.11; 35.35; 38.23; Deut. 27.15; 1 Sam. 13.19; 2 Sam. 5.11; 2 Kgs 12.12; 22.6; 24.14, 16; Isa. [3.3]; 40.19, 20; 41.7; 44.11, 12, 13; 45.16; 54.16; Jer. 10.3, 9; 24.1; 29.2; Ezek. 21.36; Hos. 8.6; 13.2; Ezra 3.7; 1 Chron. 4.14; 14.1; 22.15; 29.5; 2 Chron. 24.12; 34.11.

vision in which the reconstruction of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah commences.

3. *The Third Vision (2.5-9) and the First Set off Exhortations (2.10-17)*

With the enemies of Israel removed, the third vision picks up on the divine authorization to rebuild proclaimed in 1.15-17. The third vision opens with a scene of a man measuring Jerusalem for its width and length (2.5-6). The 'measuring line' (חבל מדה) in v. 5 and the measuring described in v. 6 evoke a common occupational domain and activity with the word 'line' (קוה) in 1.16, though focuses the action more specifically. The קוה is used in connection with most stages of construction, including land surveying, marking or determining dimensions, and justifying corners and walls while the חבל, on the other hand, is used exclusively in the Hebrew Bible with reference to land surveys, especially for the purposes of measuring and apportioning territory (Amos 7.17; Mic. 2.4-5; Pss. 16.6; 78.55).[11] Significantly, as already suggested in my discussion of 1.16, these references to trade tools emphasize the pragmatic nature of the call to restoration and elevate the activities associated with these mundane tools to an important part in the divine plan; these tools are the divinely ordained and authorized means to restore Jerusalem and, by reference to these tools, the author of these visions invites human participation to enact the divine plan. Hard work not divine intervention alone, or royal beneficence for that matter (cf. Chronicles and Ezra–Nehemiah), will effect the reconstruction of Jerusalem.

Strikingly though, the third vision introduces a somewhat unexpected caveat to the reconstruction of Jerusalem. Following the image of a man measuring Jerusalem for its width and length (2.5-6), an angel is sent running after this man to tell him 'like villages without walls, Jerusalem will dwell' (v. 7–8).[12] The angel explains that the men and cattle in

11 Floyd (2000: 363–64) observes this point and then argues that 'these contrasting connotations serve to emphasize that the rebuilding of new edifices, which involve the use of a קוה, has now become extensive enough to entail the use of a חבל מדה. The third vision thus signals that the prophecy of the first vision (1.14b-17) has begun to be fulfilled.' While the conclusion is correct in my opinion, the argument is flawed. Surveys, involving the חבל מדה, would have to precede the construction of buildings and walls and consequently Floyd's understanding of the relationship of one term to the other is not accurate. Nevertheless, the first vision is a summary and commission to rebuild Jerusalem while the third vision actually describes the first step in that process of reconstruction: the surveying of the land.

12 This seems the most likely reading, though Meyers and Meyers (1987: 154–56) suggest another attractive reading: 'Jerusalem will be inhabited, with its villages'. The object, 'villages', lacks an expected preposition and so either a ב or כ is a plausible inference. The

Jerusalem will be too numerous (v.8) and that Yahweh will be a wall of fire around the city and the glory in it (v. 9). This vision, therefore, seems to reflect a community that is self-conscious about the lack of walls in Jerusalem and reads as ideological spin that turns the absence of walls into an occasion for divine legitimacy and presence. The rhetoric evokes the juxtaposition of fire and glory in Deut. 5.24, Isa. 4.5 and 2 Chron. 7.1-3 as well as the unfolding of Yahweh's presence in the pillar of fire, at Sinai or descending upon the tabernacle in Exodus (13.21-22; 14.24; 19.18; 24.17; 40.38). Also, Petersen suggests a possible parallel to the Achaemenid Persian capital of Pasargadae, which had no walls and was surrounded by 'fire altars that symbolized the cosmic god Ahura Mazda' (1984: 171). In any case, this particular declaration stands in contrast to the concern for Jerusalem's walls in Ps. 51.18 and, more notably, the book of Nehemiah, as well as the ideological tendency in Chronicles and even in Zechariah up to this point to associate building projects with divine blessing.[13]

This caveat though amplifies the central claim of Zechariah's visions, namely that Yahweh's return to Jerusalem, which will effect and consummate the re-election of the city, is the essential ideological precursor to its renewal and revival. This ideological conviction parallels other ancient Near Eastern building texts. Perhaps most immediately, Yahweh's indignation, implied abandonment of the city, subsequent compassion and return is typologically and ideologically similar to Marduk's indignation and rejection of Babylon and subsequent compassion and return as recounted in Esarhaddon's Babylon inscription (*CoS* 2.120) and in the Cyrus Cylinder (*CoS* 2.124). Interestingly, however, both those texts centre on the roles played by Esarhaddon and Cyrus respectively, as agents of Marduk, in bringing about a reversal of fortune. In Zechariah to this point, any agents of Yahweh, such as the 'four ploughers' in 2.3-4, go unnamed. The restoration is almost exclusively the

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Meyers's reading also has the advantage that there is no explicit statement, comparable to באין חומה in Ezek. 38.11, to indicate the absence of walls; it is only implied by פרזות (see Deut. 3.5; 1 Sam. 6.18; Ezek. 38.11). This verse, however, is a highly stylized tetracolon in which stichs 1 and 3 and 2 and 4 correspond. Stichs 2 and 4 concern the presence of the multitude and the glory (of Yahweh) in the midst of the city while stichs 1 and 3 presumably concern the walls, as this is clearly the concern of stich 3. Furthermore, there is no third-person-singular suffix on פרזות as one would expect for the Meyers's reading – and which the Meyers supply in translation – if the text referred to the satellite villages surrounding Jerusalem (cf. Zech. 7.7). Yet, even if the Meyers's reading is accepted, the absence of the walls would still be implied, though admittedly not demanded, by the third stich. It is also conceivable that the ambiguity is deliberate and that the author, in such a short space, employs this ambiguity to communicate that Jerusalem expands with its villages and also that Jerusalem, like its villages, has no need of walls.

13 On this tendency in Zechariah 1–8, especially in connection with ancient Near Eastern building texts, see Boda (2006). On Chronicles, see esp. Welten (1973: 9–78).

work of Yahweh. This may be part of the reason that the visions and especially the first set off exhortations in 2.10-17 substitute the city in place of the people. There is no royal authorization, only divine authorization. Yahweh simply calls forth the city out of Babylon (v. 11) and she returns to her place in the 'Holy Land' (v. 16).

Striking too is the universalistic vision of the people in v. 15, the first occurrence of עם in the book. In this verse, 'many nations' join themselves to Yahweh and Yahweh makes them his people and affirms that he will dwell in their midst, which presupposes that this new people will live in Jerusalem. It is tempting to see this, in addition to its obvious parallels to universal themes in Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah, as an allusion to Babylon's multi-ethnic milieu and centrality in the ancient Near Eastern world. At the very least, there is an implicit connection and contrast created between Jerusalem and Babylon. From the physical dislocation/collocation of Zion in Babylon to the parallel phrases בת־בבל and בת־ציון in v. 11 and v. 14 to the typological and ideological similarities between historical representations of Babylon and the representation of Jerusalem as a universal capital, Zechariah's visions seem to belie a subtle envy of Babylon, hidden only by a modicum of the usual scorn reserved for it (vv. 13; 5.5-11; cf. Boda [forthcoming]). It would seem Babylon, obviously shorn of its 'pagan' elements and infused with Yahwism, is a city Jerusalem ought to be or, better, should supersede.[14]

In any case, the critical element of the exhortations in vv. 10–17 is the reversal of Yahweh's alienation from the city, marked by his return and the divine authorization to rebuild. When Yahweh affirms that he will dwell in the midst of 'daughter Zion' and the 'many nations', which he takes as his people (vv. 14–15), by implication at Jerusalem, the language seems chosen for this context to keep continuity with the rhetoric in v. 9. The verb 'dwell' is not the standard ישב but rather שכן, which often has a cultic nuance because of its etymological relationship to the *maqtal* noun משכן ('tabernacle'), its use (as here) with בתוך ('in the midst of') in the Torah and elsewhere, and always with reference to Yahweh's presence with his people (Exod. 25.8; 29.45-46; Num. 5.3; 35.43; 1 Kgs 6.13; Ezek. 43.7, 9), as well as its liturgical use in the Psalms to evoke images of archaic Israel or to verbalize the presence of Yahweh (Pss. 15.1; 68.16, 18; 74.2; 78.55, 60; 85.9; 120.5-6; 135.21).

Such links to Israel's formative epic may have also motivated the assertion that Yahweh will inherit Judah as his portion (v. 16), which draws on two key words, 'to inherit' (נחל) and 'portion' (חלק),

14 In my opinion, this is even more explicit in 8.23 in which Jerusalem's unassailable universal dominion is unequivocally envisioned (see my discussion ad loc).

prominent in the land discourse in the Torah and the book of Joshua.[15] Of course, in this instance, it is Yahweh who inherits and takes possession, not the Israelites; ironic language in a religious system that would confess all the earth belongs to Yahweh already (see esp. Ps. 82.8). Yet, it is not unique in the Hebrew Bible. The language actually echoes the claim that Israel is Yahweh's inheritance (Exod. 19.5-6; 34.9; Deut. 32.9; Jer. 10.16; 51.19). A certain incongruity still obtains in that the object is land and not a people, but this may serve to impart some of the meaning into the text: Yahweh claims his portion in the 'Holy Land' (אדמת הקדש) to be set apart from the other lands of the world just as he claimed Israel as a 'holy people' (גוי קדוש) to be set apart from the other peoples of the world.

Noticeably, referring to the land as אדמת הקדש – the only occurrence of this phrase in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Exod. 3.5; Ezek. 48.12-13) – invites reading the 'holy habitation' (מעון קדש) in v. 17 – a phrase used only elsewhere to refer to heaven (Deut. 26.15; Jer. 25.30; Ps. 68.6; 2 Chron. 30.27) – as synonymous, in which case the land is 'heaven on earth'. Moreover, the phrase 'and he will choose again Jerusalem' in 2.16b reintroduces the centrality of Jerusalem within Judah, and so puts the city at the centre of this Holy Land, at the apex of the holy habitation.[16] As the abode of the people and the divine, this portrait draws Jerusalem at the intersection of the human and divine planes; it is undeniably an axis mundi. The phrase is also a verbatim repetition of 1.17, and so completes an inclusio and serves as a conclusion that recapitulates and highlights the central focus of the whole unit. The inclusio circumscribes the prophecies and defines them as a treatise on Yahweh's re-election of Jerusalem.

4. *The Fourth Vision (3.1-10)*

The fourth vision concerns the high priest, Joshua, and so marks a turning point in Zechariah towards the emphasis on the temple and the community around it, which occupies the book's central chapters. Still, in 3.2, Yahweh identifies himself and rebukes the adversary by the name 'Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem'. This divine epithet consummates 1.17–2.16 and confirms its literary purpose; the re-election of Jerusalem is now past tense, so much so that Yahweh is named by that action.

The epithet also echoes another postexilic text, 2 Chron. 32.19, in which

15 More immediately, 'portion' (חלק) refers back to the land survey of Jerusalem in 2.5-6. As discussed above, the 'measuring line' (חבל מדה) is usually used to apportion land. In fact, חבל can also mean 'region', which is a synonym of 'portion' (see esp. Deut. 32.9; Josh. 19.9). Is the man measuring Jerusalem so that Yahweh can (re-)assert his (rightful) land claim?

16 It is perhaps notable, however, that an epithet like 'holy city' (עיר הקדש) does not appear here but see Zech. 8.3 and my discussion *ad loc*.

the Chronicler identifies Yahweh as the god of Jerusalem. Though this seems like conventional biblical language, as Mitchell observes of the title in 2 Chron. 32.19, it is actually quite unusual (Mitchell 2004). The epithet's particularity stands in stark contrast to the cosmic epithet 'Yahweh of Hosts', the commonly used title in Zechariah 1–8. It reduces Yahweh from being a god of the whole cosmos, as especially envisioned in 1.8-11, to a god particular to Jerusalem, a patron deity. This text, like 2 Chron. 32.19, reflects the tension within Yahwism between universalistic themes and a desire for particularity.[17] It also shows, and this is a point that goes unobserved by Mitchell, the move to subsume both the universal and the particular in a theology of Jerusalem that places the city at the centre of the world, as a home to the nations, though these nations are clearly under the dominion of Judah's patron Yahweh and, by extension, Yahweh's chosen people.

5. *Jerusalem in Zechariah 7.1–8.23*

The portrait of Jerusalem in the closing section of Zechariah 1–8 returns to some of the themes and motifs in Zech. 1.8–3.10. It is a much shorter section though and so not all the concerns of those chapters are presented again, most conspicuously the building typology. After a date formulation that establishes a setting a little over a year and half after the date of the visions in 1.7, this section starts with reference to a question sent to the priests and prophets of the temple in Jerusalem (7.1-3). The question is whether the mourning for the first temple, observed in the fifth month, should continue. This question precipitates a digression in a series of exhortations spoken by Yahweh (7.4–8.17) before it yields to a short answer (8.18-19) and a final eschatological oracle (8.20-23).[18] While a digression per se, the exhortations are an important foundation for the answer in 8.18-19 and very significant in terms of the overall portrait of Jerusalem's present and future.

The premise of the entire unit is intriguing, though the details are obscured by textual problems in Zech. 7.2-3. Specifically, the absence of an object marker in v. 2 is problematic because it is unclear who asks the

17 I am not so sure though that Zechariah reflects the same level of psychological tension that Mitchell (2004) ascribes to the Chronicler on account of 2 Chron. 32.19.

18 The redactional history, or alternatively unity, of this passage is a matter of considerable debate (see esp. Boda 2003b and the literature cited therein). Although grammatical and lexical incongruities may point to redactional expansions, the digression ultimately relates to the question asked in v. 3, simply expanding the 'liturgical and communal extent' of the discussion and moving it 'beyond the ritual level to the question of motives and ethics' (Boda 2003b: 399). As such, by using the word 'digression' or 'digressions', I do not mean to rule out the unity of the passage or formally distinguish between original content and subsequent expansions.

question of v. 3. Unfortunately, all the potential readings present difficulties. The earliest readings available in the ancient translations take בית־אל semantically as a place name and syntactically as an accusative of place. While the LXX reads εἰς Βαιθηλ ('to Bethel'), the Peshitta and the Targums add a preposition to בית־אל, which allows reading with either the LXX or the Vulgate's 'ad domum Dei' ('to the House of God'). Notably, Blenkinsopp tentatively favours the reading in the LXX (2003: 100) but his argument is problematic on several counts. First, the Peshitta and the Targums do not disambiguate the meaning of בית־אל and so do not provide the support that Blenkinsopp assumes for reading 'Bethel' instead of 'House of God'. Second, while there is no explicit statement that Jerusalem is the place to which the message is sent, v. 3a clarifies that the message is sent to the 'priests of the House of Yahweh of Hosts', which most likely refers to priests of the temple in Jerusalem (Hag. 1.14; Zech. 8.9; 14.21). Granted, if the testimony of Ezra is accepted, this temple had not been rebuilt yet (see Ezra 6.14-15 and cf. Zech. 7.1) but, Ezra testifies, as does Haggai and Zechariah, that significant steps towards its reconstruction had taken place by Darius' fourth year and moreover, the priests, including the high priest, were present there; all of this notwithstanding the possibility that Zech. 7.1-3 provides an alternative, earlier *terminus ad quem* for its reconstruction.[19] Third, the implied historical setting for the prophet and the book is Jerusalem, and so, as the prophet is the one who replies to the letter, the context strongly implies the message is sent to Jerusalem; indeed, cultic rites for Jerusalem's temple seem to be the subject of the question, as the reply also reinforces. Fourth, the book of Zechariah repeatedly affirms that Yahweh's presence is in Jerusalem and notably the exact phrase לחלות את־פני יהוה ('to entreat before Yahweh') in v. 2 is repeated in 8.21 and 8.22 as the purpose of a universal ingathering, pilgrimage, to Jerusalem. So, from Zechariah's perspective, where else but in Jerusalem would you 'entreat' Yahweh?

Still, the reading of the Peshitta, the Targums and the Vulgate, taking בית־אל to denote the 'House of God' and as the accusative of place, remains a distinct possibility. Also, another alternative, not attested in the ancient translations, is reading בית־אל as a theophoric element in the first name of a series, that is, 'Bethel-shar-ezer and Regem-melech and his men'. Both these alternatives though, either reading בית־אל as an accusative of place (as 'House of God') or as a theophoric element in the first name, requires that (1) the subject is absent, which would be a strange omission by the author or an early textual corruption for which we have no evidence, or (2) the subject is '(Bethel-)shar-ezer and Regem-melech

19 Marinovic (1994) suggests a further possibility to read בית as 'community' rather than temple, given the broader usage of the word in the book.

and his men', which would ideally be reflected with a plural rather than singular verb.

One more possibility that avoids both these problems is reading אל־בית as Bethel but instead of as the accusative of place, as the subject and, therefore, 'Shar-ezer and Regem-melech and his men' as the 'object' sent (Meyers and Meyers 1987: 379, 382–84). This is awkward though too because שלח always takes a personal subject.[20] Furthermore, while this option may be consistent with the personification of towns (chiefly Jerusalem) in Zechariah 1–8, and invites some potentially interesting insights on the political and cultic dynamics of the early Persian period, the lack of any compelling parallels to justify taking Bethel as the subject makes this reading especially problematic.

In my view, the least problematic readings are '(Bethel-)shar-ezer, and Regem-melech and his men, sent (to the 'House of God') to entreat the favour of Yahweh'. The lack of number agreement and the absence of the direct object, though less than ideal, are not unattested, especially with this verb, in cases that the implied object is a message or messengers. Plural subjects (not collectives) for the singular verb are attested in Neh. 6.2; 1 Chron. 19.6; and probably Jer. 39.13, though it is possible only Nebuchadnezzar sends in the latter verse, while the absence of an object for this verb is ubiquitous in the Hebrew Bible.[21] Unfortunately, little can be made of this conclusion because it is highly tentative and because of the uncertainty that remains, that is, whether to read Bethel as an accusative of place or a theophoric element.[22] Regardless of these problems though, the key element of the presentation is that Jerusalem is portrayed, even at

20 The only conceivable parallels are Num. 21.21 // Judg. 11.19 and Judg. 11.17 where Israel is the subject of שלח. In these passages though, Israel does not read as a place name but rather denotes a wandering tribe.

A variation of the present proposal would resolve this problem of an impersonal subject. Taking a cue from Marinovic's (1994) argument to read בית as 'community' rather than 'house' in several passages in Zechariah would provide a personal subject: 'The community of God sent Shar-ezer and Regem-melech and his men to entreat before Yahweh'. While the semantic argument is doubtful – Marinovic lacks even one unequivocal occurrence where בית in construct with God or Yahweh means 'community' or 'group' – it is an ideal solution grammatically and even makes considerable contextual sense in that the reply is addressed to a broad audience. The semantic problem, however, ultimately makes the solution improbable.

21 Regarding the latter observation, see, e.g., Gen. 20.2; 27.42; 31.4; 41.8, 14; Num. 21.32; Josh. 2.3; 10.3; 11.1; 24.9; Judg. 4.6; 1 Sam. 4.4; 16.12, 22; 25.39; 2 Sam. 3.15; 9.5; 10.5, 16; 11.3, 5, 6, 14, 18, 27; 13.7; 14.2, 29; 19.12; 1 Kgs 1.53; 2.36, 42; 5.16, 22; 7.13; 18.20; 2 Kgs 3.7; 5.8; 6.9, 10; 7.14; 10.1, 5, 21; 11.4; 12.18; 14.9; 18.14; 19.20; 23.1, 16; Isa. 37.21; Jer. 37.17; 38.14; 39.13; Hos. 5.13; Amos 7.10; Ps. 105.20; Job 1.4, 5; Est. 5.10; Neh. 6.2; 2 Chron. 2.2, 10; 10.3; 25.17, 18; 25.27; 28.16; 30.1; 34.29; 36.10, 15.

22 In light of this conclusion, a particularly attractive hypothesis, suggested by others before, is that the question is sent from exiles in Babylonia. If this reading is accepted, however, it must be observed that the prophet replies not to the delegation but to 'the people

this awkward stage in its history, as a subject of some veneration and its cultic personnel as an authority in cultic matters.

In the reply to the question, Jerusalem is the subject of a series of promises in Yahweh's exhortations (8.1-8), which are bounded by admonitions to the people to live rightly and uphold justice (7.4-14 and 8.9-17), and also the subject of the final eschatological oracle (8.20-23). The organization of the section intimates that the imperatives to live rightly and uphold justice are the conditions for the fulfilment and continuation of the promises concerning Jerusalem. Significantly, the setting for the imperatives in the first set of admonitions (7.4-14) is clearly urban. This is made explicit by the reference to Jerusalem at the outset of the historical illustration as well as the specific nature of the admonitions. The historical reference is the time of the former or first prophets, which is characterized as a time 'when Jerusalem was inhabited and at peace and her cities surrounding her and the Negev and the Shephelah were inhabited' (7.7). While this is a possible counter-textual allusion to the depressed condition of the prophet's own time, the context is not immediately conducive to such a reading. Rather, characterizing the former time in this way serves to create a contrast not with the author's present but with the time of exile as described in 7.11-14. It stresses the capacity of and necessity for the people to undertake their responsibility to live rightly and uphold justice; the city was prosperous and so without an excuse. Still, the logic and resonance of the argument for the primary community of readers ultimately depends on its *qal vahomer* style.[23] The premise is Jerusalem at its zenith was not immune to Yahweh's wrath when they failed to uphold justice and so 'how-much-more' ought the people of the prophet's Jerusalem listen and adhere to Yahweh's words. To that extent, the *qal vahomer* style implies that the author's Jerusalem is not immediately comparable to its pre-exilic predecessor. In any case, the message of the admonition is straightforward: Jerusalem's peace and population depend on the city's ethical character (Marinovic 1994: 95–101; Boda 2003c).

The same message is reiterated in the second set of admonitions, which remain centred in Jerusalem, though now a postexilic Jerusalem. The historical reference point for the illustration is the time of the prophets who spoke when the foundation of the temple was laid (8.9). In this case, the poor economic conditions of that time are juxtaposed with new promises from Yahweh for prosperity, symbolized primarily in environ-

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of the land and the priests' (7.5). At least to some extent though, this is required by any reading because of the reference to the priests, who are presumably the priests of 7.3 to whom the question was, in part, sent.

23 *Qal vahomer* is an argument from minor to major, i.e., 'if this is true, how much more so is this true'.

mental effusion (8.10-13). Yahweh explicitly declares his intention 'to do good to Jerusalem' (8.14) but immediately reiterates that this is conditional on living rightly and upholding justice. Notably, the list of right actions includes the idiom to 'administer justice in your gates' (8.16), a motif at the intersection of the urban and rural worlds.

The substance of the 'good' Yahweh intends to do for Jerusalem is captured in the pericope bounded by the admonitions. In 8.1-8, Yahweh stipulates to five major points, which evoke and amplify elements of the portrait of Jerusalem in 1.7–3.10:

1 He reiterates and amplifies his jealousy for Zion (8.2; cf. 1.14).
2 He reconfirms his zeal to return to Zion and dwell there (8.3; cf. 1.16; 2.9, 14–15).
3 He promises that the city will be filled once again with old and young, signifying a multi-generational community of native inhabitants (8.4-5).
4 He pledges to save the exiles and bring them to Jerusalem (8.7-8a; cf. 2.6-7).
5 He expresses his desire to restore the patron-client relationship between himself and his people (8.8b; cf. 2.15).

The rhetorical question in 8.6 – 'For if it would be too difficult in the eyes of this remnant of the people in these days, would it be too difficult also in my eyes?' – interrupts the list and points to the exceptional nature of these pledges in light of the prevailing conditions in Jerusalem. Strikingly, the forward-looking aspect of the promises suggests the exile is not over and so seems to reflect a perception that either the restoration had so far failed or at least had only just begun. This perception lays the groundwork for later theological reflections, particularly that of Daniel 9 in which the 'seventy years' prophecy of Jer. 25.11 and 29.10 (cf. Zech. 1.12; 7.5; 2 Chron. 36.21) is presented as failed and its promises delayed sevenfold, that is, seventy weeks of years (see Bergsma in this volume).

Significantly, in the course of making these stipulations, Yahweh proposes to rename Jerusalem 'the city of truth' (עיר האמת) and 'the holy mountain' (הר הקדש). The epithet 'the city of truth' is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible, though it echoes Isaiah's 'faithful city' (קריה נאמנה, Isa. 1.21, 26). The epithet 'the holy mountain' is rarely formulated with the definite article (only here and Isa. 27.13 and Jer. 31.23) but, in comparable formulations, the declaration is quite common in the biblical corpus, though predominantly in later texts.[24] The first epithet echoes the call to justice in the surrounding admonitions (see 7.9; 8.16) while the

24 See, e.g., הר קדשי (Isa. 11.9; 56.7; 57.13; 65.11, 25; 66.20; Ezek. 20.40; Joel 2.1; 4.17; Zeph. 3.11; Ps. 2.6), הר קדשו (Pss. 3.5; 48.2; 99.9), הר קדשך (Pss. 15.1; 43.3; Dan. 9.16), הררי קדש (Ps. 87.1), הר קדש אלהים (Ezek. 28.41), הר קדש אלהי (Dan. 9.20) and הר צבי קדש (Dan. 11.45).

second looks back to the parallel epithets אדמת הקדש and מעון קדש in 2.16-17. It revisits the holiness motif and definitively asserts that Jerusalem is the apex, 'the holy mountain', of the 'Holy Land' and Yahweh's 'holy habitation'.

The closing exhortation returns to the universal–particular dichotomy reflected in, and discussed earlier in connection with, 1.8–2.17. In 8.20-22, Yahweh's exhortation starts with the motif of universality but, in 8.23, universality is clearly subsumed under particularity. The image in 8.20-22 articulates an occasional biblical image of the ingathering of the nations to Jerusalem to seek and petition Yahweh (see esp. Isa. 2.2-3; 60; Jer. 3.17; Mic. 4.2; Zech. 2.15). In 8.23, representatives of the nations 'grasp the cloak' of 'a certain Yehudi' and ask to go with him because God is with him. The expression 'grasp the cloak' is common in Semitic languages as an idiom of supplication and submission (Brauner 1974; Greenstein 1982). This idiom, taken together with the substance of the entire verse – that God is mediated to the nations through this certain Yehudi – assigns a pre-eminent place to Yehud not always present in the parallel passages just cited. This universalism, therefore, is not egalitarian in the least. It is realized in this case in a startlingly bold claim for universal dominion, which echoes the domestication of the horns in 2.1-4 and presumes Yahweh's particularity towards his people.

6. *Conclusion*

So then, the full portrait of Jerusalem in Zechariah 1–8 mixes elements of exaltation with a pragmatic realization of the city's condition in the early Persian period. It lays out a vision for restoration, reconstruction and the ethical and moral responsibilities of the people to ensure the divine plan is fulfilled. The first three visions (1.8-17; 2.1-4; 2.5-9) and the accompanying exhortations (2.10-17) lay out the plan of restoration and reconstruction. The first vision announces the return of Yahweh to Jerusalem as the necessary precursor. Yahweh's return is marked by the re-election of the city and consequently a renewal of its central place within the ethnic and religious community. No other city is named or considered. The first vision also gives divine authorization to rebuild. The second vision announces the removal of Israel's enemies from the land, another critical precursor to the restoration and reconstruction of Jerusalem. By way of the ploughers, presumably the Persian kings, the Assyrian and Babylonian imperial complexes that were permitted to overreach and scatter Israel are now restrained and returned to their proper place; Yahweh restores 'Israel's spatial integrity' in preparation for restoration and reconstruction (Good 1982: 59). The third vision then takes up the divine authorization to rebuild given in the first vision and proclaims the start of Jerusalem's

reconstruction. The vision for the reconstruction of the city emphasizes the tools of the trade and so envisions human participation to enact the divine plan. The third vision also prophesies Jerusalem's repopulation and explains away the absence of walls to protect Jerusalem with an image of divine protection.

The fourth vision completes the portrait of Jerusalem in the first three visions and the exhortations by affixing to the divine name the twice repeated claim that Yahweh will choose Jerusalem (1.17; 2.16): 'Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem' (v. 2). In this way, Jerusalem's re-election defines Yahweh and so Jerusalem's restoration is inexorably tied to Yahweh's power, specifically, the power to rebuke the adversary in the fourth vision. The fourth vision also transitions from the passages concerning the spiritual and physical restoration, reconstruction and repopulation of the city to the middle section of the book that concerns the temple and the leadership of the new community forming around it.

By way of a seemingly innocuous liturgical question, the closing section of Zech. 7.1–8.23 returns to the promises, themes and motifs concerning Jerusalem originally articulated in Zech. 1.7–3.2 and connects these with the book's opening exhortation in Zech. 1.1-6. Yahweh's concern for Jerusalem and its complete restoration are reaffirmed and future hopes for its universal, and also particular, importance are expressed, though the ultimate success and fulfilment of the restoration are intimately related to ethical and moral imperatives. The audience of the book, the leadership and body of the new community, are admonished to order their lives around principles of peace and justice, concern for the oppressed and marginalized, and joyful religious observances.

Notably, this vision within visions presupposes an implied present that differs starkly from the exalted expectations of a new, restored Jerusalem. There are persistent signs of a city behind the text that is impoverished and under-populated, so much so that Yahweh must promise that once again the elderly and the young will fill the streets (8.14-15). The city is not surrounded by walls; there is no confirmation that the temple is rebuilt; and, the hope for complete restoration seems frustrated. Zechariah 1–8 closes, not unlike Chronicles closes, with a forward looking promise of *aliyah* that, from the vantage point of the implied present, remains, as yet, unfulfilled.

7. *Bibliography*

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