

# Zechariah 9.

## God's Future Kingdom and Earthly King

9:1–17

1 Oracle.

The word of Yhwh [is] upon the land of Hadrach,  
and Damascus [is] its resting place,  
for to Yhwh [belong] the city of Aram<sup>a</sup>  
and all the tribes of Israel.

2 Likewise Hamath—she borders on it—  
[and] Tyre and Sidon,  
for they are exceedingly wise.

3 Tyre has built a rampart for herself,  
and piled up silver like dust  
and gold like dirt of the streets.

4 Behold, Adonai<sup>a</sup> will dispossess her  
and smite her wealth into the sea,<sup>b</sup>  
and she will be consumed with fire.

5 Ashkelon will see and be afraid,  
and Gaza [will see and] will writhe exceedingly;  
and Ekron [too],  
because her hope will wither.

The king will be destroyed from Gaza,  
and Ashkelon will not be ruled.<sup>a</sup>

6 A villain will rule Ashdod;  
thus I shall cut off the majesty of the Philistines.

7 I shall take away its<sup>a</sup> blood from its mouth  
and its abominations from between its teeth;  
And it also will become a remnant before our God.  
It will be like a clan<sup>b</sup> in Judah,

and Ekron [will be] like a Jebusite [city].

8 Then I shall defend my house, a garrison  
<sup>a</sup>against any who departs and returns,<sup>a</sup>  
No oppressor will overcome them again,  
for now I have seen with my eyes.

9 Exult greatly, O daughter Zion,  
Shout, O daughter Jerusalem.  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
Righteous<sup>a</sup> and liberated<sup>b</sup> is he;  
Humble<sup>c</sup> and riding on a colt,

indeed on a jack, the son of jennies.<sup>d</sup>  
 10 Then I<sup>a</sup> will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
 and the horse from Jerusalem,  
 and the bow of battle will be cut off.  
 Then he will speak peace to all the nations,  
 his dominion will be from sea to sea,  
 and from the River to the ends of the earth.  
 11 Also as for you on account of the blood of your covenant,  
 I shall send your prisoners forth from the pit,  
 in which is no water.  
 12 Return to a stronghold, O prisoners of hope,  
<sup>a</sup>for today I am declaring,<sup>a</sup>  
 "I shall return to you double."  
 13 For I shall bend<sup>a</sup> Judah to me,  
 and fill Ephraim [like] a bow,  
 I shall arouse your sons, O Zion,  
<sup>b</sup> against your sons, O Javan,<sup>b</sup>  
 and I shall wield you like the sword of a warrior."  
 14 Then Yhwh will appear over them,  
 and his arrow will go forth like lightning;  
 and Adonai Yhwh will blow on the shophar,  
 and march<sup>a</sup> in the whirlwinds of the south.  
 15 Yhwh of hosts will protect them,  
 so they will devour  
 and tread down the sling stones;  
 they will drink and roar<sup>a</sup> as with wine,  
 and be full like a bowl, like corners of an altar.  
 16 Yhwh their God will save them.  
 On that day his people will be like a flock,  
 for [like] jewels they will shine upon his land.  
 17 For how good is he and how beautiful!  
 Grain will cause the young men to thrive,  
 and new wine the young women.

## Notes on Text and Translation

- 1a The Hebrew words עין אדם appear from the context to constitute a place name, but one that is unattested elsewhere. Several different suggestions for reading the two words have been made. NRSV translates the phrase "the capital of Aram," a translation involving two emendations. The first is to read עיר (city) for the MT's עין (eye, spring). The second is to read ארם (Aram) for אדם (Edom). These emendations fit the context and are accepted here. Many other scholars want to read the word עיר ("city") as ערי ("cities"), and translate "the cities of Aram."

- 4a Various mss read Yhwh instead of Adonai. To be sure the name Yhwh appears almost forty times in Zechariah 9–14, but Adonai appears in 9:14 also. There is no convincing reason to emend the text to read Yhwh.
- 4b It is also possible to translate this phrase “upon the sea,” suggesting God would end Tyre’s maritime activities, which became particularly important during the Assyrian empire.
- 5a The Hebrew word used here ישב can mean “sit,” “remain,” “dwell,” or even “inhabit.” Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah 9–14*, 109–111) point out that in connection with the word “king” the verb can also mean “rule,” and suggest that it has that meaning here and in the beginning of v. 6. Their translation is accepted.
- 7a The antecedent for this pronoun is probably the city Ashdod, though it could possibly be the Philistines despite the disagreement in number between the noun “Philistines” and the ms pronoun הוּא. The third masculine singular of the pronoun may have been suggested by the reference to the ruler as the “illegitimate son.”
- 7b The Hebrew word רֵֿאָ can be pointed either as רֵֿאָלֻּ (ʾallūp) to designate an intimate friend, or as רֵֿאָלֶּפ (ʾelep) to mean a “thousand.” Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah 9–14*, 116) follow the MT, but translate רֵֿאָלֻּ (ʾallūp) with a collective force they deem warranted by the context, viz. “clan.” Their translation has been adopted here.
- 8a-a The phrase seems to refer to everyone who passes by the city, i.e. all who come and go. *BHS* says to delete, but there is no compelling reason to do so.
- 9a BDB (843) gives “victorious” as the meaning of צָדִיק in Zech 9:9, and cites 2 Sam 23:3 and Jer 23:5 as other places where the word carries the same meaning. That suggestion seems to mean that the king would be the one through whom God would conquer the surrounding world. Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah 9–14*, 88, 125) prefer instead to translate צָדִיק as “righteous,” its overwhelming meaning in the Hebrew Bible. Their understanding of the word is adopted here.
- 9b נִשָּׂא can also be translated “saved” Both “saved” and “liberated” suggest a different meaning than the translation “victorious,” where the king is thought to defeat all comers. Rather, the future king will be liberated by God. Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah 9–14*, 126–127) point to Deut 33:29 and Ps 33:16, both of which employ the Niphal of the root – as here. In Deut 33:29 Israel is a people “saved by Yhwh,” and in Ps 33:16 a king is not saved by his army, but by God. The fighting in Zech 9:1–8 had been done by Yhwh, not a Judean king. Indeed, while other verses in Zechariah 9–14 speak of fighting, such fighting is never done by a Judean king.
- 9c The word means “humble” in the sense of “afflicted” or “poor.”
- 9d GK 124° notes that the plural אֲנֹנִים sometimes denotes an indefinite singular, but here the verse may instead insist that the colt that the king would ride was a “pure bred jackass.” See Way, “Donkey Domain,” esp. p.114.
- 10a Reading with the MT. The LXX reads “He,” a reading often preferred by modern translators because the second half of the verse clearly refers to “his,” i.e., the king’s dominion. The speaker, however, has been God since v. 6a (where the same first person verb is used), who continues to speak through v. 13.
- 12a-a Literally the clause could read: “also the day is announcing,” but the entirety of vv. 11–13 suggests that God is speaking in the sentence. Hence, scholars often infer from that phrase a first person speaker from the rest of the sentence, as is done here.
- 13a The verb דָּרַךְ (translated “bend”) more generally means “tread” or “march.” BDB, 202, offers “bend” as the meaning with “bow,” as here.
- 13b-b Sometimes this clause is considered textually suspect on the basis of meter. See the discussion in the comments below.
- 14a The basic meaning of the verb הִלֵּךְ is “walk,” but it is as rich a verb in Hebrew as in English. The translation “march” is an attempt to catch the military flavor of the context.

- 15a *BHS* suggests reading *דמם* or *דמם* for *המו*. *NRSV* translates the whole clause “they shall drink their blood like wine,” a gruesome picture indeed. The translation offered here follows Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah 9-14*, 154-155), who read *המו* as a third-person plural of the verb *המה* (growl, roar, be boisterous), originally prefixed by a *waw*, which they suggest fell out due to haplography.

## Synchronic Analysis

Following the introductory word *מִשָּׂא* (oracle), Zechariah 9 takes the form of a chiasmus with five parts.

- 9:1-6a. Yhwh works to re-establish the kingdom.  
 9:6b-8. Yhwh speaks of Yhwh’s redemptive work.  
 9:9-10. Yhwh presents Jerusalem its king.  
 9:11-13. Yhwh speaks of Yhwh’s redemptive work.  
 9:14-17. Yhwh works to protect the restored kingdom.<sup>1</sup>

Yhwh is the principal actor and main speaker in Zechariah 9. The first and last divisions, vv. 1-6a and 14-17, describe God’s future actions on behalf of God’s people in the third person, while vv. 6b-13 have God describe the divine efforts in the first person singular, speaking of God’s house in v. 8 and addressing Jerusalem directly in vv. 9-10.

Zechariah 9 portrays Yhwh acting in three bold strokes. First (vv. 1-6a, 6b-8), God captures the ideal territory of Israel from the land of Hadrach in the north, the city of Damascus in the east, adding them to the tribal lands of Israel, and then campaigns against Tyre, Sidon, and the Philistine cities along the Mediterranean coast. At the end God moves to defend God’s “house.” That “house,” presumably, was the temple in Jerusalem, but the word *היכל* (temple) was never used in Zechariah 9-14. By contrast, it was used seven times in Haggai/Zechariah 1-8 and twice in Malachi. Second (in 9:9-10), God presents a new king to Jerusalem, and third (in vv. 11-13, 14-17) God defends the whole land, both Judah and Ephraim, against enemy attacks. These three strokes do not coincide with changes in person of the verbs in the chapter. As shown above, whereas vv. 1-6a speak of God in the third person, in vv. 6b-13 God speaks in the first person, and vv. 14-17 return the third person. The effect of the first person voice in the middle of the chapter is to place God’s words of assurance to and about Jerusalem directly upon the lips of God. Those verses are not just a threat about what God will do outside Jerusalem; they also make promises about what God will do for Jerusalem and its inhabitants.

1 This diagram of the chapter follows that of Curtis given above, but subdivides his first and last oracles to reflect the change in number in the verbs within vv. 1-8 and 11-17.

## The Title *מִשָּׁא*

The title for Zechariah 9, indeed for the whole of Zechariah 9–11, is the word *מִשָּׁא* (oracle). What follows immediately in v. 1 (“The word of Yhwh is upon [ב] the land of Hadrach”) is an incipit, the first sentence of the author’s message. The word *מִשָּׁא* probably was placed at the head of Zech 9:1–10 or 9:1–17 when those verses were attached to Zechariah 8. *מִשָּׁא* appears in 12:1 also, but there it is followed by a second superscription: “the word of YHWH concerning (על) Israel.” Since Zechariah 12–14 never mentions the northern kingdom, the word “Israel” in 12:1 was chosen most likely with a glance back at 9:1, where it appears as the last word in the verse. Mal 1:1 likewise opens with a double superscription: “An oracle. The word of the Lord to (אל) Israel by Malachi.”

This threefold use of *מִשָּׁא* followed by the phrase “the word of Yhwh” has caused a number of scholars to conclude that Zechariah 9–11, 12–14, and the book of Malachi are three separate collections added to Zechariah 1–8 by the same hand, but that statement oversimplifies the superscriptions. Specifically, as noted above, Zech 12:1 contains not only the word *מִשָּׁא*, but also a second superscription, the phrase “the word of the Lord concerning Israel,” and a third as well: “Thus says Yhwh.” That third superscription may have been the original heading for Zech 12:1–9. The word “Israel” in 12:1 does not refer to the northern kingdom, but was used genetically for Judah, perhaps polemically, since Zechariah 12–14 expresses no hope for the northern kingdom. Moreover, Mal 1:1 originally may have begun “The word of the Lord to (אל) Israel by Malachi,” a name derived from Mal 3:1 and affixed to give the collection a name—quite possibly when it was connected to Haggai, Zechariah. Thus, the word *מִשָּׁא* in Zech 12:1 and Mal 1:1 appears to have been used in imitation of Zech 9:1, and the phrase “the word of the Lord (concerning) Israel” in Zech 12:1 was borrowed from Mal 1:1.

The word *מִשָּׁא* derives from a root meaning “to lift up, bear, carry,” and it designates a burden. Secondly, it is used to refer to prophetic utterances. The phrase “the word of Yhwh” appears as the superscription in Hos 1:1, Joel 1:1, Mic 1:1, and Zeph 1:1, though in those cases the name of the prophet follows: e.g.: “the word of the Lord that came to Hosea.” Various passages in Jeremiah likewise name him as the one to whom the word of God had come (e.g., Jer 7:1; 11:1; 14:1), and other texts, written in the first person singular say the word came to “me” (e.g., Jer 1:4; 2:1).<sup>2</sup> Unlike these other passages, however, the phrase “the word of Yhwh” in Zech 9:1 is not followed by a preposition saying to whom the word came. Instead, the phrase “the word of God” actually begins the first sentence of the prophetic message.<sup>3</sup>

2 For a discussion of other ways of introducing prophetic books, see Conrad, “Forming the Twelve,” 96–101.

3 See Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi: The Divine Messenger* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 98; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 26. She argues that the word *מִשָּׁא* alone constitutes the superscription in 9:1, that the entire first half of 12:1 serves that role in Zechariah 12, and that Mal 1:1 was similar to other prophetic passages where the addressee was named.

Richard D. Weis has argued that  $\text{אָמַן}$  designates a “prophetic exposition of a divine revelation.”<sup>4</sup> He says that a  $\text{אָמַן}$  responds to a question concerning a lack of clarity about divine intention or else some aspect of the human events through which the intention will be fulfilled. In pre-exilic texts the message needing further explication lies within the passage headed by the word  $\text{אָמַן}$ , but in the case of Zech 9:1, the texts needing further explication are Haggai 1-2 and Zechariah 1-8. In the case of Zech 12:1 and Mal 1:1, the text to be explicated is Zech 11:4-17.

One question underlying Zechariah 9 would seem to be this: when will the new king begin his reign in Jerusalem? (Zerubbabel had been promised in Hag 2:20-23, Zech 4:6b-10a, and perhaps an earlier version of Zech 6:9-15, but he is not named here.) A second question for the whole chapter might have been this: when will the reunion of Judah and Israel occur? (To be sure Israel is mentioned only twice in Haggai/Zechariah 1-8, namely in Zech 1:19 and 8:13. In both verses the references to Israel look like additions, and perhaps were read back into Zechariah 1-8 from Zechariah 9 and 10.<sup>5</sup>) Zechariah 9 answers both questions, and Zechariah 10 answers the second.

### 9:1-6a. *Yhwh works to re-establish the New Kingdom*

**Defeat of Hadrach.** Verses 1-6a have a specific objective in view: to sketch the borders of the coming new kingdom of God. They open by affirming Yhwh’s attention to the land of Hadrach. The word of God is said to be “in,” “among,” “with,” or “against” Hadrach, depending on how one translates the Hebrew preposition  $\text{ב}$ . One question, therefore, is whether God’s action toward Hadrach is positive or negative. No conclusive answer is possible, though translators have typically opted for the meaning “against.” Meyers and Meyers, by contrast, have argued that “in” is a better translation, fitting well the peaceful aura of the reference to Damascus.<sup>6</sup> It is not clear, however, that the verse envisions peace on Damascus despite the reference to God’s word being at “rest.” His “word” might have arrived on Damascus with force and then rested there. Nor would the term preclude previous conflict before the time of rest. In any case, a negative meaning fits the militaristic overtones of vv. 2-8.

The second issue is the identity and location of Hadrach. This issue is complicated by the fact that it is mentioned nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible. It is often, but not conclusively, identified with the “city of Hatarikka” mentioned by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser (r. 745-727) in his annals, naming it as the capital of a king named Zakir.<sup>7</sup> In another stele Zakir himself claims that Be’elshamayn had made him king over Hatarikka as well.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, therefore, “Hadrach” was a

4 Weis, “Oracle,” 28-29.

5 Still, the name “Ephraim” occurs in 9:14 and 10:7, and the name “Joseph” (progenitor of Ephraim and Manasseh) appears in 10:6a $\beta$ . Both chapters seem to envision some kind of reunion of north and south.

6 Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 90, 93.

7 Michael H. Floyd “Hadrach,” *NIDB*, 2. 217. The Assyrian text is from Tiglath-Pileser: “Campaigns in Syria and Palestine,” *ANET*, 283.

8 “Zakir of Hamat and Lu’ath,” *ANET*, 655.

city, a city state, or a district located in the general vicinity of Hamath.<sup>9</sup> More specifically, it seems to have lain south of the Euphrates, but north of the land of Israel, which traditionally extended “from Dan to Beersheba.”

Next, v. 1 names Damascus. It was, of course, the capital of the Arameans. The verse calls it the resting place of the word of Yhwh. The word מנוחה (translated “resting place”) means “rest” or “quietness,” as well as a place to rest. The verse portrays Damascus as a place where God’s hand already rested, perhaps after coming down on the city and its environs. The overall tenor of the opening sentence is that God is in charge of matters on the northern edge of Israel’s territory. That meaning is reinforced by the next sentence, which says that the city of Aram (i.e. Damascus) as well as all the tribes of Israel belong to Yhwh. Thus, v. 1 seems to be a description of a future politico-spiritual reality that was not yet obvious to all, but which the prophet could see. He could argue that the cities of northern Israel belonged to God (regardless of whether all their inhabitants or their neighbors thought so), and his view that Damascus did also stakes a claim to additional territory for Israel outside of the traditional boundaries.

The ensuing verses continue to broaden the borders of that land. The verbal map specifically includes Hamath, a city or city-state on the Orontes River in northern Phoenicia, located almost due north of Damascus, roughly 200 kilometers (about 125 miles). Verses 1–2a in effect claim that the future land of Israel will include Damascus and Hamath, in addition to “all the tribes of Israel.” These tribes presumably included not only the northern kingdom of Israel, but also Judah in the south.

After Hamath the passage next mentions Tyre and Sidon. These two cities lay on the Mediterranean coast, Sidon about 40 kilometers (about 25 miles) north of Tyre. They co-existed as independent kingdoms until about the eighth century, when Sidon came under the control of Tyre. At that time the Assyrians turned the area into an Assyrian province, and Tyre and Sidon gradually separated again. Though Sidon became an Assyrian province, Tyre fluctuated back and forth between independence and submission. The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar changed that situation with his successful siege of the city. Later under the Persians both cities flourished, though Sidon became the more important.

In Zech 9:2b–4 the pair functions to establish the northwestern border of God’s new kingdom. Thus, the whole northern border would stretch from the edge of the Arabian Desert on the east at Damascus to Hamath in the north to the Mediterranean at Tyre and Sidon. Nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible were Tyre and Sidon seen as belonging to Israel. Here their wisdom is mentioned, but it will not help them hold off God’s advance.

Tyre comes in for special condemnation. The text speaks of its accomplishments and wealth and specifically of its rampart. The defenses of Tyre indeed were remarkable, situated as the city was on a rocky island just off the Phoenician coast. Neither the Assyrians (who attacked in 671 and 663) nor the Babylonians destroyed it, though the Assyrians exacted tribute and the Babylonians (under Nebuchadnezzar)

Defeat of  
Damascus.

Defeat of Tyre  
and Sidon.

9 On the location of Hadrach as an area, see the map by Anson F. Rainey and R. Steven Notley, *Carta’s New Century Handbook and Atlas of the Bible* (Jerusalem: Carta, 2007), 125. Ray L. Roth (“Hadrach,” *ABD*, 3.17) calls it a city state, a suggestion that might resolve the ambiguity of whether Hadrach was a city or a district.

zar) removed its monarch. The text seems to suggest that Tyre's defenses had been sufficient to prevent its destruction up to the author's time.<sup>10</sup> Also, v. 3 says, Tyre had "piled up silver ... and gold," a reference to its wealth. It is not accused of harming Judah in either process, though such harm might be implied. Regardless, Tyre was due for a change of fortunes. Adonai (a name for God meaning "my Lord" that appears frequently in the MT) would "dispossess" her, and "smite her wealth into the sea." Her defense would be insufficient before God's onslaught. The city itself would be "consumed with fire."

Defeat of the  
Philistines.

Thus far the text has delineated the eastern border (Damascus and the Arabian Desert), the northern border (Hadrach and Hamath), and the western border (the Mediterranean Sea) of Israel's future land. What is left is the southern border. The new kingdom will reach, says v. 5, as far south as the old Philistine cities of Ashkelon and Gaza (the latter of which was the southernmost, where the coastal plain was at its widest). The southern border of Judah/Israel elsewhere is said to be the "wadi [נהל] of Egypt" in Num 34:5; see also the word נהל in Josh 15:4, 47; 1 Kgs 8:65; and Isa 27:12. The southern border also is indicated by the phrase "the river [נהר] of Egypt," mentioned in Gen 15:18, in which verse God tells Abram the borders of his land will stretch "from the river of Egypt to the great river," i.e. the Euphrates. While the exact meaning of the phrase "river of Egypt" is unclear, the point of Zech 9:5-6a was that the renewed Israel would stretch all the way to the border of Egypt.

In Egyptian records the Philistines were first mentioned by name during the reign of Pharaoh Ramses III (r. ca. 1198-1166), who clashed with them in their cities of Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Gaza.<sup>11</sup> The Philistines drove out the Egyptians and added the towns of Ekron and Gath, to form a Philistine pentapolis.<sup>12</sup> They dominated the region until about 1000, expanding their territory up the Mediterranean coast, through the Jezreel Valley to Beth-shan near the Jordan River, and they established hegemony over the Israelite tribes in the hill country.<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 9-31 records the career of Saul and his death at the hands of the Philistines, and 2 Sam 5:17-25; 8:1 credits David with their defeat. They are mentioned from time to time in 1 and 2 Kings, both as a neighboring people (in 1 Kgs 15:27; 2 Kgs 8:2) and as those who paid tribute to Israelite kings (in 1 Kgs 4:21) or warred against Judah (2 Kgs 18:8). 2 Chronicles adds to the picture with details not paralleled in 2 Kings. First, it reports (in 2 Chr 17:11) that the Philistines paid tribute to King Jehoshaphat of Judah (r. 873-849). Also (according to 2 Chr 26:6) they attacked Jehoram king of Israel (r. 849-843). Third (2 Chr 28:18), the Philistines raided the Shephelah<sup>14</sup> and southern Judah during the reign of Ahaz, king of Judah (second half of the eighth century). Assyrian literature corroborates this picture.

10 Ezek 26:1-28:24 predicts that Tyre would fall to Babylon, but Ezek 29:18-20 concedes that the Babylonian siege failed, with the new prediction that Nebuchadnezzar would take enough booty from Egypt to make up for what he failed to take from Tyre.

11 Ramses III: "The War Against the Peoples of the Sea," *ANET*, 262. The Philistines are also mentioned in "The Journey of Wen-Amon to Phoenicia," *ANET*, 26.

12 W. S. LaSor, "Philistines," *ISBE*, 3.842.

13 H. J. Katzenstein, "Philistines: History," *ABD*, 5.327.

14 The Shephelah was the "low country" between the coast of southern Judah and the hill country.

The Philistines proved less successful against Mesopotamian powers than they had against Egypt and local powers. The five city states paid tribute to Assyria for a while, specifically to Tiglath-pileser III, who captured Ashkelon.<sup>15</sup> Then Sargon II (r. 722–705) led his army to victory over a Syro-Palestinian rebellion and over Egypt. In the process he defeated Gaza and Ekron, and attached Ashdod to his sphere of influence.<sup>16</sup> He claimed to have defeated Gath (not mentioned in Zech 9:5–7) as well.<sup>17</sup> His successor Sennacherib had to reassert control over those cities. Subsequently, both Babylon and Persia maintained control over Philistine territory.

Verse 5 moves from Ashkelon to Gaza to Ekron, where it reverses the names of the first two cities, naming Gaza, then Ashkelon. One should note the structure of v. 5. Basically, it consists of a chiasmus built around Ekron.

Ashkelon will see and be afraid,  
 and Gaza will writhe exceedingly;  
 and Ekron [too], because her hope will wither.  
 The king will be destroyed from Gaza,  
 and Ashkelon will not be ruled.

The verse begins by predicting that Ashkelon, the finest port on the southern Mediterranean coast, would see God's destruction of Tyre, and would experience fear (of undergoing a similar fate?). It ends by predicting that Ashkelon would be "uninhabited," as most translations read. Meyers and Meyers, however, argue that the Hebrew root *שׁוּב* often means "ruler" when pointed as a participle, and that the verbal form used here carries the meaning "ruled" (following as it does fairly closely the word "king").<sup>18</sup> So the verse means that Ashkelon would lose its king as a result of God's actions. In lines 2 and 4, the verse predicts the same loss for Gaza, which would suffer as a consequence. The defeat of these kings would be a necessary precursor to God's rulership over the area. The middle line of the verse simply says that Ekron would lose hope, perhaps after losing its king too.

The fourth and last Philistine city mentioned<sup>19</sup> was Ashdod (v. 6a), also a coastal city, lying about as far north of Ashkelon as Gaza lay south. The city seems to have been a provincial capital under the Persians. Verse 6 envisions a "villain" or "contemptible person" ruling the city. It may have been clear to the original readers whom the author had in mind—if indeed he intended a certain individual. Regardless, the phrase is loaded with sarcasm. Which cities would be worse off: Ashkelon, Gaza, and Ekron, which had no king, or Ashdod, which had a base man for a king? It did not matter. He would suffer the same fate as the other kings: God would remove him too. God would cut off all the Philistine "kings," i.e., "the majesty of the Philistines." Alternatively, one can translate this phrase "the pride

15 Tiglath-Pileser: "Campaigns in Syria and Palestine," *ANET*, 282–283.

16 Sargon II: "The Fall of Samaria, Analytic Reports," *ANET*, 284–285.

17 *Ibid.*, 286.

18 Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 109–111.

19 Gath, the fifth Philistine city, is not mentioned. Archaeological digs have found massive destruction at a level dateable to the late ninth century BCE, explaining why the city is rarely mentioned in later texts. See Carl S. Ehrlich, "Gath," *NIDB*, 2.524–525.

of the Philistines,” i.e., as a reference to their pride in their own efforts and accomplishments.

### 9:6b-8. *Yhwh speaks of Yhwh’s redemptive work*

The second section of Zechariah 9 appears in vv. 6b-8. At this point the verbs in the chapter change voice to the first person singular, and continue in that voice through v. 13. God says: “I shall cut off [כרת] the majesty of the Philistines.” Verse 10 also employs that same verb in connection with God’s cutting off the war horse from Jerusalem, creating a nice connection between those two sections of the chapter. The result for the Philistines will be more or less positive. Here God promises to put an end to the “pride of Philistia” mentioned in v. 6a, but does not threaten the destruction of Philistia. The verse seems to anticipate its continuation within the boundaries of the future Israel/Judah.

Defeat of  
Philistia  
continued.

Verse 7 continues to develop the motif of loss by Philistia, adding that its people would be reduced in importance as the Jebusites had been. The Jebusites were listed among the traditional inhabitants of Canaan (see Gen 10:16; 15:21; Exod 3:8; 3:17; 13:5; 23:23; 33:2; 34:11), and they inhabited Jerusalem and its environs (see Josh 18:28; Judg 19:10). David brought the city under Israelite control after he became king (2 Sam 5:6-10). Verse 7, therefore, concludes with a prediction of Ekron coming under the control of God as Jerusalem had come under the control of Israel’s great king David.

God promises to take away the blood/food from the mouths of the people of Ashdod. This promise is sometimes said to have in mind all the Philistines rather than Ashdod alone, and it certainly might. The pronoun associated with the noun “blood,” however, is masculine singular and might fit the single city better than the plural noun “Philistines.” Thus, Ashdod alone seems to be the referent for the pronoun “his.” The passage continues by saying that Ashdod would be like a “clan” (אלי) in Judah. The basic meaning of the word is “thousand,” so it is used of groups, in 1 Sam 10:19 of a subdivision within a tribe.<sup>20</sup> In Zech 9:7 likewise the word seems to refer to a subgroup within Judah. The motif of the reduction of Ashdod’s power and the city’s concomitant inclusion within the Judah of the future suggests its subordination to Judah.

God’s house a  
garrison.

Finally, in v. 8 God promises to defend God’s house, making it a garrison against enemies. In late sixth-century Yehud, there was not much to the city of Jerusalem, but the verse insists that God would defend it against any further intrusions like the Babylonian attack. The passage employs two descriptions for enemies. The first is the phrase “all who depart and return.” It seems to have in view enemy armies marching back and forth through Judah and Jerusalem, especially the Babylonian army in the years leading up to the fall of Jerusalem and the

20 In 1 Sam 10:19 Samuel commands the people of Israel to present themselves by tribes and by clans. The word appears again in Zech 12:5-6, where the NRSV translates it as “clans.” משפחה, the more typical word for “clan,” is not used here.

destruction of the temple (see 2 Kgs 24:1–21.)<sup>21</sup> The verse promises that no armies will do so again. The second description employs the participle *שׂוֹרֵר* (oppressor). The term is much more general in meaning than “conqueror,” and perhaps has in view a wider referent than Babylon, maybe even including Persia. The elimination of invading armies and oppressors would usher in a time devoid of war.

God’s concluding clause “now I have seen with my own eyes” perhaps strikes modern readers as curious, since they typically work with a concept of God as all seeing. The Old Testament, by contrast, does not hold such a Greek-like concept of the perfections of God, but works with the idea of a God who acts and even changes in light of the actions and reactions of human beings. What God had apparently “seen” was that the time to act on behalf of Israel/Judah had come. The time of exile had run its course; Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 had announced as much. Now God would again “defend” the house as God had defended it in the past before Judah’s sin had driven God away. (See Ezek 11:22–23 for depiction of God’s leaving the temple and the city for the Mount of Olives, rendering it defenseless against the Babylonian army, and Ezek 43:1–5, which predicted God’s return.)

To conclude the first two sections of Zechariah 9, one may examine the territory these verses stake out for the future Judah/Israel. Havrelock argues that the Old Testament works with two conceptions of the ideal land of Israel, one that specifically includes Transjordan (see the account of Israel’s capturing Transjordan in Deut 3:8–17) and one that ranged from the River (i.e., the Euphrates) to the River of Egypt (either the Nile or the “Brook of Egypt” just south of Gaza; see also Gen 15:18, Deut 11:24, and the extent of Solomon’s kingdom in 1 Kgs 5:1). She argues that the map including Transjordan grew out of a desire to define Israel vis-à-vis Egypt, while the other map grew out of a desire to define Israel vis-à-vis Mesopotamian powers.<sup>22</sup> This passage clearly employs the “Euphrates” map.<sup>23</sup> The land will reach from Hadrach near the Euphrates to Gaza near the Brook of Egypt. Verse 10 will eliminate any doubt about that map by predicting that the new king will reign “from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.” There is nothing strange about the choice of maps. Assyria and Babylon were traditional conquerors, and Persia constituted the dominant power against whom God would continue to defend God’s people. These verses promised God’s people control of the whole area.

### 9:9–10. *Yhwh presents Jerusalem its new king*

The next two verses, Zech 9:9–10, are possibly the most famous in the book of Zechariah, both for their importance in their own right, and also—for Christian thought—because of the role they play in the NT accounts of Palm Sunday. The previous eight verses make it clear that the establishment of the new Kingdom of

21 The defeat of Jerusalem was not Babylon’s last incursion into the lands under discussion in Zechariah 9. It also besieged Tyre and invaded Egypt in 568/567; see Jer 46. See D. J. Wiseman, “Babylonia,” *ISBE*. 1.395.

22 Havrelock, “Two Maps,” 656–658.

23 Zech 9:1–8, however, does specifically include “all the tribes of Israel” (v. 1), but the map in use is the “Euphrates” map.