

Z'kharyah ~ Part 1

Like **Yirmeyahu** (Jeremiah) and Yechezk'el (Ezekiel), Z'kharyah (Zechariah) was also a priest (Nehemiah 12:12–16). According to tradition, he was a member of the **Great Synagogue**, a council of 120 that originated with **Nehemiah** and was presided over by **Ezra**. This council later evolved into the nation's ruling elders, known as the **Sanhedrin**. **Z'kharyah's** opening words are dated to 520 BCE, the second year of **Darius**. He was a contemporary of **Hagai** and began his prophesying 2 months after him. He is called a young man in 2:4, suggesting that **Z'kharyah** was younger than **Hagai**. The length of his ministry is uncertain; the last dated prophecy (7:1) came approximately two years after the first, placing them in the same time period as **Hagai's** prophecy (520–518 BCE). According to Mathew 23:35, he was murdered between the **Temple** and the altar, a fate like that of an earlier **Z'kharyah** (cf. 2 Chronicles 24:20, 21), who had been stoned to death.

The historical background and setting of **Z'kharyah** are the same as those of his contemporary, **Hagai**. **Z'kharyah** joined Hagai in rousing the people from their indifference and challenging them to resume building the **Temple**. Haggai's primary purpose was to rebuild the **Temple**; his preaching has a tone of rebuke for the people's indifference, sin, and lack of trust in **God**. He was used to start the revival, while **Z'kharyah** was used to keep it going strong with a more positive emphasis, calling the people to repent and reassuring them regarding future blessings. **Z'kharyah** sought to encourage the people to build the **Temple**, in light of the promise that the **Messiah** would someday come to inhabit it. The people were not just building for the present, but with the future hope of the **Messiah** in mind. He encouraged the people, still downtrodden by the **Gentile** powers (1:8–12), reminding them that the **Lord** remembers His covenant promises and will restore and bless them.

This book is the most **Messianic**, **Apocalyptic**, and **Eschatological** in the **Tanakh**. Primarily, it is a prophecy about **Yeshua**, focusing on His coming glory as a means to comfort Israel (cf. 1:13, 17). While the book is filled with visions, prophecies, signs, celestial visitors, and the voice of **God**, it is also practical, addressing issues such as repentance, divine care, salvation, and holy living. Prophecy would soon be silent for more than 400 years until **Yochanan the Baptist**, so **God** used **Z'kharyah** to bring a rich, abundant outpouring of promise for the future to sustain the faithful remnant through those silent years.

1¹ In the eighth month of the second year of Daryavesh, the following message from Adonai came to Z'kharyah the son of Berekhyah, the son of 'Iddo, the prophet: ² "Adonai was extremely angry with your ancestors. ³ Therefore, tell them that Adonai-Tzva'ot says this: "Return to me," says Adonai-Tzva'ot, "and I will return to you," says Adonai-Tzva'ot. ⁴ "Don't be like your ancestors. The earlier prophets proclaimed to them, 'Adonai-Tzva'ot says to turn back now from your evil ways and deeds'; but they didn't listen or pay attention to me," says Adonai. ⁵ "Your ancestors, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? ⁶ But my words and my laws, which I ordered my servants, the prophets, overtook your ancestors, didn't they? Then they turned and said, 'Adonai has dealt with us according to our ways and deeds, just as he intended to do.'"

The opening 6 verses introduce the entire prophecy in which the prophet calls upon the people to repent and never again repeat the past sins of their fathers (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11).

⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Sh'vat, in the second year of Daryavesh, this message from Adonai came to Z'kharyah the son of Berekhyah, the son of 'Iddo, the prophet:

In a society that was reinventing itself - after its leaders, cities, and the **Temple** were destroyed and after years in exile - the need for vision and hope ran deep. A means to penetrate the very core of the human spirit and transform deepest feelings was necessary. The solution was pictures and visions. The string of visions that came to the prophet **Z'kharyah** brought to life the answer for people on the brink of despair: **God** is in control and is on your side.

8 It was night, and I saw there before me a man riding on a russet-colored horse. He stood among the myrtle bushes in the valley, and behind him were other horses, russet, chestnut-colored, and white.

The first vision depicts a man riding a **russet-colored horse**, accompanied by others riding **russet, chestnut-colored, and white**. These normal horses are concealed among the **myrtle bushes** (evergreens that provide plenty of foliage for cover) in the glen (a deep valley or ravine).

9 I asked, "What are these, my Lord?" The angel speaking with me said to me, "I will show you what these are." 10 The man standing among the myrtles said, "These are those whom Adonai has sent to wander throughout the earth."

A symbolic military description of angelic movement patrolling and reconnoitering on a global scale. The purpose is to ascertain the state of the enemy and to respond to **God's** will in engaging that enemy triumphantly.

11 Then they themselves answered the angel of Adonai standing among the myrtles, "We have been wandering throughout the earth, and the whole world is quiet and at peace." 12 The angel of Adonai said, "Adonai-Tzva'ot, how long will you keep withholding mercy from Yerushalayim and the cities of Y'hudah? You've been angry with them for the past seventy years!"

The Angel of the Lord interceded to **God** the Father on behalf of Israel, pleading for the withdrawal of **God's** chastening hand. The "seventy years" refers to **God's** words to Jeremiah concerning the length of Judah's exile (Jer 25:11, 12; 29:10).

13 Adonai replied with kind and comforting words to the angel who was speaking with me. 14 The angel speaking with me then said to me, "Here is what Adonai-Tzva'ot says: 'I am extremely jealous on behalf of Yerushalayim and Tziyon; 15 and [to the same degree] I am extremely angry with the nations that are so self-satisfied; because I was only a little angry [at Yerushalayim and Tziyon], but they made the suffering worse.' 16 Therefore Adonai says, 'I will return to Yerushalayim with merciful deeds. My house will be rebuilt there,' says Adonai-Tzva'ot; 'yes, a measuring line will be stretched out over Yerushalayim.' 17 In addition, proclaim that Adonai-Tzva'ot says, 'My cities will again overflow with prosperity.' Adonai will again comfort Tziyon, and he will again make Yerushalayim the city of his choice."

In **Z'kharyah** 1:1-17, **God** addresses His people who have returned from exile, encouraging them to repent and rebuild. If you're feeling overwhelmed by burdens at home, consider dedicating time this week to reflect on areas of your life that may need spiritual rebuilding. Set aside a specific evening to pray and seek **God's** guidance regarding family relationships or personal habits that may not glorify Him. Write down your reflections and commit to acting by communicating openly with your family about how you can support each other in this rebuilding process.

In our next post, we will pick up where we left off by exploring **Z'kharyah** in the previous post.