

Zechariah 5:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.

Analysis

Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll —Zechariah's fifth vision depicts a megillāh 'āphāh (מְגִילָה עֲפָה, 'flying scroll'). The megillāh is a rolled parchment manuscript, and 'āphāh (participle of 'ūph, עַפֵּ, 'to fly') indicates autonomous movement—this scroll flies of its own accord through the air, symbolizing the self-executing nature of God's judgment. Ancient scrolls contained written decrees, laws, or prophecies. A flying scroll represents the word of God actively searching out and judging sin.

This vision shifts focus from restoration promises (visions 1-4) to purification requirements. God cleanses His land not only by removing external enemies but by purging internal sin. The scroll's flight suggests God's word can't be evaded—it pursues transgressors like a heat-seeking missile. This anticipates Hebrews 4:12-13: 'The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword... all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' The flying scroll fulfills Deuteronomy 28's covenant curses against covenant-breakers. Before God fully blesses restored Judah, He must execute justice against persistent sin.

Historical Context

Post-exilic Judah struggled with the same sins that caused the Babylonian exile—theft and false oaths are highlighted in verse 3-4. Despite return to the land and temple rebuilding, moral reformation lagged. Malachi (c. 430 BC) would later

rebuke similar sins: robbing God (Malachi 3:8), false swearing (Malachi 3:5), and withholding tithes. The flying scroll warns that geographic return doesn't guarantee covenant blessing without heart-level repentance.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does the image of an inescapable, flying scroll illustrate God's active judgment against sin?
2. What does the transition from restoration visions to judgment vision teach about the order of God's redemptive work?
3. In what areas of your life does God's 'flying scroll' convict you of unaddressed sin?

Interlinear Text

מִגְּלֵה	הִנֵּה	הִנֵּה	תִּאָרְאָה	הִנֵּה	עִינֶיךָ	וְ	וְ	אֶאָשֶׁר	אֶאָשֶׁר	וְ
Then I turned	and lifted up	mine eyes	and looked		H2009			roll		
H7725	H5375	H5869	H7200					H4039		

עִפָּה:

and behold a flying

H5774

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 5:2 (Parallel theme): And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

Isaiah 8:1 (Parallel theme): Moreover the LORD said unto me, Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

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