

Zechariah 9:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.

Analysis

The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof—this oracle begins with massa (אֲשָׁעַת, "burden"), a technical term for weighty prophetic proclamation, often of judgment. The phrase "**in the land of Hadrach**" identifies an Aramean region north of Damascus, likely the territory around the Orontes River valley. Hadrach appears in Assyrian texts as Hatarikka, confirming its historical existence. "**Damascus shall be the rest thereof**" (u-Dammaseq menuchato, אַתְּ דַמּוֹסֶק מְנוּחָתוֹ) means Damascus will be the oracle's resting place—where divine judgment settles.

The concluding phrase introduces a remarkable condition: "**when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD**" (ki la-Yahweh eyn adam ve-khol shivtei Yisrael). This dense Hebrew phrase suggests that the LORD's eye is upon humanity and Israel's tribes, or that human and Israelite eyes turn toward God. The ambiguity points to mutual regard—God watching humanity while calling them to look to Him. This sets the theological framework: judgment on surrounding nations occurs within God's sovereign plan to draw all peoples, including Israel, to recognize His lordship.

This opening verse establishes the pattern for Zechariah 9-11: oracles of judgment against Israel's neighbors (Syria, Phoenicia, Philistia) that paradoxically serve redemptive purposes. The nations' fall precedes Messiah's peaceful reign (verse 9-10). God's judgment on pagan powers creates space for His kingdom's expansion

—a theme fulfilled as Alexander's conquests (333-323 BC) Hellenized the ancient Near East, preparing for the gospel's spread in Greek language and Roman peace.

Historical Context

Zechariah 9-14 forms the second major section of the book (chapters 1-8 containing dated visions from 520-518 BC). Chapters 9-14 lack date formulas and shift to apocalyptic oracles concerning Israel's future. Many scholars date these chapters later, but conservative interpretation sees them as Zechariah's mature prophecies looking beyond immediate post-exilic circumstances to the Messianic age. The historical referents—Damascus, Tyre, Philistine cities—were ancient powers that dominated Israel at various times.

Damascus, Syria's capital, threatened Israel from the time of David (2 Samuel 8:5-6) through the divided kingdom period. Hadach and Damascus represent Aramean power that would soon fall to Alexander the Great (332 BC). Zechariah prophesies this conquest over 180 years before it occurred. Alexander's march south from Syria through Phoenicia to Egypt followed this exact geographic sequence, sparing Jerusalem (see verse 8) in fulfillment of prophecy. The connection between judgment on these cities and Israel's eyes turning to the LORD suggests that God orchestrates international affairs to accomplish His redemptive purposes.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does God's sovereignty over pagan nations like Syria demonstrate His comprehensive control of history to accomplish redemptive purposes?
2. What does it mean for humanity's and Israel's eyes to be 'toward the LORD,' and how does divine judgment serve this end?

3. How did Alexander's conquests historically fulfill this prophecy while preparing the world for Christ's coming?

Interlinear Text

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|----------------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| מִשְׁא | דְּבָר | לִיהְיוֹת | בָּאָרֶץ | פָּדַח הַ | יְדָם שָׁק |
| The burden | of the word | of the LORD | in the land | of Hadrach | and Damascus |
| H4853 | H1697 | H3068 | H776 | H2317 | H1834 |
| וְיִמְנַצֵּת | לִיהְיוֹת | בְּעֵינֵי | וְיִמְנַצֵּת | אֵת אָדָם | וְיִמְנַצֵּת |
| shall be the rest | of the LORD | thereof when the eyes | of man | | |
| H4496 | H3588 | H3068 | H5869 | H120 | H3605 |
| וְיִשְׁבַּת | וְיִשְׁבַּת | | | | |
| as of all the tribes | of Israel | | | | |
| H7626 | H3478 | | | | |

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