



Zechariah Week 3: Armageddon

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Dedicated by Zena and David Zobin for the yahrtzeit of David's father, Zvi Hirsh ben Dovid

1. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Zechariah 7:3

It said "Shall I cry", singular... Because perhaps those who lived in Jerusalem should not cry in the fifth month, since their loss had been returned – but I, who dwell in Babylon, perhaps I should cry in the fifth month.

Introduction

2. Eric H. Cline, Welcome to Armageddon <https://press.princeton.edu/ideas/welcome-to-armageddon>

Megiddo is mentioned a dozen times in the Hebrew Bible, and in a multitude of other ancient texts, but it is especially well-known as the setting in the New Testament for the penultimate battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. We are told in Revelation 16:16 that the two opposing armies will assemble "at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon."

In fact, the very word *Armageddon* comes from *Har Megiddo*—Hebrew for the "mound" or "mountain" (*har*) of Megiddo. By the Middle Ages, multiple nationalities, languages, and centuries had added an *n* and dropped the *h*, transforming *Har Megiddo* to *Harmageddon* and thence to *Armageddon*.

3. Verse by Verse <https://www.yutorah.org/search/?teacher=81072&collection=2649>

Chapter 12 – Divine Defense of Jerusalem, and National Unification

4. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra, Commentary to Zechariah 12:1

This portion continues from before, "his sword upon his arm", telling when this would be, and where. Now it explains that this will be when Yisrael returns to Jerusalem with Mashiach ben Yosef. This prophecy is about Yisrael.

5. Radak, Commentary to Zechariah 12:2

When Gog and Magog attack Jerusalem after the redemption, they will ascend upon Judea, to come to Jerusalem first. They will not be concerned with attacking all of Israel to conquer it first, for they will say, 'After we conquer Jerusalem, all of Israel will be conquered before us.' They will ascend to Jerusalem via Judea as their route, and they will force Judea to join their siege upon Jerusalem.

6. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Zechariah 12:7

When those of the east and north will come to battle the Christians, their first war will be at the edge of Judea when they enter the land, against the Christians who will have spread throughout the land... Then the war will spread to Jerusalem; thus it says, 'Gd will save the tents of Judea first'...

7. Zechariah 12 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

The burden of the word of the Lord concerning Israel. The saying of the Lord, who stretches out the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him; Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the peoples round about, and it shall also be for Judea during the siege against Jerusalem.

And on that day I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples: all that burden themselves with it shall be grievously hurt: and all the peoples of the earth shall be gathered together against it. On that day, says the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open my eyes upon the house of Judea, and will smite every horse of the nations with blindness. And the governors of Judea shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength through the Lord of hosts their Gd.

On that day I will make the chiefs of Judea like a hearth of fire among trees, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the peoples round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. And the Lord shall save the tents of Judea first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judea.

On that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that stumbles among them at that day shall be like David; and the house of David shall be like a divine being, like the angel of the Lord before them.

And it shall come to pass on that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. But I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look towards me, regarding those whom the nations have thrust through. And they shall mourn for him (that is slain) as one mourns for an only son, and shall be in bitterness over him, as one that is in bitterness for a firstborn.

On that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Natan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shim'i apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

Chapter 13 – Purification

8. Zechariah 13 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

On that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for cleansing and for sprinkling.

And it shall come to pass on that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land.

And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother who begot him shall say to him: You shall not live; for you speak lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies.

And it shall come to pass on that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he has prophesied; and they shall not put on the hairy mantle to deceive: but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the ground; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

And one shall say to him, What are these wounds between your hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man who is associated with Me, says the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn My hand against the little ones.

And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, says the Lord, two parts in it shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on My Name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The Lord is my Gd.

9. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Zechariah 13:2

Due to all of this, it appears to me that these sentences were stated only about the Edomite preachers who say that the Divine spirit rests upon them in their service; they are called *neviim* from the root *niv sefatayim*, meaning those who speak. Among the Ishmaelites, too, there are people who sanctify and purify themselves, and remain alone and say that Gd speaks with them. They inflict wounds, bruises and fresh blows upon themselves, to make their bodies suffer.

10. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Zechariah 13:7

"My shepherd" refers to the Arab prophet known as Muhammad; they say Gd sent him to the world to herd His sheep, people. "My friend" is Jesus; the Edomites believe that he was the son of Gd, bone of His bone.

11. Don Isaac Abarbanel, Commentary to Zechariah 13:8

Two nations will be cut off and die. "Will be cut off" may refer to the Arabs, whose kingdom upon the holy land will be cut off, and "Will die" may refer to Edom, for they will die in that war and plague. The third will remain – Israel.

Chapter 14 – War, Punishment, a Redesigned Jerusalem, Succot for All

12. Structure of the chapter

1 Your spoils distributed

2 War on Jerusalem, half of the city exiled

3-5	Gd comes to fight, the mountain splits, you flee
6-7	Ultimate result: Strange light, a day of neither dark nor light, light in the evening
8-9	Water from Jerusalem, Unity of Gd is recognized
10-11	Flattening of the land around Jerusalem, Jerusalem is safe
12-15	Returns to discuss War and Plague
16-21	The remaining nations come to celebrate Succot, or suffer the consequences

13. Zechariah 14 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Behold, the day of the Lord comes, when your spoil shall be divided in your midst.

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go into exile, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go out and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall be split along the middle of it by a very great valley from east to west; and half of the mountain shall be removed towards the north, and half of it, towards the south.

And you shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Atzel: and you shall flee, just as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judea: and the Lord my Gd shall come, and all the holy ones with you.

And it shall come to pass on that day, that there shall neither be bright light nor thick darkness; but it shall be one particular day which shall be known as the Lord's, neither day, nor night: but it shall come to pass that at evening time, there will be light.

And on that day, living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them towards the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: on that day the Lord shall be one, and his name One.

All the land shall be changed like the Arava from Geva to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; while [Jerusalem] shall be lifted up, and shall remain in her place, from the gate of Binyamin to the place of the first gate, to the corner gate, and from the tower of Chananel to the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall dwell secure.

And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will smite all the peoples that have fought against Jerusalem; their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

And it shall come to pass on that day, that a great panic from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.

And Judea also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and clothing, in great abundance.

And such shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the donkey, and of all the beasts that shall be in these camps, as this plague.

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations who came against Jerusalem, shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths. And whoever does not come up of all the families of the earth to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, upon them shall be no rain.

And if the family of Egypt does not go up, and does not come, then they shall have no overflow. This shall be the plague, with which the Lord will smite the nations that shall not come up to keep the feast of booths. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that do not come up to keep the feast of booths.

On that day shall there be (inscribed) upon the bells of the horses, "Holiness to the Lord"; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the basins before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and in Judea shall be sacred to the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and cook in them: and on that day there shall be no more merchants in the house of the Lord of hosts.