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ABSTRACT

THE POLYVALENT STONE LAID BEFORE JOSHUA IN ZECHARIAH 3:9:
AN EXEGETICAL AND INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

by

Sergey Panfilov

Adviser: Roy E. Gane, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE POLYVALENT STONE LAID BEFORE JOSHUA IN ZECHARIAH 3:9:
AN EXEGETICAL AND INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

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Date completed: July, 2024

The Problem

The imagery of “the one stone” laid before Joshua and the meaning of the related symbols and dynamics surrounding this object in Zech 3 remains an issue of scholarly debate. Although there are Hebrew Bible references and archaeological backgrounds to elucidate the object, they are found to be mutually conflicting or incomplete, suggesting the need for a methodological contribution to aid the investigation.

Methodology

The current study uses three independent methodological processes: (1) mining of data, (2) attribute-based theological evaluations of potential backgrounds, and (3) exegetical synthesis. These three processes can be viewed as independent or

interdependent. As independent, they can be applied without regard to other processes. In this case, their results can be compared or merged. As interdependent, the processes are run in the sequence suggested by the current study, in which case the results of each method inform the synthesis performed at the following step. The current research utilizes both approaches—independent and interdependent—cumulatively by specifying which process generated which outcome before all outcomes are ultimately merged into a coherent picture.

The first process—mining of data—includes conversion of the passage of interest to representative sets applied in the TextFabric searches within the ETCBC database. The second process—attribute-based theological evaluations of potential backgrounds—proposes formal criteria for identifying, filtering, merging, and interpreting applicable references. The third process—exegetical synthesis—allows the existing and new exegetical insights to be compared and combined with the integrative view generated in the second process. The final step is to synthesize the obtained results into a coherent message.

Results

The three processes described above yielded a “kaleidoscopic view”: a combination of four previously known backgrounds (1, 2, 5, 6) with two that are newly identified (3, 4). In order of priority, all of them are (1) the crushing stone in Dan 2, (2) the rejected stone in Ps 118, (3) the two tablets of the law in Exod 31, and (4) the ark of the covenant in 1 Chr 21–22, (5) the golden plate of the high priest in Exod 28–29; 39, and (6) the two onyx stones in Exod 28–29; 39. The additional independent exegetical

analysis was related to that view and corroborated it. The final picture suggests the function of “the one stone” and the contents of the inscription written on it by God.

Conclusions

The inscription in Zech 3:9 emerged as a blend of the ten commandments, “the holiness to the Lord,” and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Thus, the meaning of “the stone” is theocentric—the divine eschatological plan for the returned exiles and “all the nations” and theanthropic—the revival of the covenantal relationship between YHWH and Israel as another opportunity for the nation to fulfill its universal mission.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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AN EXEGETICAL AND INTERTEXTUAL STUDY

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

by
Sergey Panfilov
2024

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AB</i>	<i>Anchor Bible</i>
<i>ABD</i>	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>DCH</i>	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
<i>HALOT</i>	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JNSL</i>	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSQ</i>	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
KJV	King James Version
LHBOTS	The Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LLC	LaRondelle Library Collection
LXX	Septuagint
NET	New English Translation Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
PTL	<i>Journal for Descriptive Poetics and Theory of Literature</i>
RNBC	Readings: A New Biblical Commentary

SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
SDABC	Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary
<i>SEÅ</i>	<i>Svensk exegetisk årsbok</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am incredibly thankful to Dr. Roy Gane for the detailed and responsive feedback he has provided to this research prototype, the references to the pertinent literature, the clues in the area of a potential contribution that helped me navigate the subject, the pastoral academic and personal attention through the years of my studies, and the crucial attentive rounds of review of this thesis in the final stages of this project. I also want to thank Dr. Cedric Vine for responding to a draft of this work with valuable and critical comments and for his kind guidance through my M.A. program. In this research, I also used the tutor program scripts prepared by Dr. Oliver Glanz, which substantially helped in the initial phase of my inquiry to master the Information Technology-related concepts convertible to the technical clues for finding the necessary biblical backgrounds. I also appreciate the continual assistance of Hong Park, which was indispensable in the overall degree journey, from the uncertain beginning to the end.

I greatly appreciate the help and guidance of other professors who have assisted me in growing in the art of research, including the willingness of Kenneth Bergland and several other presenters at the SBL conference in San Antonio in 2023 to share some of their preliminary discoveries that proved to be invaluable as part of the present system of research.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In Zech 3:6–10, the angel laid a stone before the high priest Joshua. Today there exists a diverse range of exegetical conclusions about its meaning. Is there a system of thought behind the problem that could be uncovered within the canonical biblical structure, and how could ancient Israelites have understood this object? Below is the passage in Hebrew with my translation.

וְלֵעֵד מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה בִּיהוֹשֻׁעַ לֵאמֹר: כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אִם־בְּדַרְכֵי תֵלֵךְ וְאִם אֶת־מִשְׁמַרְתִּי תִשְׁמֹר
וְגַם־אֶתְּהָ תִדְוֶן אֶת־בֵּיתִי וְגַם תִּשְׁמֹר אֶת־חֻצְרוֹ וְנָתַתִּי לְךָ מֵהַלְלָיִם בֵּין הָעַמֻּדִים הָאֵלֶּה: שְׁמַע־נָא יְהוֹשֻׁעַ
הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל אֶתְּהָ וְרַעֲיֵךְ הַיֹּשְׁבִים לְפָנָיִךְ כִּי־אֲנֹשִׁי מוֹפֵת הִמָּה כִּי־הִנְנִי מֵבִיא אֶת־עֲבָדֵי צִמְח: כִּי הִנֵּה
הָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְפָנָי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת שִׁבְעָה עֵינָיִם הִנְנִי מִפְתִּיחַ פֶּתַח נָאֵם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת וּמִשְׁתִּי
אֶת־עֵזוֹן הָאֶרֶץ־הַזֶּה בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד: בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נָאֵם יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת תִּקְרָאוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ אֶל־תַּחַת גֶּפֶן וְאֶל־
תַּחַת תְּאֵנָה:

Then the angel of the Lord witnessed to Joshua saying: “Thus says the Lord of hosts: if you walk in my ways and keep that which I entrusted to you, then you also will both judge my house and keep my courts, and I will give you paths among these who stand here. Listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your companions, those sitting before you! Surely, they are a sign.¹ For behold, I am bringing forth my servant, the Branch. For behold, [here is] the stone that I have laid before Joshua—on this one stone [there are] seven eyes. Behold, I am engraving its inscriptions [on it], says the Lord of hosts, to the effect² that I will remove the guilt of this land in one day. In that day,” says the Lord of hosts, “everyone will invite his friend under his vine and under his fig tree.”

¹ In Hebrew: “the men of a sign.” In this sentence the angel of the Lord includes both Joshua and his companions in the word “they,” addressing the heavenly group.

² The consecutive perfect used contingently in a discourse (which is the case here) is “most basic” for the apodosis of a condition, C. H. J. van der Merwe, J. A. Naudé and Jan H. Kroeze, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 194. Here, the protasis is the laying of the stone and its inscription and the apodosis is the removal of guilt, therefore translated “to the effect.”

The imagery of “the one stone” laid before Joshua and the meaning of the related symbols and dynamics surrounding this object in Zech 3 remains an issue of scholarly debate. Although there are Hebrew Bible (HB) references and archaeological backgrounds to elucidate the object, they are found to be mutually conflicting or incomplete, suggesting the need for a methodological contribution to aid the investigation. The nature of “the Branch,” Joshua’s colleagues, the contents of the stone’s inscription, and their connection to “the one stone” and “the one day” of a peaceful fellowship are all parts of the interpretive issue.

The current research proposes quantitative and qualitative methodological strategies for classifying the relevant data in new terms that help to systematize existing views and those developed in this study into a coherent model. The theological tool obtained in this manner arranges the main object and its setting against six specific OT backgrounds, allowing their categorization, producing the ability to interpret the significance of “the stone” as a warning and an encouragement, and suggesting the contents of its anticipated writing, which originates in the mix of inscribed substances in Exod 31–39.

As the current research involves methodology and exegesis, it will commence with a literature review in those two areas before expanding on the specifics of the suggested process, followed by a description of the results of the newly developed approach, as well as ensuing exegetical re-evaluations, concluding with brief theological implications.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will survey the literature on the relevant methodological body of knowledge and specific interpretations of “the one stone” in Zech 3.

Methodological Review

Genre of Zechariah

It is difficult to place the book of Zechariah in a particular literary genre. On the one hand, in chapters 1 and 7, there are sections in which the prophet complains about the disloyalty of the previous generations and gives plain instructions to the contemporary generation about how they should live at that particular point in history. On the other hand, the other chapters in the book represent a mix of similar didactic material and a view toward an uncertain future with universal overtones, using combinations of transparent and veiled symbolism. Zechariah 3, on which the present study is primarily focused, conveys a priestly investiture scene with a backdrop of heavenly judgment and the related Day of Atonement. Smaller sections, such as Zech 11:16–17, seem to utilize poetic elements, and angelic lessons (e.g., 4:6) are full of practical spiritual insight. Thus, in various degrees, historical narrative, classical prophecy, law, poetry, and wisdom apply to this literary work. Although its eschatological aspect is not immediately apparent, the

book nevertheless, shares a common trait with apocalypticism—transcendence, with its focus on the divine realm³ and symbolic language that requires explanation.⁴

In Zech 1:7–6:15, Stephen Cook discerns a “radical eschatology” and apocalypticism.⁵ Antonios Finitsis, instead, concludes that for these visions, “the world is at hand”⁶ and Mark Boda sees “nothing... within the vision reports... [that] appears to be connected to the distant future.”⁷ Thus, eschatology seems to be the central point of the debate about the affinity of this section to apocalypticism, a concept that Boda does not find in this book.⁸

It is true that there are some similarities between the book of Zechariah and the “full-blown” apocalypses of Daniel and Revelation, since these books share “expanded narrative,” “participation of heavenly figures,” “otherworldly tour,” and “spatial dimension.”⁹ Furthermore, Zech 3 and 4 are closely linked to the book of Revelation by some shared imagery, such as olives trees (Rev 11),¹⁰ and by certain shared elements of determinism and theocracy. However, when it comes to a book such as Zechariah that is difficult to place in a particular genre, it appears that the safest procedure is to focus on

³ The divine references are found in nearly all of the chapters in Zechariah. This study will later describe the prominent heavenly emphasis in Zech 3 and “the one stone.”

⁴ In both Dan 2; 7–12 and Zechariah, the angelic interpreter is not active all the time, leaving some symbols undecipherable and requiring thought and investigation. “The one stone” in Zech 3 is the most pertinent example in this context.

⁵ Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 123–132.

⁶ Antonios Finitsis, *Visions and Eschatology: A Socio-Historical Analysis of Zechariah 1–6* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

⁷ Mark J. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, eds. R. K. Harrison and Jr. Robert L. Hubbard, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing company, 2016), 102.

⁸ As Boda argues, “even the term ‘protoapocalyptic’ is dangerous because it encourages treatment of the vision reports as eschatological,” Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 102.

⁹ Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 101.

¹⁰ Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 101.

attributes that it shares with other texts, instead of attempting to assign its meaning and function within an existing genre taxonomy.

Symbolism

The present study focuses on interpreting a given symbol in the book of Zechariah. Although this book is not apocalyptic, discussion regarding its symbolism involves concepts shared with that genre. As this study later shows, “the one stone” in Zech 3 emphasizes the divine realm, complex imagery, and, although partly and indirectly, eschatology.

A significant challenge for analysis of symbolism in the HB books is that scholars do not define the nature of a symbol. De Saussure, the creator of semiotics, addresses this lack of attention. He disapproves of the term “symbol,” which is never “wholly arbitrary,” and prefers the term “sign” in terms of the more detailed convention “concept” / “sound-image,” distinguishing between “signified” and “signifier” to emphasize their opposition.¹¹ He demonstrates that “every means of expression used in society is based... on collective behavior ... on convention” because the same sign designates different meanings in different languages.¹² Further, according to de Saussure, signs create reality for the people who use them; they “organize the world” because “if words stood for preexisting concepts, they would have exact equivalents in meaning from one language to the next, which is not at all the case.”¹³ It follows that when a new sign renders a new meaning prior to becoming a part of known and accepted convention, it at first appears

¹¹ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, eds. Charles Bally, Albert Sechehaye and Albert Riedlinger (Lasalle: Open Court, 1986), 67–68.

¹² De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 68. He brings convincing examples to argue against onomatopoeia, the seeming similarity between a word and its sound, demonstrating that there is no actual link between the word’s sonority and its etymology (Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 69).

¹³ As succinctly summarized by Culler, Jonathan D. Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 58.

abnormal in the flow of the language and perplexing from the perspective of the hearer or the reader—a figure that needs interpretation and adoption.

Eco’s “symbolic mode” (which is closer in meaning to the introductory use of de Saussure’s “signs”) is when “events, gestures, things suddenly appear as a strange, inexplicable, intrusive evidence within a context which is too weak to justify their presence. So they reveal that they are there to reveal something else; it is up to the reader to decide what else.”¹⁴ Eco brings examples of a carriage’s wheel at the door of a country house, which can be viewed both as “the sign for the workshop..., a restaurant,” or a mere “stylization.”¹⁵ Thus, newly emerged symbols appear intrusive even for the primary audience of a literary passage. In ancient texts, intrusive symbols challenge modern exegetes, who seek to uncover their meanings in the original context.

One way to deal with intrusiveness is to leave it up to the reader’s interpretation, an approach with which Reynolds disagrees, suggesting that “levels of meaning beyond the strict associations between a symbol and its immediate referent” might be at work and “a broader analysis” may be needed.¹⁶ The crucial question about how those levels can be found is answered in varied ways by Friedrich Lücke, Adolf Hilgenfeld, R. H. Charles, H. H. Rowley, Martin Noth, and David Russell,¹⁷ who conjecture about how a visionary author generates a signifier in a text to lesser (as in Lücke)¹⁸ or greater (as in Noth, Rowley, or Russell) degrees. Those views appear to be externally imposed on the text

¹⁴ Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and The Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 157.

¹⁵ Eco, *Semiotics and The Philosophy of Language*, 162.

¹⁶ Bennie H. Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism: The Use of Symbolic and Non-Symbolic Language in Ancient Jewish Apocalypses 333–63 B.C.E* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 78–79.

¹⁷ Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism*, 39–44.

¹⁸ Although Lücke seems to give little due to the visionary, the latter is still portrayed to be forced to describe a synthesized “picture at large,” Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism*, 39.

because it is nearly impossible to know precisely what the visionary saw unless the original passage clearly describes the object of the vision.

Reynolds takes another route and constructs his framework for analysis of apocalyptic symbolism based on tangible data, “ancient and modern analyses of dream reports” as defined by Leo Oppenheim, admitting at the outset the inadequacy of the method to “explain all the evidence” since “both the symbolic and the non-symbolic apocalypses contain features that require more... sophisticated nomenclature.”¹⁹ In light of this discussion, Koch’s position seems to have the most solid methodological grounds. He remains closest to the sources and suggests looking for a symbol’s meaning in the HB, which conditions and involves a “particular mentality.”²⁰

Reynolds’s attention to “deliberate and transparent terminology”²¹ and Koch’s focus on understanding the original audience’s mindset²² appear to be well-founded approaches. Accordingly, de Saussure’s terms, “the signified” and “the signifier,”²³ should be defined with even more precision, being immersed in the world containing “insider information”²⁴ and created with language of the ancients.

Thus, the analysis of books that involve symbolism cannot avoid intertextual analysis of inner-biblical reuse in one form or another to uncover further information and language tendencies.²⁵ A brief overview of such analysis follows in the next section.

¹⁹ Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism*, 62. He also underscores that attempts to find allegories in Jewish apocalypses would fail in treating, e.g., Dan 10–12. Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism*, 48.

²⁰ Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic; A Polemical Work on A Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy*, SBT 22 (Naperville, IL: Alec Allenson, 1970), 27.

²¹ Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism*, 74.

²² Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, 27.

²³ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 67–68.

²⁴ Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism*, 85.

²⁵ For more information on the canonical approach, see the section **Conventions** in this study.

Inner-Biblical Reuse

Kenneth Bergland and Felipe Masotti use the expression “inner-biblical reuse,” which is neutral and “as open as possible” to the dynamics of ancient texts.²⁶ They suggest “uniqueness,” “distinctiveness,” “parallel or inverse literary structure,” “availability of options,” “thematic correspondence,”²⁷ and “multiplicity” as the six indicators of reuse.²⁸

Since the book of Zechariah includes many “indicators of reuse,”²⁹ it appears to be methodologically crucial to gather as much data as possible about the existing inner-biblical parallels to arrive at the intended meaning that may be located outside the realm of modern known literary categories. The first step in such a process that involves investigation of a symbol is to select a benchmark passage and to identify its internal textual features. Second, through data-mining, these features can be correlated with other, auxiliary passages that contain the same features. Third, the parallel features can be analyzed according to reuse criteria to detect any indicators of reuse. Fourth, instances of reuse can be investigated to shed any available light on the symbol in question. This approach will be applied in this study, with Zech 3 used as the benchmark passage.

²⁶ Kenneth Bergland, “Indicators of Reuse and Direction of Dependence in the Hebrew Bible” (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the SBL, San-Antonio, TX, 18–21 November 2023), 3, 5–6, 9; Felipe A. Masotti, “Prophetic Reuse and Chronotope: The Reuse of Prophecies and the Representation of Time and Space in Daniel 10–12” (PhD diss., Andrews University, 2023), 94–107. See also, Kenneth Bergland, *Reading As a Disclosure of the Thoughts of the Heart: Proto-Halakhic Reuse and Appropriation Between Torah and the Prophets* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2019). He also suggests to adopt Schultz’ term “verbal parallels” where directions of dependence cannot be established (p. 5, n. 19). Such parallels can involve the following: “The occurrence of two or more passages of distinctive content, ranging in length from a few significant words to several sentences, which display identical or minimally divergent wording.” Richard L. Schultz, *The Search for Quotation: Verbal Parallels in the Prophets*, eds. David J.A. Clines and Philip R. Davies, JSOTSup 180 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 19. Michael A. Lyons, “Marking Innerbiblical Allusion in the Book of Ezekiel,” *Biblica* 88.2 (2007).

²⁷ For the indicator “thematic correspondence,” see Michael A. Lyons, *From Law to Prophecy: Ezekiel’s Use of the Holiness Code*, LHBOTS 507 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 72.

²⁸ Bergland and Masotti have minor differences between the order, naming, and number of the indicators, as described in more detail in the section **Conventions** in this study.

²⁹ Bergland, “Indicators of Reuse,” 3–6.

Exegetical Review

Backgrounds and Themes of Zechariah 3

Among the historical backgrounds to Zech 3 is the ANE mode of foretelling the dynamics of future history from a static picture,³⁰ which is employed with related imagery in Dan 2:31–35. This method can also be discerned in the book of Zechariah. For instance, there is no movement of Joshua’s colleagues, who are said to be a “sign” of future events, and “the one stone” is also still, yet these serve as symbols of things that are beyond themselves (Zech 3:8–9).³¹ However, neither in Dan 2 nor in Zech 3 are the symbols completely static or the main characters idle. In Dan 2, a stone demolishes the statue and Daniel is brought before the king. In Zech 3, “the one stone” will receive an inscription and the angel changes Joshua’s clothing. In the book of Zechariah, the symbols may incorporate elements of nature (3:9–10)³² and are injected into “the distribution of physical spatiality” at the “local, urban, national, and universal” levels.³³

In addition to this static-dynamic symbolism, the cultic elements in Zech 3, which include the change of priestly clothing and the removal of “the iniquity of that land in one day,” invite association with two cultic backgrounds. The ordination ritual and “the charge of Joshua” are depicted against the background of the consecration ritual (Zech

³⁰ For example, history is foretold by a picture of colored birds. Janice Kamrin, *Cosmos of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hasan*, Studies in Egyptology (London: Kegan Paul International, 1999).

³¹ The text connects the role of Joshua’s colleagues with the future actions of “the Branch” and the meaning of “the one stone” with inscriptions that will be engraved in the future and the removal of iniquity that is yet to happen. Both links will be discussed in more details later in this study. Both Daniel (Dan 2:19) and Zechariah (Zech 3:1) “saw” their visions. In each vision, the dynamic elements are mixed with a discernable static picture that foretells the future. With some reservation, the similar approach can be said to be found in the classical prophecy of Ezek 4:1–4 which describes the siege of Jerusalem presented as a clay tablet that is said to be “a sign” of future events, and in Jer 1:11–16 where Jeremiah sees a branch of an almond tree and a boiling pot that are symbols of the future.

³² Goran Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place: A Critical Examination of the Ritual Production of Space in Haggai–Zechariah 1–8” (PhD diss., McMaster Divinity College, 2023), 272, and other sections.

³³ Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 78.

3:4–7; Exod 28; 39; Lev 8)³⁴ and the Day of Atonement (Zech 3:1–5; Lev 16; 23).³⁵

Živković recognizes this connection (although as a secondary backdrop) in removing “the iniquity of that land in one day” in Zech 3:9³⁶ from the uncleanness of the people and, by implication, from their ruined temple.³⁷ Mary Douglas observes that the cleansing performed on the Day of Atonement was primarily to heal the breach in God’s

³⁴ Mark J. Boda, “Perspectives on Priests in Haggai–Malachi,” in *Prayer and Poetry in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature: Essays in Honor of Eileen Schuller on the Occasion of Her 65th Birthday*, ed. Jeremy Penner, STDJ 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 25–27. See also: Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “The Guilty Priesthood (Zech 3),” ed. Christopher Mark Tuckett in *The Book of Zechariah and Its Influence* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 8–11; Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 271. Milgrom connects the “removal of iniquity” with the consecration of the high priest based on Exod 28:38 and the similarity of the admonition given to Joshua in Zech 3 and to the high priest in Lev 8:31–36. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 511–512, 542–544. Moreover, there is a connection between the inscription on the stone in Zech 3 and the breastpiece in Exod 28. Walter Harrelson, “The Trial of the High Priest Joshua: Zechariah 3,” *ErIsr* 16 (1982): 120; Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 505–507.

³⁵ Mentioned by Roy Gane on account of the need to return the culpability back to the origin of evil (Zech 3:1–2), Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winina Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 263, and the removal of uncleanness from the camp (3:3–5). See also Gane, *Cult and Character*, 217–304, regarding the cleansing of the high priest before going before the Lord on that day (3:1–5), Gane, *Cult and Character*, 238.

Tiemeyer noticed that the need to change garments is prescribed in Torah only on two occasions. Those two occasions are the inauguration of the high priest (Exod 28; 39; Lev 8) and the Day of Atonement (Lev 16). Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage: Post-Exilic Prophetic Critique of the Priesthood*, FAT: 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 249; Boda, “Perspectives on Priests in Haggai–Malachi,” 25–27. Compare clothing in Zech 3:4 with Lev 16:4; the turban in Zech 3:5 with Lev 16:4. Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 257–258.

³⁶ “It is very likely that this removal of guilt described in v. 9, together with the text in Zech 3:4–5 refers to the Day of Atonement (Lev 16),” Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 258, 271. At the textual level, despite the variance with the original terminology for “removal” (כפר, “to atone,” Lev 16:6, 10, 11, 16–18, 20, 24, 27, 30, 32–34; עבר in Hiphil, “to remove,” Zech 3:4; מוש, “to withdraw,” 3:9), other words, עון (“iniquity,” Lev 16:21, 22) and ביום אחד (“in one day,” Zech 3:10) / ביום הזה (“on this day,” Lev 16:30) are shared. The removal of the iniquity from the high priest (Zech 3:4) is directly linked to the cleansing of the land (3:9), Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 268. “The only day known in the OT when God removes the sins of his people [corporately at one time] is the annual Day of Atonement.” Tiemeyer, “The Guilty Priesthood (Zech 3),” 9.

³⁷ Živković brings Hag 2:10–14 and the mentioned there relation between the impurities of “this people,” “this nation,” “all the work of their hands,” and “whatever they offer there.” Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 257.

protection.³⁸ According to Roy Gane, evils were primarily removed from the sanctuary, thereby showing that God was vindicated for having forgiven loyal Israelites and for condemning the disloyal, and this purgation of the sanctuary secondarily provided the loyal with moral purification (Lev 16:30; 23:29–30).³⁹

Tiemeyer highlights the common theme of the atonement-related investigation and judgment because of its similarity with Job 1–2; Zech 1; 4; 5; 8⁴⁰ and Živković refers to the atonement as being dependent on judgment (Lev 23:29–30; Zech 3:7),⁴¹ which implies the fulfillment of a specific condition: “behaving with humility on this particular day.”⁴² However, Petersen points to a potential dissociation between Zechariah and Leviticus due to the absence of the washing rites, clothing nuances, and offerings.⁴³ Nevertheless, the mixed heavenly and earthly realities that saturate the vision may explain the perceived disparity.⁴⁴

Tidwell and others see a heavenly setting in Zech 3 due to the nature of the messengers and the textual affinity with Job 1–2; 1 Kgs 22:19–21; Isa 6:1–13; Jer 23:18.⁴⁵ Essentially, the high priest Joshua has access to both earthly and heavenly

³⁸ Mary Douglas, “Atonement in Leviticus,” *JSQ* 1.2 (1993): 123, 128–129.

³⁹ Gane, *Cult and Character*, 202, 207, 240, 246, 255, 257, 262, 270, esp. 274. For the cases with privative ׀ (“from”), see Lev 14:19; cf. 12:7. Gane, *Cult and Character*, 115, 126, 193.

⁴⁰ Tiemeyer shows how the court vision in Job 1–2 projects to Zech 1; 4; 5; 8 through the use of the words “patrol” and “Satan,” Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, “A Busy Night in the Heavenly Court,” *SEA* (2006): 203–204. See also Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 244.

⁴¹ Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 258.

⁴² Lev 23:29, translation of the NET Bible.

⁴³ David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8: A Commentary*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984), 198–199.

⁴⁴ As Živković correctly observes, “the boundaries between earthly and spiritual realms completely blurred.” Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 259, especially in regards to Zech 1–6, Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 67 n.31.

⁴⁵ Neville L. A. Tidwell, “Wā’ōmar (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah’s Fourth Vision,” *JBL* 94 (1975): 347–348; see also Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 188–191; Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 104–105, 220–221, 248; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Zechariah and His Visions: An Exegetical Study of Zechariah’s Vision Report*, LHBOTS 605 (T & T Clark, 2015), 118; Michael R. Stead, *The Intertextuality*

realities in Zech 3.⁴⁶ The structure abstracted by Živković explains that the ritual in Zech 3, that being “envisioned,”⁴⁷ has a transitional function to move the people from the “infelicitous/ lived” to “felicitous/ ideological” rituals in connection to the second earthly temple.⁴⁸ The observation of the beneficent transition is significant, and the prominence of the heavenly setting in the vision might suggest a complementary explanation, to be discussed later in this study.

Turning to specifics of the fourth vision in Zech 3, several prominent elements of this chapter invite consideration. Among them is “the Branch” symbol, which involves levels of vegetation, monarchy, and priesthood. Anthony Petterson observes this symbol in the context of the renewal of the land (Zech 3:9–10).⁴⁹ Mark Boda sees a Davidide, “the Lord’s Servant,” עֶבְדֵי יְצַמַּח (Zech 3:8), in a typical Davidic reference.⁵⁰ However, the context of the dedication of Joshua, the high priest, according to David Petersen and

of *Zechariah 1–8*, Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament studies 506 (London: T & T Clark, 2009), 88–90, 156–157, 208; Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 247–248.

⁴⁶ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 207; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 25B, eds. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 197; Eugene H. Merrill, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 125; Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 215 (n. 80), 259.

⁴⁷ Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 259.

⁴⁸ For the chart and the conclusions of the transition, see Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 55, 406–409. The author sees fasting as infelicitous and feasts as felicitous rituals to accommodate both Israelites and Gentiles in common activities. Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 408. “These envisioned rituals had the purpose of encouraging the reestablishment of the ritual system associated with the second temple and, in that way, facilitating the transition from infelicitous ritual practices to felicitous ones.” Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 409.

⁴⁹ Compare with Isa 4:2; 5:1–7. Anthony R. Petterson, *Behold Your King: The Hope for the House of David in the Book of Zechariah*, eds. Claudia V. Camp, et al., LHBOTS 513 (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2009), 88.

⁵⁰ Jer 33:21, 22, 26 in relation to the servant David; Jer 33:15 about the promise to restore a branch to David. Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 254.

Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, dissociates the coming Davidide from “the men of a sign.”⁵¹ The high priest Joshua, not the king, is being consecrated.

Nevertheless, the priest-kingly connection could be substantiated by the fact that the consecration of the high priest implies a speedy commencement of the services in the temple, which needs a king to complete its construction (Michael Stead’s argument).⁵² Additionally, Mark Boda highlights the background in Jer 33:15–22, where the promises to David and the Levitical priests are conflated.⁵³ Despite these intertextual connections, there is still tension between the unfulfilled realization of the desired Davidic king and his historical substitute in the person of the king of Persia, as observed by Wolter Rose.⁵⁴

Possibilities to resolve this tension are to suggest that the anticipations of Zech 1–6 wane in the later chapters (Boda),⁵⁵ which is partly supported by the corresponding language shift from the customary HB usage of numbers for months to the Babylonian style with corresponding month names (Živković),⁵⁶ or to expect the king to appear in a remote future (Rose, Petterson).⁵⁷ In any case, the relevance of the Solomonic backdrop (1 Kgs 4:24–25) and the eschatological promise (Mic 4:1–5), connected to Zech 3:10,⁵⁸

⁵¹ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 209; Tiemeyer, *Priestly Rites and Prophetic Rage*, 240.

⁵² See Deborah W. Rooke, *Zadok’s Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁵³ Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 254–255.

⁵⁴ In Zech 9:9, Rose sees YHWH as the king, arguing from the overall context of Zech 2:14; 9; 14. Wolter H. Rose, “Zechariah and the Ambiguity of Kingship in Postexilic Israel,” in *Let Us Go up to Zion: Essays in Honour of H. G. M. Williamson on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, eds. Iain Provan and Mark J. Boda, VTSup 153 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 119–120. Nevertheless, this argument does not seem to resolve the tension, since YHWH is not a Davidide.

⁵⁵ Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 424.

⁵⁶ Živković observes that the manner to refer to months changes in Zech 7:1 to adopt the Babylonian style instead of customary OT usage of numbers for months. Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 312.

⁵⁷ Rose, “The Ambiguity of Kingship,” 248–251; Petterson, *Behold Your King*, 247–248.

⁵⁸ Irene Jacob and Walter Jacob, “Flora,” *ABD* 2:807, 810; Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 272.

reveal an expected major royal shift in Judah's destiny. Some findings of the current study will confirm the anticipation of the king emerging in the future.

The role of the Branch is tightly connected to the extent of the transformation God implements in or with the returning people. Edgar Conrad argues that in Zechariah's early visions, God plans a universal change while Jerusalem remains the capital of the new order.⁵⁹ Živković, on the other hand, sees that the phrase כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, "all the earth," in Zech 1:11; 4:10, 14; 6:5 should not be imposed on the meaning of כָּל־הָאָרֶץ in Zech 5:3,⁶⁰ or on אֶרֶץ־הַהֵיחָל, "this land," in Zech 3:9,⁶¹ referencing Al Wolters and his emphasis on the local context.⁶² This question seems to condition another discussion about the minimalist or maximalist approach to purity in Israel, according to whether it is confined to the temple or extends beyond it.⁶³

Questions concerning the meaning of "the one day" in Zech 3:9 pertain to several aspects of the chapter, its scope—limited to the local Jewish community or the world, its expectations—whether the final action of the Lord will take short or long time, its commencement—taking place in the imminent or remote future, and its transcendence—whether "the day" pertains to the natural processes of the land's recovery or requires heavenly involvement to rearrange earthly affairs. According to Tiemeyer, Boda, Stead, and Živković, "the one day" in Zech 3:9 is literal,⁶⁴ a view challenged in the present

⁵⁹ Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah*, RNBC (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 21–22.

⁶⁰ Živković argues that in Zech 5:3, 6 the framework is the transfer of wickedness from one locality to another. Živković, "Rites In and Out of Place," 79.

⁶¹ Živković argues that the circumstances in Zech 3 are local, Živković, "Rites In and Out of Place," 79, because of the chapter's main focus on consecration of Joshua. Živković, "Rites In and Out of Place," 269.

⁶² Al Wolters, *Zechariah*, Historical Commentary on the Old Testament (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 57.

⁶³ For discussion about the minimalist and maximalist approaches to purity in ancient Israel, see Živković, "Rites In and Out of Place," 253, n. 42.

⁶⁴ Tiemeyer, "The Guilty Priesthood (Zech 3)," 9; Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 261; Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8*, 170; Živković, "Rites In and Out of Place," 258, n. 68.

study. At this point, the overview of the existing interpretations of the main object of this study, “the one stone,” is the last step in this condensed chapter.

Interpretations of “The One Stone” in Zechariah 3

The interpretation of “the one stone” (Zech 3:9), which is the main object of this research, is a debated issue in the modern scholarly conversation.⁶⁵ A selected list of existing views includes the following:

(1) The stone is a metaphor for the Messiah⁶⁶ as the foundation stone. Similar metaphorical variations include symbolism for Christ (Isa 8:14) or the kingdom of Christ (Dan 2:34, 35, 44).⁶⁷ However, such symbolic options have not been popular recently.⁶⁸

(2) Hans Schmidt has suggested that the stone is a literal massive stone or a foundation (corner) stone of the temple because the phrase לְפָנַי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ, “before Joshua,” only applies to sizable objects.⁶⁹

(3) Jonathan Yogev adds a historical archaeological background and explains the phenomenon in the light of “the Babylonian kalû ritual and the well-known mythological

⁶⁵ “The one stone” in Zech 3 is “perhaps the most complicated interpretive issue in this chapter.” Mike Stallard, “The Messiah and His Restoration of Israel,” eds. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 1242. “Symbolism [of the stone] is not clearly explained.” “The stone” [Zech 3:9], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC:Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 4:1093. Ellen G. White does not comment on the meaning of “the stone.”

⁶⁶ David Baron, *The Visions & Prophecies of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1972), 114–115. The connection is made to Ps 118:22–23; Isa 8:13–15. Stallard supports this view, among other scholars and, additionally, references Isa 28:16. Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1242.

⁶⁷ Another metaphoric option is Zerubbabel “as the ‘signet’” (Hag 2:23). “The stone” [Zech 3:9], *SDABC*, 4:1093.

⁶⁸ James C. VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest and the Interpretation of Zechariah 3,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 562. He references the authors who describe the “older view.” André Petitjean, “La Mission de Zorobabel et la Reconstruction du Temple: Zach 3:8–10,” *ETL* 42.1 (1966): 44–46; Albert Emil Rühly, “‘Sieben Augen auf einem Stein,’ Sach 3:9,” *TZ* 13.6 (1957): 525–526; for the interpretation “kingdom of God,” C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Twelve Minor Prophets*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 2 (Twelve Minor Prophets; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868).

⁶⁹ Hans Schmidt, “Das vierte Nachtgesicht des Propheten Sacharja: [Sach 3:1–10 und 4:6–10],” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 1–2 (1936): 54.

Sibittu iconography.”⁷⁰ One challenge to this approach is the doubtful blending of the stones’ contexts in Zech 3:9 and 4:7b, since the two chapters are two distinct visions and have different actors, moods, types of stones, and approaches to resolve two distinct problems.⁷¹

(4) An option that has been recently recognized observes the forceful contextual resemblance between Exod 28; 29; 39, and Zech 3, where the description of the high priestly attire is prominent. The precious stones of the breastpiece, the ephod, and the golden plate on the turban invite comparison with “the one stone” of Zechariah, and the engraving “holiness to the Lord” on the golden plate seems to provide a clue for the contents of its inscription.⁷² However, despite the attractiveness of these analogies, “a

⁷⁰ Jonathan Yogev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” *VT* (2019).

⁷¹ As VanderKam observes, “the temple-building approach... must face substantial obstacles... the need to rip 3:8–10 from its context and to read it in another. There appears to be no firm evidence to support the thesis that the oracular material in Zechariah belonged together at one time and that later it was sliced up and distributed among the visions.” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 566. For more details about the discussion, see n. 45 of that page. Specifically, the following contrasts should be considered: (a) the difference in the original phrasing—the cornerstone which Zerubbabel brings forth (4:7b) is called הָאֶבֶן הַיְסוּדָה, “capstone,” not אֶבֶן אֶחָד, “the one stone” (3:9); (b) the difference in the setting—the stone before Joshua is laid with calm speech (3:5–9), while Zerubbabel brings forth his stone with shouting (4:7b); (c) God himself has provided and placed the stone before Joshua, and he engraves it, making the work being God’s work, while the cornerstone of Zerubbabel is shaped and set to its place by humans. The sentence “the hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundations of this temple, and his hands will complete it” in 4:9 creates a distinctive contrast with the four verbs describing God’s work in 3:8–9. Thus, the book of Zechariah is a book of contrasts: there are, generally, eight references to אֶבֶן, “stone,” in the book, all with radically different meanings and contexts, so the three stones mentioned in Zech 3:9, 4:7b, and 4:10, should be three different stones, used for three distinct purposes. Another suggestion that builds the bridge between chapters 3 and 4 is the notice of the presence of “the Branch” in them. After all, Zech 6:12–13 explicitly says that he, “the Man whose name is the Branch,” will “build the temple.” It appears, however, that intratestamental phenomena, such as “the Branch,” can hardly reduce the gap between the chapters in this case, due to their participation in a larger canonical metanarrative. The different roles of Joshua and Zerubbabel, that do not form such a metanarrative, should be considered instead, but, as also noted by VanderKam, “in Zech 3 Joshua alone is the protagonist... he does not share the stage with Zerubbabel.” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 570.

⁷² Hinckley Gilbert Thomas Mitchell, J. M. Powis Smith and Julius A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and Jonah* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912), 157–159; Lars Gösta Rignell, *Die Nachtgesichte des Sacharja: Eine Exegetische Studie* (Uppsala; Lund: Gleerup, 1950), 130–134; Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC*, The Old Testament library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), 190–191;

stone and a metal plate are rather different phenomena”⁷³ and the role of the other primary protagonist in Zech 3, who is not the high priest but “the Lord [who] performs all of the action” and bears the guilt,⁷⁴ would need to be explained.

Having acknowledged these issues, VanderKam nevertheless reaffirms but revises the interpretation of the Exodus background, transferring the emphasis from the golden plate (Exod 28:36–38) to the grouping of the two onyx stones (v. 12) and the twelve precious jewels of the ephod (vv. 22–28), due to the shared אבן, “stone,” and פתח, “to engrave” / פתוח, “inscription.”⁷⁵ Besides, these “fourteen stones of remembrance”⁷⁶ would align with the “seven pair of eyes” (due to the perceived dual morphological form of עינים, “eyes,” in Zech 3:9). Despite the weakness of the latter argument regarding “seven pairs of eyes”⁷⁷ (to be discussed in detail later in the present thesis), by exhibiting supplementary connection points between Zech 3 and Exod 28, VanderKam has strengthened “the vestments approach.”

All of the interpretive proposals feature credible biblical antecedents for “the one stone,” but some of the arguments conflict with each other. None of the options appear to offer holistic interpretation in which they consider the divergent but strong sides of the competing views and thereby take all of the available data into account to reach their conclusions. Hence, a methodological paradigm shift may be necessary to progress in the area under discussion.

Harrelson, “The Trial of the High Priest Joshua: Zechariah 3,” 120; Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 211–212; VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 563.

⁷³ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 564.

⁷⁴ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 212; VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 564.

⁷⁵ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 567–568.

⁷⁶ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 568.

⁷⁷ Christopher J. Thomson, “The ‘Seven Eyes’ of Zech 3:9 and the Meaning of the Dual Form,” *VT* (2012). This case will be discussed later in detail.

Meyers and Meyers take a step in this direction, positing that “the very ambiguity of the word ‘stone’ in its present placement may well be intentional,”⁷⁸ suggesting a mixed meaning of simultaneously priestly and building stone for, correspondingly, “the priestly and the monarchic realm.”⁷⁹ They emphasize the historical-political context in which the “temple without a monarch... is the dominant issue,” and therefore, “the postexilic prophets were concerned with... the ideological setting... to supply the motivation for... rebuilding despite [the temple’s] ruin.”⁸⁰

It seems worthwhile to pursue the proposal of ambiguity, but the brief conjecture about the joint priestly and kingly offices needs to be defined lucidly enough to enable assessment of the other views, including the older metaphoric interpretations, and itself may need refinement. Besides, the ambiguity of the object may be explained differently from other perspectives that are less conjectural, which may be discovered when additional biblical backgrounds are searched.

Recognizing the parameters and limitations of the current scholarly interchange, the present study extends the effort on the methodological front in a quest to discover one or more biblical canonical (as opposed to a purely historically conditioned) backgrounds behind “the one stone.” Such background(s) can help to identify the meaning of the phrase.

⁷⁸ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 206.

⁷⁹ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 207.

⁸⁰ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 206.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Conventions

This research accepts the integrity of the book of Zechariah as a whole⁸¹ and assumes that the HB canonical form aids in deciphering the mode of thinking of its contemporaries or inheritors.⁸² On this basis, an intertextual inquiry within the HB canon

⁸¹ Examples of scholars who regard Zech 1–8 as different in origin from 9–14 are given in the dissertation by Chan-kok Wong, “The interpretation of Zechariah 3, 4 and 6 in the New Testament and early Christianity” (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 1992), 8. See also reference to the same approach by Joseph Klausner in Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1235. On the other hand, Stallard points out that if the alleged separation is based on differences between the sections, one should not overlook the similarities, and on the basis of those “the reader *must* accept the singular authorship of Zechariah the prophet for the entire text,” Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1235. Similarly, conjectures about original segments of Zech 3:6–10, specifically, have led to opposite conclusions “about what is primary and what is secondary, [meaning] that this sort of division is not based on very strong evidence.” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 562. For VanderKam’s conclusion that there is “no firm evidence to support the thesis that the oracular material in Zechariah belonged together at one time and that later it was sliced up and distributed among the visions,” see VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 566. The church fathers regarded the book of Zechariah as a unity. Wong, “The interpretation,” 8.

⁸² It can be assumed that a significant part of the materializing canonical form enjoyed, at least partly, authoritative status already at the time of the composition of Zechariah. John Peckham brings convincing arguments for the “intrinsic” canonical model, implying that the process of inclusion of the books into the spectrum of the authoritative texts primarily depended on the content of the sources and their “divine commission,” “consistency with past revelation,” and “self-authentication by divine purpose,” rather than merely arbitrary decisions of a given community. John Peckham, *Canonical Theology: the Biblical Canon, Sola Scriptura, and Theological Method* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 47. Regarding indicators of intentional seams in the HB, suggesting its unity, as well as the “earmarks” of its authoritative message and “its reception as inspired and canonical by Israel,” see Michael Rydelnik, “Canonical Perspectives on Messianic Prophecy,” eds. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 121–122. On the connection between the “intelligent life behind its formation” and “the messianic hope,” see John H. Sailhamer, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” *JETS* 44.1 (2001): 22.

concerning possible literary reuse seems to fit the needs of the current study's data mining and evaluation phases.

One should avoid the following two methodological extremes to pursue the goal of reconstructing the mindset of the ancients regarding symbolism. While external historical sources contribute to comprehending the HB background, they can be too remote, mutually conflicting, and, therefore, "too external" to be treated as its decisive interpretational tool. On the other hand, attempting to grasp the inner perception of the visionary would require unattainable access to all of his or her presuppositions and experiences, forcing the researcher to subjective assumptions.

An approach to deciphering the meaning of symbolism that avoids these extremes is to work with relevant canonical parallels, including in apocalyptic literature. As discussed earlier, the weak eschatological emphasis in Zechariah is the most conspicuous aspect that separates this book from full-fledged apocalypses. However, the same cannot be said about the element of transcendence, which includes the focus on the divine realm,⁸³ symbolic language that requires explanation,⁸⁴ and wisdom beyond human grasp. As this study later argues, while Zech 3 depicts events relevant to the ancient house of Judah, one should not neglect the eschatological nuances simultaneously present in the chapter, which add weight to the transcendent aspect of its message.

In order to distinguish between apocalypticism and the peculiar style of Zechariah and to underline the focus of the current research, it seems appropriate to ascribe to the literary approach where a transcendent messenger communicates something in the future via symbols in a vision a specific label: "transsymbolism" or better, "transsemiotism." There is a logical connection between transcendence and symbolism in the context of

⁸³ The divine references are found in nearly all of the chapters in Zechariah. This study will later describe the prominent heavenly emphasis in Zech 3 and "the one stone."

⁸⁴ In both Dan 2: 7–12 and Zechariah, the angelic interpreter is not active all the time, leaving some symbols undecipherable and requiring thought and investigation. "The one stone" in Zech 3 is the most pertinent example in this context.

foretelling a future new experience for which there is a shortage of historical references or readily available words or concepts. Transsemiotism does not depend on the other apocalyptic criteria, such as determinism, eschatology, and theocracy, but it shares common ground with classical prophecy and, partly, with apocalypticism.

To conduct inner-canonical analysis of transsemiotism, this study employs Bergland's six indicators of reuse, which, in declining order of significance and accuracy, are "uniqueness,"⁸⁵ "distinctiveness,"⁸⁶ "parallel or inverse literary structure,"⁸⁷ "availability of options,"⁸⁸ "thematic correspondence,"⁸⁹ and "multiplicity."⁹⁰ Notably,

⁸⁵ "A specific linguistic phenomenon (e.g., a lexeme, phrase, lexical set, or syntax) is only attested in the two parallel passages in the HB," e.g., the combination of "camel," "rock badger," "hare," and "swine" are only found in Lev 11:4–7 and Deut 14:7–8. Bergland, "Indicators of Reuse," 6. Another example is unique terminology in Obad 3–4 and Jer 49:16 with shared phrases, "the pride of your heart," "you who live in the clefts of the rock," and "from there, I will bring you down, declares the Lord." Schultz, *The Search for Quotation*, 20; cf. Masotti, "Prophetic Reuse," 99.

⁸⁶ "A linguistic phenomenon (e.g., a lexeme, phrase, lexical set, or syntax) is attested in more than two cases in the HB, but it is possible to demonstrate a semantic usage unique to the parallel passages under consideration," e.g., the phrase רָצַח וְשָׁחַט + בְּיָד , that even if it is used in Jer 26:1 and Hos 9:10, is still particularly associated with Gen 1:1. Bergland, "Indicators of Reuse," 7. Another example is "shared language between Ps 72:1–8 and Zech 9:9–10... [with] distinct vocabulary for describing a king by using the root of the term 'salvation' and the adjectives 'righteous' and 'poor, humble,' combined with the phrase 'from sea to sea, and from the River to // the ends of the earth.'" Masotti, "Prophetic Reuse," 100–101.

⁸⁷ "Parallel or inverse order of literary elements or the structure may be a sign of reuse, compared to a more random order." Bergland, "Indicators of Reuse," 7. For this criterion, Masotti adds rearrangement and conflation of the elements. E.g., "the parallelism between Zeph 3:3–4 and Ezek 22:25–28 reveals a change of several elements' original literary structural order and a clear expansion of their original wording into a new recombined oracle." Masotti, "Prophetic Reuse," 106.

⁸⁸ "If various ways of formulating an idea are attested in a language, a shared specific formulation may indicate reuse," e.g., "the potential reuse of $\text{בְּתַיִם} + \text{צִי/צִיָּים}$ from Num 24:24 by Dan 11:30." Here Bergland demonstrates in more depth that there are other options in Dan 11 that could have been used instead, but were not used. Hence, this is a reuse indicator. Bergland, "Indicators of Reuse," 7.

⁸⁹ "The parallel texts share a similar semantic cognate, word-pair, wordfield, theme, motif, or argument," e.g., "thematic correspondence is seen between Lev 25:42; Deut 15:15; and Jer 34:13 regarding the exodus from Egypt as an explicit rationale for manumission, something not found in Exod 21." Bergland, "Indicators of Reuse," 8. Cf. his detailed discussion of this example in Bergland, *Reading As a Disclosure*, 182. Masotti rightly notes that, "although this is the weakest criterion when considered in isolation, when coupled with other criteria it can be decisive for establishing literary parallelism." Masotti, "Prophetic Reuse," 104.

⁹⁰ "The more of the above indicators of reuse that are present, the stronger will be the case for intentional reuse." Bergland, "Indicators of Reuse," 8. Bergland cautions that this weakest criterion relies

the first three indicators are detectable with low-level linguistic comparisons and carry the highest promise for finding relevant parallels. At the same time, the latter four⁹¹ can be identified through higher-order conceptual synthesis and juxtaposition.

The methodological section below will describe quantitative and qualitative steps for retrieving initial clues for possible backgrounds of a passage based on the first three reuse indicators.

Quantitative Phase: Mining of Data

The initial textual comparison should commence with finding potential backgrounds at the levels of lexemes, phrases, and grammar, since the strictest reuse indicators are concerned with these most basic literary manifestations, and, at the technical level, it is easiest to formulate search criteria in such terms. When programmable tools are employed at this step and in the following steps, the Eep Talstra Centre for Bible and Computer⁹² (ETCBC) database, with its rich set of native analysis kits, appears to be the most suitable primary tool.⁹³ Further, this technical quantitative phase will be delimited to lexeme analysis because it is most practical to retrieve the

heavily on the persuasiveness of each argument, not on the number of arguments per se. On the other hand, Masotti lists this criterion as “one of the strongest indicators of deliberate reuse, for it increases the possibility of // intentionality.” Masotti, “Prophetic Reuse,” 101–102. It appears that a multiplicity of weak criteria results in a weak multiplicity argument, but a multiplicity of strong criteria creates a strong multiplicity argument.

⁹¹ The indicator “parallel or inverse literary structure” participates in both categories, but not simultaneously in a specific case. It is either linguistic when the analogies are drawn on the level of lexemes/phrases/syntax or conceptual when thematic analogies are employed.

⁹² <https://etcbc.nl>

⁹³ Aided by the auxiliary support of Logos or Accordance. Among the native tools of the ETCBC database is Shebanq, TextFabric, and Python. Valuable results have been produced through a similar approach to the definition and study of, for example, the “valence” phenomenon, which explains how the statistical study of the placement of words and prepositions in sentences in the HB increases the precision of understanding the meaning of a verb. Janet W. Dyk, Oliver Glanz and Reinoud Oosting, “Analysing Valence Patterns In Biblical Hebrew: Theoretical Questions and Analytic Frameworks,” *JNSL* 40/1 (2014); Oliver Glanz, Reinoud Oosting and Janet W. Dyk, “Valence Patterns In Biblical Hebrew: Classical Philology and Linguistic Patterns,” *JNSL* 41/2 (2015).

preliminary data with such a straightforward approach. A narrow set of rules for searching in the HB should give more results than needed. The result filtering and comparison at the levels of phrases, grammar, and thematic juxtaposition will take place in the following, qualitative phase.⁹⁴

The primary passage in Zech 3 is initially condensed to an array of its representative lexeme set. This step collects the most frequent lexemes in the primary text, excluding the most typical HB words, prepositions, and pronouns—since they are not considered significant in the larger context of the HB in this specific study.⁹⁵ The number of times a certain lexeme is found in the primary passage is the “local lexeme count.” The ratio of this count to the overall biblical count is the “lexeme ratio.” For example, filtering the lexemes by their general HB frequency of a value greater than ninety, the local lexeme count in the primary passage of Zech 3 using a value greater than four, and using a ratio of the latter to the former with a value less than two,⁹⁶ yields the following representative set for this chapter: יהוה, “YHWH”; אמר, “to say”; עמד, “to stand”; פנה, “face,” and מלאך, “messenger.”⁹⁷ In other words, whatever filtering technique one uses, a set containing more generally used lexemes will lead to finding

⁹⁴ The other possibility is to invest more time in specifying more sophisticated inquiries already in the quantitative phase to save time in the qualitative phase.

⁹⁵ As a second step, the most frequent lexemes should be filtered to include only those that have certain higher rankings in the general canonical vocabulary. Otherwise, the set is not representative in the general HB context.

⁹⁶ The ratio of the count of the lexemes found in Zech 3 to the overall frequency of these lexemes in HB is chosen to be limited in this case to reduce the size of the lexeme set and to make the outcome less idiosyncratic in the context of the passage. As a result, the obtained representative set will align with more HB backgrounds at the thematic level and will require more afterwork to check the matching backgrounds.

⁹⁷ The choice of the lexeme general frequency and its local count with the ratio between them directly influences the contents of the set, and the proper limitation leads to avoidance of those searches in the HB that yield no results, while there should be some. On the other hand, a too-short local lexemes list or one with too many HB-matching commonplace general entries may produce results without theological value. Therefore, a researcher should take several rounds to see how to select the ranges of those three values to obtain optimal outcome. Regardless of the precision of this step, theological value will be identified and confirmed in the later qualitative phase, so there is no need to spend too much time in trying to find perfect parameters for these three values.

more general backgrounds, and a set containing more specific lexemes yield more specialized backgrounds. Therefore, to avoid one-sidedness in the process, one should search with sets of various specificities.⁹⁸

There is a theological reason to consider different sets for the same passage based on various combinations of ranges of the mentioned parameters. From a theological perspective, unequal representative sets should correspond to distinct readings of the passage and equip the researcher with non-identical and complementary view angles that can later be aggregated into an integral picture. For example, the previously given array of lexemes—יהוה, אמר, עמד, פנה, and מלאך—gives an impression of more general thematic correspondence with HB, since each of these words is typical for nearly every HB book.⁹⁹ By contrast, if the overall HB lexeme frequency is chosen to be between two and three hundred, the local lexeme count for Zech 3 is greater than two, and the ratio of the latter to the former is greater than seven-tenths, so then the representative set changes and becomes: מלאך, “messenger”; בגד, “garment”; עון, “sin, guilt,” and אבן, “stone.” This combination of lexemes is at variance with the former set: it is narrower in meaning and should yield more thematically specific potential backgrounds. Thus, both representative sets allow viewing Zech 3 from different perspectives. Therefore, the results generated through them will reflect distinct emphases: the relative frequencies of the lexemes

⁹⁸ The higher the lexeme ratios and the lower the local counts, the more general and broader the correspondence with the primary passage is during a search, and vice versa. The higher lexeme ratio frequencies will correspond with broader linguistic/thematic parallels, since they are relatively typical, and the lower ones will highlight those HB segments with narrow and specific matching features. At the same time, the lower lexeme count frequencies will correspond with broader linguistic/thematic parallels, since they are not so typical for the studied text (primary passage), and the higher ones will highlight those HB segments with narrow and specific matching features. However, extreme count or ratio frequencies, those that are too low or too high, will lead to mostly irrelevant or non-existing results.

⁹⁹ However, the *combination* of those lexemes in a given context is not necessarily expected to be found in each book. This gives value to these broader contextualized searches. Yet, in principle, this combination can appear nearly anywhere in the HB.

condition how broad or narrow the sought backgrounds will be, and the number of lexemes in a set dictate the verbosity of the point of view in the primary passage.

The next step is to search the HB in order to find passages of a specific size that contain all the lexemes in the set.¹⁰⁰ The outcome should be a list of verses with their suggested relevance,¹⁰¹ which will be manually verified for actual relevance in the next phase.

¹⁰⁰ The following technical detail might not be relevant in each case, but it is provided here as optional information. In this methodology, I measured this size via “radius”—the acceptable maximum number of words between the set’s lexemes. For example, suppose there are five lexemes in the set with a search radius of one hundred. In that case, the inquiry is being made for all passages with up to one hundred words between the lexemes. The smaller the radius, the higher the chance for a significant lexical match. The higher the radius, the easier it is to find valid thematic parallels or, on the contrary, run into unrelated mixtures of contexts. The genre of a match is crucial, since the historical books would be more tolerant for bigger radiuses because keywords may be spread across a large number of verses or even chapters and still represent a single story, which may function as a background. By contrast, for example, in certain cases in the Proverbs, the background passage could demand extremely low radiuses and low-sized representative sets in order to yield meaningful results because this book is known for its concise maxims and aphorisms. Therefore, searching the book of Proverbs, with large verbal sets across a number of chapters, would be nearly fruitless. In the present study, most practically valuable results were obtained with radiuses of one to five hundred words.

¹⁰¹ The following technical detail might not be relevant in each case, but it is provided here as optional information. To run this search, it is possible to use the TextFabric module with the ETCBC database. To calculate the relevance in the present study, I used the number of occurrences of a verse in the total search results because a specific verse may be viewed as relevant by TextFabric multiple times. The search engine will count it once for fulfillment of the criteria, demanding a certain maximal distance between certain lexemes, in relation to each word in a given verse. Since the criteria can be met in multiple ways and there are several words in the verse, there are many “relevant” combinations that are considered by the search engine. Therefore, the verses with the most fortunate locations will appear most often in the results, and their occurrence can serve as suggested relevance. For example, the most significant verse in 1 Chr 21–22 appears to be 1 Chr 21:18. It contains three lexemes (יהוה [twice], אמר [twice], מלאך) out of the five found in the search-set, which, in this case, happens to be יהוה, אמר, עמד, פנה, מלאך. The other two lexemes not found in the verse (פנה, עמד) are, nevertheless, found in its proximity (1 Chr 21:1, 12, 15, 16, 30; 22:2, 5, 8, 18). Since 1 Chr 21:18 has several words, the search engine will run separate round for each word in the verse. Each round will consider whether the condition of not exceeding three hundred words between the word יהוה and the other four lexemes of the search-set (אמר, עמד, פנה, מלאך) in the HB text is met. This condition can be fulfilled through multiple combinations because, first, there are two instances of יהוה and אמר in 1 Chr 21:18 and, second, there exist several instances of other lexemes in the nearby verses. As a result, there are multiple permutations for the five lexemes, or ways to show that the condition is fulfilled between them, for each round. Furthermore, when the search engine checks other verses in the chapter, the current verse will again appear multiple times as a supplementary result because its lexemes are within the needed range from, e.g., the lexeme עמד in the nearby verse 21:16. Therefore, the verses, such as 1 Chr 21:18, that are found near the center of the matching passage, will be counted distinctly more

Qualitative Phase

Principles of Pattern Identification

The qualitative phase does not exclusively depend on the previous quantitative phase of programmable data mining, which helps to obtain clues to potential backgrounds. It is also possible to find possible backgrounds by other procedures, such as by simply reading the HB or existing scholarly literature.

Inspecting the background options includes checking for verbal and thematic parallels that would confirm or refute the validity of the potential background. This verification will be achieved through categorizing them under the reuse types described by Bergland.¹⁰² To these types, I add “semantic/thematic antithesis”—a literary feature with inversion of earlier content at the level of the content’s statements or ideas. The comparable passages are akin verbally or thematically, but the borrower negates the verbs or principles of the borrowed passage. For example, such antithesis can be found in the theme of a three-party—divine-human-Satan—struggle concerning surveying the land in Zech 1; 3; 6¹⁰³ compared with 1 Chr 21–22. Along with numerous similarities between those themes,¹⁰⁴ the antithetical contrasts are divine versus human surveyor, the positive versus the negative outcome of the inspection, and Satan’s loss versus his victory.

Complex Transsemiotic Imagery

Interlocking Dual Backgrounds and Complex Object

Some symbols in transsemiotic passages—passages in which transcendent messengers communicate something in the future via symbols in a vision—lack sufficient

often than the other verses around them, helping the researcher to get a clue early in the process regarding where to check whether the passage in question is indeed relevant for further consideration.

¹⁰² Bergland, “Indicators of Reuse,” 3–6.

¹⁰³ The inspections of the land are described in Zech 1; 6, the chapters that are interrelated with the central vision in Zech 3.

¹⁰⁴ The juxtaposition between Zechariah 1; 3; 6 and 1 Chr 21–22 is discussed later in this study in more detail.

contextual backgrounds to fully explain their meaning in every aspect or they may raise possibilities of other, equally possible, backgrounds. For instance, “the one stone” in Zech 3 relates to “the [one] plate of gold” in Exod 28:36 both thematically (high priestly investiture) and verbally on a range of parameters (here called “attributes”), such as “quantity,” but not on “material composition” or “function.”

Two observations can be made regarding this scenario. First, the described example displays dual parallelism, where both the primary passage and the object relate to the other passage and the object in that other passage. Dual parallelism provides a “dual background.” Second, this scenario generates methodological tension because the possible background is non-dismissible due to “strong”¹⁰⁵ contextual links and, simultaneously, weak because of conspicuous discrepancies at the level of the correspondence between the objects of interest in the primary and background passages.¹⁰⁶ The absence of this characteristic tension would mean there exists a single background satisfactory enough to explain all the features of the object in the primary passage, so a traditional investigation of parallels between two HB sections would give a non-controversial exegetical answer to the problem. Since such a straightforward procedure proved to be inadequate for “the one stone” in Zech 3, the present study considers a methodology in which the described tension is no longer an obstacle but the necessary starting point and a potential marker of the need to apply the current approach. However, for the cases where there is no tension between the convincing parallels and the dissimilarities at the object-level, there would be no necessity for the current method.

To further emphasize the dual nature of the correspondence and differentiate between the objects in the borrowed and borrowing texts, the central object of the

¹⁰⁵ VanderKam mentions that Exod 28 is a strong background for Zech 3. VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 564.

¹⁰⁶ “A stone and a metallic plate are rather different phenomena.” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 564.

background in a text that parallels the central object of the primary passage will be termed “counterobject.”¹⁰⁷ Following this terminology, “the one stone” in Zech 3 is the object, and “the [one] plate of gold” in Exod 28:36 is the counterobject for this specific background. The relation between “the stone” and “the plate” needs to be inspected in addition to analyzing thematic correspondences between the chapters, rendering Exod 28 a dual background for Zech 3.

Suppose the resulting list of dual backgrounds allows their mutual superimposition to the effect that one background’s inconsistencies at the level of certain attributes of the counterobject (such as “material composition” of “the plate” [Exod 28:36] which, inconsistently, is not a stone) are compensated by this same attribute’s value in another background (such as “material composition” of the “tablets of the Testimony” [Exod 31:18] which, favorably, are made of stone).¹⁰⁸ Let us also suppose that all of the identified attributes (such as “material composition” or “quantity”) are mutually compensating in this manner. In that case, this study will call them “interlocking (dual) backgrounds” because they are constructable into an integrated picture. The object of the primary passage in such an instance will be called a “complex object” because it produces a picture as an aggregated synthesis.

A complex object should initially be perceived as strange, out-of-ordinary, or “intrusive”¹⁰⁹ even in its original context. This intrusiveness is logically coherent with the fact that no single linguistic background can adequately explicate it. To illustrate, no scholarly consensus exists today regarding the meaning of “the one stone” in Zech 3, but

¹⁰⁷ The attribute for which the counterobject matches or deviates from the object could be respectively called “sufficiency” and “deficiency.”

¹⁰⁸ That Exod 31 is the dual background for Zech 3 on other grounds will be demonstrated later in this study.

¹⁰⁹ Eco brings examples of a carriage’s wheel at the door of a country house, that both can be viewed as “the sign for the workshop . . . , a restaurant,” or a mere “stylization.” Eco, *Semiotics and The Philosophy of Language*, 157, 162.

theologians have given attractive arguments for various interpretations. The inexplicability of “the stone” in its original context, not the inadequacy of any solitary background, is the primary reason for the dissensions among opinions. The uncertainty of the object in its immediate surrounding becomes the starting point for a necessary and more sophisticated theological inquiry, which, in this study, has led to the notion of the complex object, the interrelated backgrounds, and the framework containing both. Since the inscrutable appearance of that object in the primary passage has been the starting point of a deeper exploration, the object’s “intrusiveness” (in the terminology of Eco) is a necessary marker of a complex object.

Prioritization of Interlocking Backgrounds

Since a complex object in a primary text may relate to several backgrounds in auxiliary texts where parallels are found, the relevant question is whether those backgrounds are equally influential in explicating that object. This study employs two ways to differentiate between the auxiliary texts.

One differentiation that helps to prioritize backgrounds is based on the unequal weight of the attributes used to describe the parallels at the level of the object. If background “1” aligns with the primary passage on a single weightier attribute (e.g., the weightier attribute “quantity” has the same value of “one” in both passages, [“one stone,” “one plate”]) and background “2” associates with that passage on a single weaker attribute (e.g., the weaker attribute “material composition” is described in the same terms [“stone”] in both), then background “1” should have a more potent influence in the interpretation of the primary text.

However, what makes the attributes different in weight? If one attribute is directly semantically extractable from the text, it should be of greater weight than another attribute that is derivable only exegetically through additional reasoning. This distinction is justified by the principles of textual reuse discussed earlier and the consideration of

respecting and reflecting the most apparent emphases of the primary passage. For instance, for “the one stone” in Zech 3:9, where the attribute “quantity” is explicit in the text,¹¹⁰ it should have greater weight in the analysis than the attribute “material composition,” which is not immediately available to the researcher in precise terms, although it is described simply as a “stone,” and should have a lesser weight.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, a certain level of precision is required for the attributes in this specific example so that the object is effectively comparable to counterobjects in their respective backgrounds.¹¹² An exegetical inquiry may help to define “material composition” in this case, but the conclusions may vary due to differences in the methodologies and assumptions of theologians. Thus, another reason for this attribute to have a lesser weight is because it is more prone to disagreements in assessments of its value. Simultaneously, the attribute “quantity” should be calculated with stronger emphasis because no additional logical reasoning beyond reading the text is needed to obtain its value and the passage plainly emphasizes it.

In particular, the “two onyx stones” in Exod 28 share only the exact value of the “material composition” (a weaker attribute) with “the one stone” in Zech 3, and the one “golden plate” in Exod 28 shares only the weightier “quantity” with the same. Since the attributes in the collation of these two backgrounds with Zech 3 are unequal, the “golden plate” backdrop should be assigned greater weight than the “two onyx stones.”

¹¹⁰ The morphological and semantical value of אֶבֶן אֶחָד, “one stone,” in Zech 3:9 unequivocally ascribes the value “one” to the attribute “quantity.”

¹¹¹ Zech 3:9 could be perceived as ambiguous with regard to the value of the attribute “material composition” of “the one stone,” because it does not provide grammatical clues for this object to be a precious stone or a piece of a rock, large or small, worked or without any specific shape.

¹¹² “The one stone” could be compared to the two stone tablets in the hands of Moses that appear to be a prepared writing surface (Exod 31:18; 34:4, Moses שָׂנֵי־לִחַת אֲבָנִים, “cut two tablets of stone”) or to the two onyx stones that rest on the shoulders of the high priest (Exod 28:9, שְׁתֵּי אֲבָנֵי־שֵׁהָם, “two onyx stones”). These comparisons require more precision at least in regard to the shape and type of “the one stone” in Zech 3:9.

Another differentiation that helps to prioritize backgrounds is the corollary of the principle given above: the more the attributes of a given background in an auxiliary passage match the same in the primary passage and the greater weight they have, the closer the background is to the meaning of the primary passage.¹¹³

The described prioritization scale facilitates ruling out inappropriate potential backgrounds in auxiliary passages with no matching attributes, which should be removed from further analysis.

Kaleidoscopic View

Suppose a meaningful theological picture or message arises from the interlocking backgrounds' mutual integration by synthesizing the theological aspects of the borrowed contexts according to their respective weights. In that case, this picture can be called a "kaleidoscopic view."¹¹⁴

¹¹³ For illustration of this principle, see chapter 3 of the current study.

¹¹⁴ I appreciate Roy Gane's suggestion and naming for the notion of "kaleidoscopic view." The precursors of such a view may be found at the verbal level in transsemiotism, for example, for such idiosyncrasies as expressed in the word קָדְשָׁךְ (Dan 8:14), which conveys three different meanings decipherable both from the intertextual analysis of the verb and the exegesis of the surrounding passage. Richard M. Davidson, *A Song for the Sanctuary: Experiencing God's Presence in Shadow and Reality* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2022), 560–562. The kaleidoscopic view induced by the complex object shares a common trait with some texts categorized as allusion/literary allusion (Ziva Ben-Porat, "The Poetics of Literary Allusion," *PTL* (1976): 109, 115, 122, 125)—the necessity to reconstruct the background literary information in order to arrive at any intelligible "local interpretation" ("LI") (p. 125). The difference between the two approaches is that, with a complex object, no single background is able to provide such a reconstruction, but the complex object in the primary passage causes a "shift in the hierarchy" by its very presence. To clarify, if a single background could exhaust the meaning of the passage containing a complex object, that background would cause the "shift of representational elements." However, a complex object requires a synthesis across several backdrops to explain it. Therefore, no single antecedent passage is sufficient to bring an adequate "shift" and help arrive at the intertextual meaning. On the contrary, several backgrounds, cooperatively, cause the desired change of elements' roles. However, in contrast with regular thematic backgrounds, this spectrum of backgrounds for the complex object are non-identifiable without the complex object's special features that point to them. Since the complex object of the primary passage played a key role in selecting the needed borrowed passages, it is the real source of the "shift in the hierarchy" of "representational elements." Furthermore, there does not even exist an initial completed hierarchy of elements in the original setting prior to finding the solution for this object in each case where a complex object is found. Therefore, with interlocking systems, instead of employing the term "shift of representational elements in the original system," one should instead speak about an ultimate (or, final) construction of meaning of the primary passage through the hierarchy of backgrounds. Therefore,

To briefly illustrate, the current study will ultimately describe six backgrounds for Zech 3, where the most influential one is the crushing stone in Dan 2 and the weakest is the “two onyx stones” in Exod 28. Thus, part of the ensuing kaleidoscopic view in this example is the emphasis on divine radical intervention as depicted in Dan 2, combined with the milder, more anthropocentric, and covenant-related theme of Exod 28. In the setting of Zech 3, this combination of backgrounds primarily means that the Lord communicates his undisputable end-time related plan, centered on the stone, to the post-exilic community (as Dan 2 is the weightiest passage) and additionally seeks cooperation with that community in the reaffirmation of the earlier established covenant (as represented by the “two onyx stones” in Exod 28 as the weakest backdrop).¹¹⁵

The backgrounds should not simply be stacked together. As mentioned earlier, not every background merely featuring thematic parallels qualifies for addition to the kaleidoscopic view. In addition to the criterion of having dual parallels with the primary passage (described earlier), an auxiliary passage needs to satisfy the rigorous attributive rules engendered by the complex object. Thus, only the legitimate backgrounds are considered, so the methodological error of “illegitimate totality transfer” is avoided.¹¹⁶

The following sentence seems applicable in evaluating the complexity of the described process. “That the resolution is neither clear nor simple is perhaps more a function of our failure to appreciate the thought patterns of a sixth-century prophet.”¹¹⁷ It seems more profitable to discover a conceptual system as it emerges from the ancient

unlike an allusion, the complex object is not a mere reference to, but a selective and delimiting modifier of a number of backgrounds, emerging as what is probably the most sophisticated literary device.

¹¹⁵ Other aspects of the integration of those six views are depicted later in this study.

¹¹⁶ “The error that arises, when the ‘meaning’ of a word (understood as the total series of relations in which it is used in the literature) is read into a particular case as its sense and implication there, may be called ‘illegitimate totality transfer.’” James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961; repr. London: SCM Press, 1983), 218; cf. 222.

¹¹⁷ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 206.

texts than to rely on the preconceived modern anachronistic tools of literary analysis and their application to those texts.¹¹⁸

Summary

A succinct description of the methodology for the present research concludes this chapter. (1) The object-related steps involve (1a) checking the literary object for intrusiveness, that is, whether it appears foreign in its immediate context.¹¹⁹ If intrusive, one should establish a preliminary (1b) array of attributes, where those derived from the plain reading are assigned greater weight (e.g., for “the one stone” in Zech 3, “quantity” should have greater weight as derivable directly from the central passage’s text and the “material composition” should have a lesser weight as it must be inferred from more sophisticated exegetical reasoning).

(2) The contextual passage of the object (the primary passage) is then (2a) condensed to one or several representative sets of lexemes (or other germane grammatical structures that manifest themselves most often in the passage, not including the most common phenomena in the HB). (2b) Using various technical tools, one may search the HB (or background data of pertinent choice) to find, in the order of the process, background options, potentially significant backgrounds, and, ultimately, dual backgrounds (that have parallels both at the thematic level and between the identified main objects of comparison within the primary and auxiliary passages). (2c) The researcher can add or remove the attributes as needed during the process so that they help most accurately to describe the object, counterobject, and deviations between them. Dual

¹¹⁸ Bergland suggests being cautious in applying modern definitions of parallelism to ancient texts. He also invites researchers to accept that an earlier text is not always the simplest in comparison with later texts. Bergland, “Indicators of Reuse,” 3, 5–6, 9.

¹¹⁹ Normally, intrusive objects pose additional challenges in exegesis. See the earlier section on “Symbolism” for more details about intrusiveness. While all complex objects should be intrusive, it is not known if all intrusive objects can be explained by the complex object methodology. Therefore, intrusiveness is a necessary but not exhaustive test of a complex object. On the other hand, the presence of interlocking dual backgrounds is the identifying footprint of a complex object.

backgrounds may help to enrich the attribute set according to the specifically identified deviations between the potential counterobject (the object of the background) and the main object of the primary passage.¹²⁰ Thus, a refined attributive classification is achieved at this step. (2d) The dual backgrounds are then filtered: those that do not have any attribute values that match the object in the borrowing passage are removed, as they will not be considered in the final synthesis. (2e) The remaining backgrounds are checked for completeness. If for every attribute a backdrop with a value identical to the value of the original passage exists, then the comparison is complete.¹²¹ In this case, the object is a “complex object,” and the located dual backgrounds mutually interlock.¹²² For example, the crushing stone in Dan 2 would be a correspondence to “the one stone” in Zech 3 for the “quantity” attribute (there is one stone in both cases), but, as will later be established, not for the “material composition.” On the other hand, “the two tablets” in Exod 31; 34 share identical “material composition” with the stone of Zech 3, but not the “quantity.” In this case, all of the identified attributes are covered by at least one background, which makes the system of comparison complete. (2f) The backgrounds are assigned weights and sorted according to the number and weight of the matching attributes. In the latter example, the background of Daniel would have greater weight due to the more substantial influence of its matching “quantity” attribute. (2g) The last step is to integrate these backgrounds into a kaleidoscopic view and synthesize them into a unifying message.

¹²⁰ This may be necessary to describe the textual correspondence as precisely as possible in terms of the complex object’s framework.

¹²¹ Lack of completeness may result from missing backgrounds and suggest re-iteration of steps 2a-b or signal that problems arose at steps 1a-b and the interpretation of the object is achievable outside of the current framework.

¹²² As mentioned earlier, the distinct feature of a complex object and its backgrounds is that no single background can fully match its features. Therefore, two or more auxiliary passages providing two or more backgrounds for comparison are required in the current methodology. In the opposite case, where a single background is sufficient for the primary passage, there is no need for the current approach.

Since the background alternatives can be obtained through processes other than the quantitative phase described in this study, steps 2a and 2b are optional.

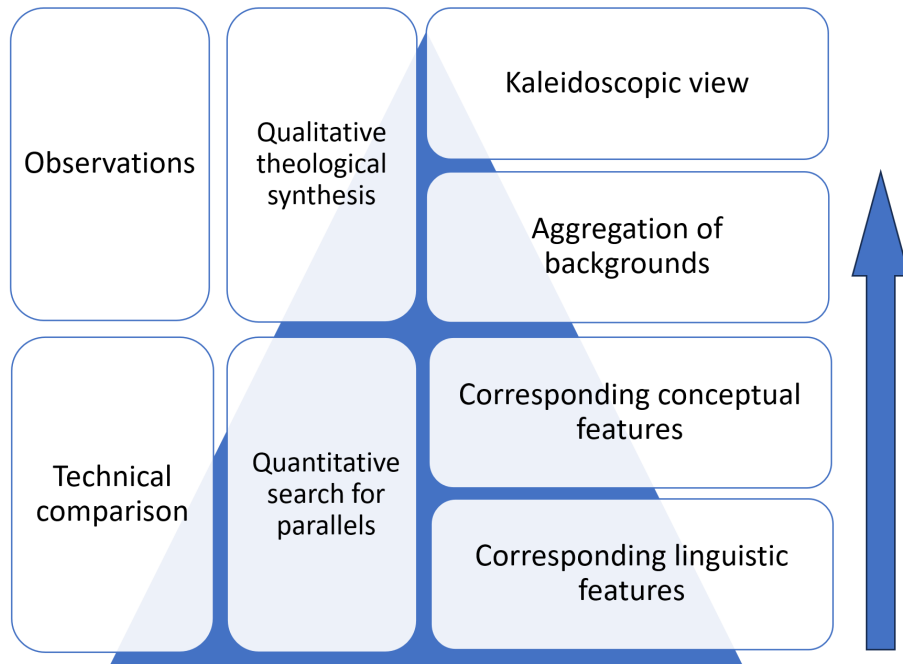


Figure 1. Methodological Steps for Finding Inner-Canonical Backgrounds

CHAPTER 4

“THE ONE STONE” IN ZECH 3 AS A COMPLEX OBJECT

The sophisticated priestly, legal, and divine¹²³ scene of Joshua’s investiture in Zech 3 references several HB settings. This complexity might be as intentional as the purposeful placement in the text of the ambiguous literary object אֶבֶן אֶחָד , “the one stone,” in Zech 3:9. It is nearly inexplicable in its local context, nor is it fully resolved with the help of the correspondences found outside of the prophetic book. On these grounds, the object can be pronounced intrusive,¹²⁴ fulfilling the minimal requirement of a complex object, as defined in the earlier described taxonomy.

The suggested analytical framework demands a potential set of the object’s attributes. For “the one stone,” the refined¹²⁵ attributive classification that allows a meaningful collation of the detected dual backgrounds¹²⁶ are “quantity” (with values: “one/several”), “principal operator” (“God/human”), “separateness” (“separate” or “part of something else, such as clothing/building”), and “material” (“stone,” “metal,” or “mixed”), where the “quantity” and “principal operator” qualities are established on

¹²³ For example, “the context of the scene is very complex, as it blends the legal court, divine council, and priestly setting.” Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 245.

¹²⁴ Intrusive objects appear foreign in their immediate context. For the definition of intrusiveness, see the section on Symbolism earlier in this study. Cf. Eco, *Semiotics and The Philosophy of Language*, 157, 162.

¹²⁵ This attributive classification is called “refined,” since it was further improved from the later comparisons to the dual backgrounds at a later stage in the process. For details, see step (2c) of the final concise description of the methodology in the chapter “Methodology.”

¹²⁶ Dual backgrounds are the backgrounds with passage/object-level verbal/thematic parallels, as delineated in the previous chapter.

direct verbal references and therefore have a weight of two while the other attributes are assigned a weight of one since they are exegetical logical corollaries.¹²⁷

The object's primary passage is Zech 3, a chapter with distinct literary boundaries. Various lexeme frequencies, counts, and relative frequencies (ratios) were used to generate the primary passage's representative lexeme sets. Searching the HB with the lexemes, of which those sets consist, produced a pool of potential backgrounds in auxiliary passages. Of these, only those that matched the dual background criteria—backgrounds with correspondences to the primary passage on the whole and between their particular comparison objects—will be taken into account in the further steps.

The first two passages in the following list of auxiliary passages have been identified using the previously described quantitative-qualitative procedure. The other passages were previously known and assessed as pertinent by the qualitative criteria alone. The passages are as follows: 1 Chr 21–22 (counterobject: the ark of the covenant)¹²⁸; Exod 31:10–18 (the tablets of stone)¹²⁹; Exod 28–29; 39 (the two onyx

¹²⁷ The reasons for neglecting the stone's inscription among the attributes are as follows. Attributes require clear textual statements transferable to their values or strong exegetical conclusions to enable the researcher to create a static picture of the object at the time of the vision or narrative, but the time of the engraving's completion is not clear or known in the text. Therefore, although the inscription is suitable to draw parallels between passages or objects, it is not sufficiently lucid to provide grounds for an attribute of any weight. Cf. "That stone has already been set before Joshua, but the Lord has yet to engrave it," VanderKam, "Joshua the High Priest," 562.

¹²⁸ The following parameters helped find 1 Chr 21–22 as a background/dual background candidate. For the representative set: lexeme frequency ≥ 90 , lexeme count ≥ 4 , lexeme ratio ≤ 2 ; parts of speech accepted: substantives, verbs, personal pronouns. The obtained representative set: יהוה, "YHWH"; אמר, "to say"; עמד, "to stand"; פנה, "face"; מלאך, "messenger." For the search in the HB: maximum word count between nearest lexemes (radius) ≤ 300 . About twenty background options were found. About thirteen thereof were considered irrelevant at the passage level. Among the other dual background candidates, no convincing object-level parallels were discerned.

¹²⁹ The following parameters helped find Exod 31:10–18 as a background/dual background candidate. For the representative set: lexeme frequency ≥ 200 and ≤ 300 , lexeme count ≥ 2 , lexeme ratio ≥ 0.7 ; parts of speech accepted: substantives, verbs. The obtained representative set: מלאך, "messenger"; בגד, "garment"; עון, "sin, guilt"; אבן, "stone." For the search in the HB: maximum word count between nearest lexemes (radius) ≤ 1000 . About seven background options were found. Six of them were considered irrelevant at the passage level and due to the lack of counterobjects.

stones); Exod 28–29; 39 (the twelve gemstones¹³⁰); Exod 28–29; 39 (the golden plate); Dan 2 (the crushing stone); Ps 118 (the rejected stone). Let us now analyze each case separately.

Ark of the Covenant in 1 Chr 21–22 as Counterobject

To observe how the thematic parallels in 1 Chr 21–22 correspond to those in Zech 3—both passages being holistic stories with clear-cut literary boundaries—one should recognize that the thematic characteristics of the latter chapter with just ten verses (the nation’s need for intercession and its outcome), require reference to the book of Zechariah in general. By comparison, the broader aspects of the two Chronicles chapters are better covered in their forty-nine verses.¹³¹

First, let us trace the structural positioning of the ark of the covenant as the counterobject in the thematic framework before addressing the more specific thematic and verbal parallels and formally proving the dual background. Three phases in these chosen sections of Chronicles and Zechariah comprise the coherent narratives: (1) The

¹³⁰ The twelve gem stones is the dual background that later will be rejected as not fulfilling the interlocking requirement.

¹³¹ This study investigates the parallels between the passages of HB in their final canonical form. Nevertheless, the sources with events described in 1 Chr 21–22 were likely available to the author of the book of Zechariah. While scholarly opinions differ in regard to the period in which 1 and 2 Chronicles were composed, the mentioned section closely resembles 2 Sam 24; 1 Kgs 5–8 (see especially 6:19; 8:1–7; cf. 2:26, with the emphasis on the ark of the covenant). Some scholars maintain that the books of Samuel were likely written in the “late-eight century B.C.” Mark Leuchter and David T. Lamb, *The Historical Writings: Introducing Israel’s Historical Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 177. Multiple times in these books, the reference is made to king David, who, according to the Tel Dan inscription, dated to the ninth century B.C., must have been a the royal figure before that period. Leuchter and Lamb, *The Historical Writings*, 191. Since 2 Samuel, along with its final appendix in chapters 21–24, is “indeed rooted in history” and “possess[es] important information regarding pivotal moments in the earlier narrative of David’s reign” (Leuchter and Lamb, *The Historical Writings*, 192, 247), the records of history (by contrast with theological or political interpretations) depicting David’s story and his collaboration with Solomon, had to be made about that time. The reference to “Satan” in 1 Chr 21 would not be an entirely new element in the narrative, as the same reference is made in the book of Job, if Job is older than Chronicles. Even if one can make the case that “the Chronicler used Nehemiah as his source, there is still the possibility that both depend on an earlier common source.” Jonathan Dyck, “Dating Chronicles and the Purpose of Chronicles,” *Didaskalia* 2 (1997): 18.

pre-phase, or plot, here called “Satan prevails,” links the disapproved conditions of the Jews in Zechariah’s backdrop (Zech 1:1–6, 12, 21; 2:6; 3:1, 3) with the royal failure and God’s ensuing displeasure in 1 Chr 21:1–10. (2) The central phase, or climax, “Satan restrained,” portrays the angelic/divine (Zech 1:12; 3:2, 4–5) or human (1 Chr 21:8–22) intercessory activity to curb the adversary’s progress. (3) The post-phase, or denouement, “The temple will be built,” depicts the emerging temple as the ultimate nation’s project after Satan’s defeat (Zech 4–8; 1 Chr 21:29–22:10). Note that for structural (as shown here), thematic, and verbal resemblances (as will be demonstrated later), the main elements are located in Zech 3.

The main structural thrusts of both passages are, respectively, “the one stone” (Zech 3:9–10) and the ark of the covenant (1 Chr 22:19) for three reasons. (1) Both objects existed before the temple’s building commenced. (2) Both are the literary foci in the respective passages.¹³² On the one hand, “the one stone’s” introduction is surrounded by multiple “behold” utterances and its function involves fulfilling the ultimate nation’s mission in purity and peace (Zech 3:9–10). On the other hand, the tension of the story in Chronicles (1 Chr 21:28–30) resolves in David’s desire to build the temple, and the conclusive goal of this endeavor is “bringing the ark” into the new edifice.¹³³ They are also the last conspicuous items mentioned in the stories. (3) Both contain God’s writing: on “the one stone” (Zech 3:9) and on the tablets located in the ark (Exod 32:16; 1 Kgs

¹³² In addition to Zech 3 being the central passage in the currently investigated narrative “Satan prevails”– “Satan restrained”– “The temple will be built,” it provides, as admitted by several authors, also the literary emphasis of the first half of Zechariah, due to (1) the fact that in Zech 3, God uncommonly speaks directly (Zech 3:1) while the participation of the prophet is minimized, and (2) structural reasons where the fourth vision (Zech 3) shares commonalities with the fifth vision (Zech 4) and reflects the setting of the first and the eighth visions in Zech 1 and 6.

¹³³ The sentence in 1 Chr 22:19 connects the temple building and bringing the ark through the preposition ל, indicating the purpose for the project, אֲבִיבֵי, “to bring.” David also mentions “the holy articles” that are to be brought into the future temple, but they are not explicitly named and are obviously subordinated to the ark as the main item.

8:9; 1 Chr 15:2; 2 Chr 5:10). Therefore, the ark of the covenant is a suitable and unique counterobject in the examined narrative.

At a broader contextual juxtaposition of the passages, there are the following similarities: (1) a chief regular thematic correspondence in the execution of judgment on God's people (Zech 1:2; 1 Chr 21:10); (2) a thematic antithetical resemblance in that God and David, respectively, inspect the land and demand a report for the ultimate benefit (Zech 1; 6) and the destruction of (1 Chr 21) Israel; (3) a remark about the unestablished state of the Lord's sanctuary (Zech 1:16; 1 Chr 21:29), and, significantly; (4) remarks regarding the expected construction project (Zech 2–6; 1 Chr 22:1) that (5) not Joshua, but “the Branch”¹³⁴ (Zech 6:12)—not David, but his son, Solomon (1 Chr 22:6)—will accomplish the Lord's house; against which (6) “all the nations” will not prevail (Zech 12:3,6,9; 14:2,12) and “all the lands” will consider it to be “splendid” (1 Chr 22:5). The mentioned indicators seem to be sufficiently distinctive to arrange them into (7) the solid multiplicity indicator of reuse for the backgrounds of the book of Zechariah found in 1 Chr 21–22. There is also (8) a weaker verbal indicator with syntactical similarity where Zechariah lifts his eyes (יָרָם עֵינָיו וַיִּשְׁאַף, “I lifted my eyes”; Zech 2:5)¹³⁵ as David יָרָם עֵינָיו וַיִּשְׁאַף “lifts his eyes” (1 Chr 21:16).¹³⁶ So far, we have seen the parallelism with the themes of Zech 1–8 presented as the immediate context of Zech 3.

Assessing parallelism more specifically and directly only with Zech 3, the story with David in the plot phase features (1) a distinctive verbal equivalent (הַשָּׂטָן / הַשָּׂטָן, “the adversary / Satan,” Zech 3:1; 1 Chr 21:1), a substantial indicator of reuse in the taxonomy

¹³⁴ The identification of “the Branch” is done later in this study.

¹³⁵ Cf. Zech 1:18; 2:1; 5:1, 5, 9; 6:1. Here and further, unless stated otherwise, the Biblical quotations are taken from the NKJV or, in some shorter biblical quotations, translated by the writer of this study.

¹³⁶ Since the verbal phrases with the verb יָרָם and the noun עֵינָיו are found in multiple instances of HB, the correlation here is considered to be a weaker indicator of reuse.

of reuse indicators,¹³⁷ combined with the antithetical themes of (2) a failing adversary (Zech 3:1–2) because of the Lord forgiving iniquity (3:4) versus (3) a succeeding adversary (1 Chr 21:1) because of the king causing guilt to rest on the people (21:3).¹³⁸

In the culmination phase, there is no more antithetical parallelism present in the pre-phase of the Chronicles passage: David acknowledges his sin and asks God to “remove the guilt” in the same way that God removes Joshua’s guilt. In both cases, the “guilt,” חַטָּאת, is removed from the leader as the people’s representative (Zech 3:4, 10; 1 Chr 21:8). Thus, there is a thematic and distinct verbal correlation between the two passages. Another verbal and thematic relationship is the “standing company” in Zech 3:1[x2], 3, 4, 5, 7 (the high priest, the adversary, “those standing,” and the angel of the Lord) and a similar company in 1 Chr 21:1, 15, 16 (Satan and the angel of the Lord¹³⁹) sharing the verb עָמַד. Zechariah is with his “colleagues” (Zech 3:8), and David is with “the elders” (1 Chr 21:16), which are thematically connected. Thus, another multiplicity criterion of reuse appears: the blending of distinct verbal indicators with a mixture of thematic correspondences.

Assessing 1 Chr 21–22 in relation to Zech 3 by the reuse indicators identified above, several of which are distinctive verbal parallels, and the presence of a counterobject, these two chapters of 1 Chronicles can be considered a valid dual

¹³⁷ This distinctive verbal parallel is the strongest indicator of reuse among the other indicators (only after “uniqueness,” according to Bergland’s classification, Bergland, “Indicators of Reuse,” 6–8) and among the listed ones in this context, since the noun חַטָּאת (חַטָּאת in 1 Chr 21:1), depicting a role of a heavenly adversary acting against both the heavenly agencies and the associated with them nation on earth, is only found in Job 1:6–9, 12; 2:1–4, 6–7; Zech 3:1, 2; and 1 Chr 21:1. This, together with other thematic and verbal similarities between the chapters and the fact that the events in Zech 3 transpire later than the events in 1 Chr 21–22 strongly suggests that Zech 3 was influenced by 1 Chr 21, in addition to being influenced by the investigative court perspective from Job 1–2.

¹³⁸ These last two less significant thematic antithetical parallels show the contrast between human weakness and divine strength, which is pertinent to the later theological analysis.

¹³⁹ Notably, the Lord (Angel of the Lord) commands those serving Him (Zech 3:5; 1 Chr 21:27). מַלְאָכָא, “angel,” is used four times in Zech 3 (“the Angel of the Lord”: Zech 3:1, 5, 6; “the Angel”: Zech 3:3) and ten times in 1 Chr 21 (“the Angel of the Lord”: 21:12, 15, 16, 18, 30; “the Angel”: 21:15[x3], 20, 27).

background of Zech 3. The attribute collation for the respective objects appears in Table 1.

Table 1 conveys the following ideas, using the following explanation of T-NR-ST-MC. The stone in Zech 3 and the ark of the covenant in Chronicles are singular types of objects (ST), as there is only one of each. The inscriber of the “one stone” in Zech 3 is God, and, in the case of the ark in Chronicles, the inscription is only on the tablets inside the ark, meaning that both God and humans (priests, craftworkers) are “mixed” principal operators of the ark as a whole. These two observations are derived directly from the textual descriptions and, therefore, both are aligned with the weightier, 2-point, attribute “principal operator.”

<i>primary passage</i> <i>dual backgrounds</i>	<i>attributes</i> Quantity 2 points	P. Operator 2 points	Separateness 1 point	Material 1 point	<i>influence degree</i>
One Stone Zech 3	One	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	6/6 points (the primary passage)
Ark of Covenant 1 Chr 21–22	One	Mixed (God, human)	Separate	Mixed (metal, wood, T-NR-ST-MC)	3/6

Table 1. The Attribute Collation of the Primary Passage of Zech 3, Version 1

Another remark about the objects in Zech 3 and Chronicles is that both artifacts are embeddable into other physical systems. However, since each has a biblical function in its own right¹⁴⁰ and plays a correspondingly self-sufficient role in each text, they are marked as “separate.” “The one stone” is expected to be treated (T) because God is about to write on it (Zech 3:9), and it is God’s custom,¹⁴¹ as well as a general human practice in the HB, to inscribe on surfaces previously prepared. It is non-refined (NR) because the HB never applies זָהָב to refer to pure iron, gold, or other metals. In the related texts closest to metal connotations, Job 28:2 and Deut 8:9, use זָהָב with reference to the ore that would need a purification process to extract pure metals. Therefore, “the stone” is not refined and, consequently, is not a piece of gold or any other metal. Neither is it, by definition, a wooden artifact. At a minimum, it is safe to assume that the item is a whole piece of rock (mineral compound [MC]) of an unknown type and size (T-NR-ST-MC). Thus, it could be a gemstone of a smaller size or a huge boulder, opening itself to theological comparison with precious stones and larger rocks cut from a cliff. For the sake of the current collation, the material of the “two tablets of stone” inside the ark of the covenant¹⁴² is marked with the same linguistic pattern and appears to have an identical value of T-NR-ST-MC. However, in this case, the counterobject is the ark, not the tablets. Being made of “acacia wood,” the ark was overlaid with gold and was comprised of golden rings, a lid, cherubs, and stone tablets. Therefore, the “material” is “mixed.” The current dual background’s deviations from the primary object appear to be

¹⁴⁰ “The one stone” is separate from Joshua’s clothing since it is set לְפָנָיו , “before” (Zech 3:9), him. Likewise, although the ark of the covenant initially was built to be a part of the Mosaic tabernacle (Exod 40:21, cf. 2 Chr 5:7), it stood on its own for years without a suitable sanctuary and was functionally used as a separate object: Num 10:33; 14:44; Deut 10:8; Josh 3:3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17; 4:9, 11, 18; 6:5, 7, 10, 11; 8:33; Judg 20:27; 1 Sam 4:3, 4, 5; 2 Sam 15:24; 1 Kgs 6:19; 8:1, 6; 1 Chr 15:25, 26, 28, 29; especially, 17:1; 22:19; Jer 3:16.

¹⁴¹ Exod 32:32; 34:1, 4, 28; cf. Exod 24:12; 31:18; 32:15–16; Deut 4:13; 5:22; 9:10; 10:2, 4; 2 Kgs 17:37; Hos 8:12; Job 13:26. In a spiritual sense: Jer 31:33.

¹⁴² Exod 25:10–21; 1 Kings 8:9.

“principal operator” and “material.” In sum, this background has a degree of influence in three of six attributive points (two points for the matching attribute “quantity” and one point for the matching attribute “separateness”) in relation to the stone in Zech 3.

Further classification of the abbreviations of the stone materials considered in this study appears in Table 2. The values of the parameters used in the table are: Treatment (Treated [T]/Non-Treated [NT]), Refinement (Non-Refined [NR]), Number (Singular Type [ST]/Multiple Type [MT]) of Mineral Compounds (MC).

Abbreviation	Description	Examples
T-NR-ST-MC	Treated Non-Refined Singular-Type Mineral Compound	Exod 28:9; 31:18; Zech 3:9
NT-NR-ST-MC	Non-Treated Non-Refined Singular-Type Mineral Compound	Ps 118:22; Dan 2:34–35
T-NR-MT-MC	Treated Non-Refined Multiple-Type Mineral Compound	Exod 28:17–20

Table 2: Classification of Stone Material Abbreviations

Two Stone Tablets in Exod 31:1–18 as Counterobject

In the broader contexts of the compared chapters—Zech 3 and Exod 31—is God’s declaration as the one who forgives חַיִּיב, “guilt,” in Exod 34 (vv. 4, 7, 9), the chapter in which Moses gets his second set of tablets inscribed by God (cf. Zech 3:4), and preparation of “all manner of workmanship,” including the “lampstand” in the sanctuary setting (Exod 31:4, 8; Zech 4:2).

The narrow comparison between the passages discloses the following: (1) Thematically, there are two appeal sections where the Lord first instructs his chosen ministers in regard to preparation for their service for the sanctuary/temple (Exod 31:1–11; Zech 3:1–5) and, second, admonishes them and the people surrounding them to be faithful (Exod 31:12–17; Zech 3:6–7), concluding with a climactic conclusion where the Lord reveals an artifact that he emphasizes (Exod 31:18; Zech 3:8–10). The artifacts in

these passages are “the two tablets of the Testimony” in Exod 31 as the counterobject of “the one stone” in Zech 3.

(2) Along with the structural equivalence of the mentioned objects between the chapters, the following distinguished comparative feature firmly pairs them together even within the larger canonical framework: except for “the one stone” in Zech 3:9, the only other HB artifact made available for humans to contemplate, on which God himself writes or engraves,¹⁴³ is the pair of stone tablets received by Moses. Other thematic resemblances between the two passages are (3) the exclusive garments that are prepared for the high priest (Exod 31:10; Zech 3:4), (4) the presence of his co-workers (Exod 31:10; Zech 3:8), and (5) the “signs” of Sabbath and Joshua’s companions (Exod 31:13; Zech 3:8).¹⁴⁴

Among the verbal parallels interspersed in the above structure is (6) the “garment” theme with direct verbal correspondences (בְּגָדִים, “garments/clothes,” Exod 31:10; בְּגָדִים, “garments/clothes,” Zech 3:5, both as pure clothing) and antithetical verbal correspondences (בְּגָדֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ, “the garments of holiness,” Exod 31:10; בְּגָדִים צוּאִים, “the filthy garments,” Zech 3:3); (7) the mention of הַכֹּהֵן, “priest” (Exod 31:10[x2]; Zech 3:1, 8) for whom the garments are made; (8) The admonition’s nature is to שָׁמַר, “keep, guard, preserve,” the Sabbaths/the Lord’s commands (Exod 31:13–14, 16; Zech 3:7). In both passages, the root שָׁמַר is emphatically used three times, concerning the Sabbath (Exod 31:13) or the men of ministry (Zech 3:8),¹⁴⁵ both of which are called “a sign.”¹⁴⁶ (9) The

¹⁴³ Exod 31:18; 32:16; 34:1.

¹⁴⁴ The Sabbaths are an אֵימָה (“sign,” “commemorative token,” “sign confirming the truth of an earlier statement”), Ludwig Koehler et al., “אֵימָה,” *HALOT*:26, and Joshua’s companions are מוֹפֵת (“wonder,” “sign”), Ludwig Koehler et al., “מוֹפֵת,” *HALOT*:559. There is an intersection in the ranges of meanings of the two nouns.

¹⁴⁵ See the exegetical section for more information about Joshua’s companions.

¹⁴⁶ See footnote 144.

Lord, literally, נתן, “gives,”¹⁴⁷ to the actor the prominent object, (10) which is qualified or defined with the noun אֶבֶן, “stone” (Exod 31:18; Zech 3:9).

The dual background Exod 31 depicted above, with five thematic and five verbal parallels to Zech 3, containing resemblances between the object and the counterobject in both categories, is added to the aggregated Table 3 of dual backgrounds. The following table includes the findings of the previous backgrounds.

<i>primary passage</i> ----- <i>dual backgrounds</i>	<i>attributes</i>	Quantity 2 points	P. Operator 2 points	Separateness 1 point	Material 1 point	<i>influence degree</i>
One Stone Zech 3		One	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	6/6 points (the primary passage)
Ark of Covenant 1 Chr 21–22		One	Mixed (God, human)	Separate	Mixed (metal, wood, T-NR-ST-MC)	3/6
Two Tablets Exod 31		Two	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	4/6

Table 3. The Attribute Collation of the Primary Passage Zech 3, Version 2

The sole deviation between the studied passages, as reflected in the cumulative table above, is that there are two, not one, instances of the main object (“one” stone, “two” tablets). God is the principal operator of the two tables; he gives them to Moses and writes on them (Exod 31:18). After their reception, they have an independent (separate) function as the Lord does not immediately associate them with any other artifact, and they are displayed to the Israelites (Exod 32:19; 34:29–30). On the first occasion, they are broken as an individual object (Exod 32:19). As with “the one stone”

¹⁴⁷ The range of meaning of the verb נתן includes to “give,” “to set before,” etc. Ludwig Koehler et al., “נתן,” *HALOT*:733. Despite the minor difference of valence in its usage in Zech 3:9 and Exod 31:18 (the former having an additional phrase לפני יהושע, “before Joshua” and the latter אלי־משה, “to Moses”), it is used in the same tense/aspect (imperf. cons. vs. perf., Qal) and has one direct object without a preposition (הָאֶבֶן, “the stone”; שְׁנֵי לְחֹת הָעֵדוּת לָחַת אֲבָן כְּתוּבִים בְּאֶצְבַּע אֱלֹהִים, “two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God”). Therefore, both objects are given to the actors in both contexts, although, in Zechariah, the object appears “before Joshua” and is untouchable by humans, while in Exodus Moses holds the tablets in his hands.

in Zechariah, there is no certainty about the type of the material of “the two tablets” in Exodus, as portrayed in the canon, except that both are treated (cut in preparation to receive inscriptions), non-refined, singular-type mineral compounds (T-NR-ST-MC). The degree of influence of this dual background is four of six.

Two Onyx, Twelve Gem Stones, and Golden Plate in Exod 28–29 as Counterobjects

Several theologians have observed the “obvious and strong”¹⁴⁸ parallels between Zech 3 and Exod 28–29; 39.¹⁴⁹ In addition to the apparent shared high priestly investiture context, they include verbal resemblances via (1) the turban (מְצַנְפֹּת, Exod 28:37; צָנִיף, Zech 3:5), (2) the engraved precious stones and the plate, (3) the inscriptions described with the two cognates פָּתַח, “to engrave,” and פְּתוּחַ, “inscription,”¹⁵⁰ and (4) עוֹן, “guilt,” that is to be removed.

Thematically, there is a shared (5) removal of the guilt from “the land” (Zech 3:9) and the “holy things” (Exod 28:38) and (6) focusing of both the object (“the one stone”) and the counterobject (the two onyx stones; the twelve gem stones; or the golden plate) in connection to the turban (Exod 28:4, 37[x2], 39; 29:6[x2]; 39:28, 31; Zech 3:5, 7).¹⁵¹

These correspondences and the three existing angles for the structural form of the chapters of Exodus (each angle emphasizing a distinct main object in Exod 28–29; 39 depending on how one perceives “the one stone” to relate to its counterpart) lead to three possibilities for the counterobject in the same dual background of Exod 28–29; 39—(a) the two onyx stones of the ephod, (b) the twelve stones on the breastpiece, and (c) the

¹⁴⁸ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 564.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Exod 29; Lev 8; 16. For full discussion, see VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 553–570.

¹⁵⁰ Exod 28:11, 21, 36; 39:6, 14, 30. Zech 3:9. Note, however, that in the case of the twelve stones of the breastpiece, only one cognate, פְּתוּחַ, is used.

¹⁵¹ VanderKam establishes the prominence of the turban in connection to all the three counterobjects inspected here. VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 564–564.

golden plate of the high priestly headdress. Instead of arbitrarily choosing one of the objects, the current methodology allows another (attributive) comparison between them as independent counterobjects with identical textual basis behind their dual backgrounds.¹⁵² The following table includes the findings of the previous backgrounds.

<i>primary passage</i> ----- <i>dual backgrounds</i>	<i>attributes</i>	Quantity 2 points	P. Operator 2 points	Separateness 1 point	Material 1 point	<i>influence degree</i>
One Stone Zech 3		One	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	6/6 points (the primary passage)
Ark of Covenant 1 Chr 21–22		One	Mixed (God, human)	Separate	Mixed (metal, wood, T-NR-ST-MC)	3/6
Two Tablets Exod 31		Two	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	4/6
Two Onyx Stones Exod 28–29; 39		Two	Human	Part of clothing	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	1/6
Twelve Gem Stones Exod 28–29; 39		Twelve	Human	Part of clothing	T-NR-MT-MC	0/6 = not interlocking
Golden Plate Exod 28–29; 39		One	Human	Part of clothing	Metal	2/6

Table 4. The Attribute Collation of the Primary Passage Zech 3, Version 3

The values of the first three attributes in Table 4 for the added three dual backgrounds in Exod 28–29; 39 are the following. The “quantity” attribute derives its values from the fact that there are “two” onyx stones, “twelve” gem stones, and “one” golden plate. The “primary operator” is “human” in all three cases because those three types of objects are crafted by “gifted artisans” (Exod 28:1–6) for the purpose of being worn by Aaron, that is, made by humans for humans. The “separateness” attribute receives the value “part of clothing,” because neither of the three objects are mentioned in the HB to have had a separate or independent function.

The last attribute, “material,” is different for all the three counterobject candidates. The two onyx stones share an identical description with the stone in

¹⁵² Further exegetical nuances in regard to the three mentioned alternatives are discussed in the later chapters of the present research.

Zechariah, both being treated, non-refined, singular-type mineral compounds (T-NR-ST-MC). By comparison, the twelve gemstones deviate from this pattern because they are different kinds of stones, i.e., compounds of multiple types (T-NR-MT-MC), and the golden plate is a refined mineral—metal, not stone.

Therefore, the first and the last of the three backgrounds receive the influence degree of one and two of six, respectively, but the background involving the twelve stones falls outside the range of valid potential interlocking backgrounds for “the one stone” in Zechariah, due to the lack of any attributive intersection with the primary chapter of comparison. Appositely, the later exegetical analysis of this unapproved background in this study will demonstrate separate grounds for the incompatibility of this specific backdrop with “the one stone” in Zech 3.

Crushing Stone in Dan 2:31–35 as Counterobject

The broader correspondence between Dan 2:31–35, chosen as a single visionary passage of the same HB transsemiotic approach, and Zech 3 includes the common obstacles on the path of God’s people, a “great mountain” soon to be removed (Zech 4:7), and the hostile succession of kingdoms to be replaced by a “large mountain” (Dan 2:35).¹⁵³ This correlation is antithetical, since, in Zechariah, the mountain will disappear, while, in Daniel, the mountain will appear. In the former, the change leads to a cleared path for human activity, and in the latter, the transformation blocks the regular flow of usual human life.

Direct correlations between the passages include common thematic aspects of (1) the Lord as the principal performer who lays the stone before the high priest (Zech 3:9) and cutting out a stone from a rock (Dan 2:34), (2) the reference to a targeted territory,

¹⁵³ This study investigates the parallel between the passages of the HB in their final canonical form. Nevertheless, the sources with earlier events described in Dan 1 and 2—at least the siege of Jerusalem and perhaps the troubling dream of Nebuchadnezzar that was explained by Daniel around 605 B.C.—were likely to be available to the author of the book of Zechariah.

“that land” (Zech 3:9) and “the entire earth” (Dan 2:35),¹⁵⁴ (3) the shared verbal similarities mentioning אֶבֶן, “stone” (Zech 3:9; Dan 2:34, 35) twice, and (4) אָרֶץ / אֶרֶץ, “land” (Zech 3:9; Dan 2:35). Both segments conclude with an emphasis on the stone as the object/counterobject in the primary passage and its background.

Except for the identical values for the first three attributes, it should be said that, since the stone in Dan 2 was הִתְגַּזְרֶת, “cut out, broken off,”¹⁵⁵ from a rock, its material is non-treated, and the corresponding attribute constitutes the deviation from the primary object, the one stone in Zech 3. Despite the seeming simplicity of this dual background, its influence degree is five of six. See Table 5, which includes the findings of the previous backgrounds.

<i>primary passage</i> ----- <i>dual backgrounds</i>	<i>attributes</i>	Quantity 2 points	P. Operator 2 points	Separateness 1 point	Material 1 point	<i>influence degree</i>
One Stone Zech 3		One	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	6/6 points (the primary passage)
Ark of Covenant 1 Chr 21–22		One	Mixed (God, human)	Separate	Mixed (metal, wood, T-NR-ST-MC)	3/6
Two Tablets Exod 31		Two	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	4/6
Two Onyx Stones Exod 28–29; 39		Two	Human	Part of clothing	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	1/6
Twelve Gem Stones Exod 28–29; 39		Twelve	Human	Part of clothing	T-NR-MT-MC	0/6 = not interlocking
Golden Plate Exod 28–29; 39		One	Human	Part of clothing	Metal	2/6
Crushing Stone Dan 2		One	God	Separate	NT-NR-ST-MC	5/6

Table 5. The Attribute Collation of the Primary Passage Zech 3, Version 4

¹⁵⁴ The terrestrial parallel becomes stronger if “that land” in Zech 3:9 is the global eschatological reference, as will be suggested later.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. in Hitpeel, “to be broken off, break away from.”

Rejected Stone in Ps 118 as Counterobject

The shared broader motif of the “chief cornerstone” and “capstone” is distinguishable in Ps 118:22 and Zech 4 (v. 7), a chapter with close affinity to Zech 3, as several scholars notice.¹⁵⁶ Correspondences between Zech 3 and Ps 118 include the following: (1) They share a temple setting.¹⁵⁷ However, both “the one stone” in Zech 3, due to its uniqueness in its immediate context, and the stone in Ps 118 could be metaphors pointing to their spiritual meaning and exhortation.¹⁵⁸ In any case, there are (2) verbal and (3) thematic parallels between אֶבֶן in these chapters. (4) The Lord is the main protagonist for handling the stones in both cases,¹⁵⁹ (5) his “day” is directly connected to (6) the scene of people’s rejoicing that follows in both situations (Zech 3:9–10; Ps 118:24), (7) he מְבִיא, “is bringing forth,” his “servant the Branch” (Zech 3:8). Just as God’s servant fulfills a task according to the authority of his master, so “blessed is the one who ‘comes’ [הֹבֵא] in the name of the Lord” (Ps 118:26).

The following table includes the findings of the previous backgrounds.

¹⁵⁶ There are common components in Zech 3 and 4, such as temple setting, mutual cooperation between the high priest and the Zerubbabel, and the seven eyes of the Lord.

¹⁵⁷ Especially, Ps 118:26.

¹⁵⁸ Although the garments and the turban of Joshua in Zech 3 are real clothing, the other items in the same chapter, such as “the Branch,” which is intimately connected with “the one stone,” appear to be metaphors. The stone appears to be closer to the metaphorical interpretation due to its complexity and the affinity with the Branch.

¹⁵⁹ Unlike the two tablets of stone containing the ten commandments (Exod 31; 34), that are described in physical terms (God creates them, later he asks Moses to cut them from a rock, then God writes on them), Ps 118 does not emphasize the physical details for the rejected stone but portrays it in providential terms: despite human rejection, divine guidance ensures its ultimate primacy. “This is the Lord’s doing... This is the day the Lord has made” (Ps 118:23, 24). The given context reminds of the similar setting in Zech 3 where, as noted by Petersen, “the Lord performs all of the action,” Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 212. In both cases, however, the texts emphasize God’s predominance in controlling the functions of the artifacts, either in the physical or in providential spheres, as chosen by the text. In either case, the attribute describes the *primary* operator of the object, not the *sole* operator. The function of this attribute does not exclude people from handling the object as secondary operators (Moses holds, cuts, and delivers the tablets; the builders have to use the cornerstone despite their original intention).

<i>primary passage</i> ----- <i>dual backgrounds</i>	<i>attributes</i>	Quantity 2 points	P. Operator 2 points	Separateness 1 point	Material 1 point	<i>influence degree</i>
One Stone Zech 3		One	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	6/6 points (the primary passage)
Ark of Covenant 1 Chr 21–22		One	Mixed (God, human)	Separate	Mixed (metal, wood, T-NR-ST-MC)	3/6
Two Tablets Exod 31		Two	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	4/6
Two Onyx Stones Exod 28–29; 39		Two	Human	Part of clothing	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	1/6
Twelve Gem Stones Exod 28–29; 39		Twelve	Human	Part of clothing	T-NR-MT-MC	0/6 = not interlocking
Golden Plate Exod 28–29; 39		One	Human	Part of clothing	Metal	2/6
Crushing Stone Dan 2		One	God	Separate	<u>NT</u> -NR-ST-MC	5/6
Rejected Stone Ps 118		One	God	Part of building	<u>NT</u> -NR-ST-MC	4/6

Table 6. The Attribute Collation of the Primary Passage Zech 3, Version 5

The stone in Ps 118 does not function outside of a structure, and it could be inferred that the builders did not accept it for any modification or usage. Further, the psalm points to the stone’s divine providential guidance despite human rejection, which makes the possibility of altering it by a human hand theologically questionable. Nevertheless, it “became the chief cornerstone” (v. 22); therefore, it was not treated and was ultimately used in its original shape and form (NT-NR-ST-MC). Therefore, this dual background has two attributive deviations from the primary object and an influence degree of four of six.

Kaleidoscopic View

At this junction, one may attempt to assemble a kaleidoscopic view as presented in Table 7, demonstrating mutually fulfilling attributive deviations that indicate interlocking dual backgrounds. In other words, each attribute has a background with a matching value, and each background has at least one matching attribute, which signals that every background’s lack of correspondence is covered by another backdrop’s correspondence across those attributes.

<i>primary passage</i>		<i>attributes</i>				<i>influence degree</i>
<i>dual backgrounds</i>		Quantity 2 points	P. Operator 2 points	Separateness 1 point	Material 1 point	
	One Stone Zech 3	One	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	6/6 points (the primary passage)
1	Crushing Stone Dan 2	One	God	Separate	NT-NR-ST-MC	5/6
2	Rejected Stone Ps 118	One	God	Part of building	NT-NR-ST-MC	4/6
3	Two Tablets Exod 31	Two	God	Separate	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	4/6
4	Ark of Covenant 1 Chr 21–22	One	Mixed (God, human)	Separate	Mixed (metal, wood, T-NR-ST-MC)	3/6
5	Golden Plate Exod 28–29; 39	One	Human	Part of clothing	Metal	2/6
6	Two Onyx Stones Exod 28–29; 39	Two	Human	Part of clothing	T-NR-ST-MC (no metal or wood)	1/6

Table 7. The Interlocking Dual Backgrounds of “The One Stone” in Zech 3

In Table 7, the backgrounds are sorted according to their degree of influence, and the most significant attribute contribution, the values with the highest weight, are in a larger font. The kaleidoscopic picture can be delineated in the next step by stitching the backgrounds together according to their degree.

Reading the relevant matching (unshaded) values horizontally highlights the overall attributive emphasis across the backgrounds, and viewing the table rows vertically aggregates the isolated meanings into a single story. The horizontal evaluation yields the following chain: One (8 points)–God (6 points)–Separate (3 points)–A Treated Non-Refined Singular-Type Mineral Compound (2 points). Making further sense from the horizontal reading seems problematic at this stage. However, the primary emphasis on oneness in this conflated structure coincides with the equivalent oneness emphasis found in the plain reading of Zech 3.¹⁶⁰ This observation strengthens the correspondence between the kaleidoscopic view’s conspicuous “oneness” feature and the profound “oneness” emphasis of the primary passage (Zech 3). Knowing how these weighted values are connected at this point is impossible before analysis of the vertical reading.

¹⁶⁰ In Zech 3:9, the oneness of the stone is mentioned three times: twice via the noun “stone” in singular and once through the modifier “one.”

The vertical examination discloses the directly noticeable ontological gradient, from God-first to humans-last, which is evident from the behavior of the “primary operator” attribute and supported by the circumstances of the counterobjects. The crushing stone is the weightiest background (1), representing God’s sole action, knocking a stone out of the rock “without hands,” to achieve a divine eschatological goal. The weakest, sixth, background consists of the two onyx stones, which contain humanly engraved names of humans. The main components of the other backgrounds found between these two extreme backdrops are within the mentioned spectrum: (2) the rejected stone is still predominantly about God, yet implies a human rejection; (3) the two tablets are engraved by God and made by God or Moses in the two respective instances in Exod 31; 34; (4) the ark of the covenant is primarily a human work with a significant contribution by God: the tablets’ physical inscription; (5) the golden plate is a feature of a man’s attire created and inscribed by the earthly craftworkers where only the inscription’s contents mentioning “holiness” remind us of God’s ideas; and (6) while “holiness” is intimately connected to God,¹⁶¹ the humanly inscribed names of humans on the two onyx stones do not directly represent this divine requirement.

The next level of meaning in the emerged system, which rests on this God-versus-human ontological gradient foundation, is the conspicuous functional gradient concerning how God brings about a change from an unaided divine cataclysm,¹⁶² suddenly installing a new universal kingdom (background 1), to theanthropic gradual restoration, patiently teaching mortals a new religious order (6). The backgrounds (2) and (3) are in the same “principal operator” category and seem to explain why God chooses the upheaval: the rejected divine person (2) becomes the rejector (1) and the tablets with the commandments (3) have provided the measuring standard for evaluation of such

¹⁶¹ Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26. Cf. 1 Pet 1:16.

¹⁶² Representing the sole, divine, and separate action in its attributes.

rejection. Thus, the most significant focus of the interlocking backgrounds, represented by the most influential backgrounds (1–3), is, therefore, on God’s story and the ultimate doomsday, ensuring the inexorable restoration of the divine law and universal order. Consequently, the first three backgrounds suggest an eschatological dimension in Zech 3.

On the other hand, at the backdrop of the prominent theocentric determinants in backgrounds 1–3 are the anthropocentric backgrounds 4–6, expanding on the covenantal pursuits of divinity to save humanity, although they are subordinate in emphasis. The backgrounds (3) and (4)—the transition links between sections (1–3) and (4–6)—are closely related by their order in the proximity scale and by their contents. The tablets with the law were placed inside the ark (Exod 25:16) as the initial step toward a more thorough restorative system to bring people to unity with God. This path of reconciliation with divinity was conditioned by their dedication to him, forcefully represented by the unique golden plate on the forehead of the high priest and its inscription: “holiness to the Lord” (5). The fact that the high priest was the intermediary for all of the covenant people is manifested in their twelve names written on the two onyx stones located on the same attire that held the golden plate (6).

At this stage, the potential backgrounds have been identified, analyzed, filtered, prioritized, and joined into a theologically intelligible picture, primarily seen through the newer concepts of a complex object and a kaleidoscopic view. The question that could be raised is whether conventional exegetical analysis yields similar or compatible results and how the two perspectives function together. Therefore, let us now approach Zech 3 and its main object of study—“the one stone”—through a regular exegetical procedure, using the insights gathered from the previous phase as supportive details or as a benchmark for comparison. The next chapter will conclude with a synthesis of both approaches and brief theological implications.

CHAPTER 5

EXEGESIS OF “THE ONE STONE”

This chapter aims to conduct an exegetical analysis of literary phenomena surrounding “the one stone” in Zech 3, primarily following standard exegetical procedure and utilizing the previously investigated kaleidoscopic insights as an aid.

Background

By 520 B.C., the exodus of the people of Judah from Babylon was still in process, and the controversy around rebuilding the Lord’s temple continued. The people of Judah said to themselves: “The time has not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built” (Hag 1:2), “the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem is incomplete, and the land of Israel unsettled in spirit,”¹⁶³ meaning “the indefinite postponement... laying aside the idea of pressing forward with the work.”¹⁶⁴ At this time, “the prophets Haggai and Zechariah son of Iddo prophesied” (Ezra 5:1). They encouraged the first generation of settlers to restore the temple as one of the early national steps on the path to the national resurgence,¹⁶⁵ which resulted in positive action, and the work commenced (v. 2).

The first part of the book of Zechariah contains eight visions (1:7–6:8).¹⁶⁶ Laying a stone before Joshua takes place within the fourth vision, describing Satan’s accusations

¹⁶³ Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1236.

¹⁶⁴ “Then the prophets” [Ezra 5:1], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC:Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 3:352.

¹⁶⁵ The previous step had been taken in 538 B.C., when “Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his priestly colleagues and Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel and his colleagues started to build the altar of the God of Israel” (Ezra 3:2).

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1236.

and putting new robes instead of filthy ones on the high priest. According to the structure outlined by Joyce Baldwin, chapters three and four are at the center of the section's chiasm,¹⁶⁷ underlining its significance.

Several aspects in Zech 3—guilt transfer, eradication of filth, priestly purification, change of garb—indicate the affinity of the chapter to the Israelite Day of Atonement.¹⁶⁸ Furthermore, the events transpiring in this chapter culminate in a joyful time.¹⁶⁹

Zechariah 1:1–21 depicts judicial investigation and verdict, and 2:13 suggests that God was sitting before rising from his place for action, suggesting a judgment context and the expectation of restoring and rebuilding the critical elements of Jewish independence.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi; an Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC 24, ed. D. J. Wiseman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 85. For another encompassing structure of the book of Zechariah, see for example, “Outline” [Zech Introduction], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC:Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 4:1086.

¹⁶⁸ See the section Backgrounds and Themes of Zechariah 3 in this study for more information.

¹⁶⁹ Zech 3:10; cf. direct reference to the joyful harvest Festival of Booths (Lev 23:33–36, 39–43) in Zech 14:16, 18, 19.

¹⁷⁰ Some doubt the judgment context in Zechariah, based on the absence of the judgment seat, as noted in W. H. Lowe, *The Hebrew Student's Commentary on Zechariah with Excursus on Syllable-dividing, Metheg, Initial dagesh, and Siman Rapheh* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 31–33, but this fact does not seem to have removed the overall context of judgment. In “Satan’s accusatory position (v. 1) and the Angel of the Lord’s defense of Joshua (v. 2)” Stallard hears a “judicial tone.” Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1237. He writes: “Charles L. Feinberg correctly brings both the temple service and the judicial aspects of the passage together: “The best solution of the matter seems to be that the priestly scene is changed into a judicial one.” This observation supports the current view, but in Zech 3 Stallard sees a “regular temple service,” which “ends with an earthly promise for the removal of guilt (v. 9) from the land,” deducing from it that “the location in the vision is the earthly Temple, even though the Temple is not yet finished in Zechariah’s day.” It seems difficult to infer, however, that all those standing heavenly beings—angels (vv. 1, 3–5), Satan (vv. 1, 4), and God the Father himself who is “aroused from His holy habitation” (2:13)—are gathered in the unfinished earthly temple. Among them is also Joshua, who is receiving the promise about “walking among those standing here” (v. 7). The context of the heavenly judgment is also strengthened by God’s messengers who are sent out to the whole earth to investigate the pertinent matters (Zech 1; 6). It is consistent, therefore, as will be shown later in this thesis, that God’s eyes watch the affairs of people from above, and multiple and unique parallels with Exod 28 confirm the sanctuary setting. The inter-biblical context supports this view, since Dan 7–10 and Zech 1–3 share much in common in regards to the sanctuary, judgment, prayer, and expected restoration. In Dan 7–10 people’s expectations are earthly, but heaven’s response is global, eschatological, and heavenly, just as God in that context is also in heaven, not on earth (Stallard also mentions Dan 7 as a shared context, Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1236). It should be safe to assume a similar setting in Zech 3: while the representative of God’s people is focusing on the

Despite the previously experienced calamity described in Ezek 9—where God judged against Israel—at this time, he reverses the flow of events in Zech 1–8 and judges for Judah’s benefit.

However, there is a difference between the earthly Day of Atonement prescribed in Lev 16 and Zech 3. Washing rites, clothing nuances, and offerings are missing in the latter,¹⁷¹ which can be interpreted as an indicator of the vision’s transcendence.¹⁷² The depicted messengers, the nature of “the Branch,” the standing company of angels, the mysterious stone, the envoys that are seemingly on earth but are sent from the presence of the Lord (Zech 1:8–11; 6:1, 5), who arises from “his holy habitation” (2:13), his regular dwelling place,¹⁷³ and the resemblance of Zech 3 to otherworldly HB passages,¹⁷⁴ on the other hand, strongly point to a heavenly realm.¹⁷⁵ That transcendent reality appears primary for all of the vision’s participants, including Joshua, whose ultimate prerogative is to walk among the members of the heavenly council (3:7).¹⁷⁶ Thus, the mundane and the celestial are closely blended, but the latter prevails.

earthly temple, the Lord plans eschatologically, but sustains both dimensions—on earth and in heaven—and seeks to elevate the prophet’s understanding accordingly. For some other nuances and references in the discussion, see Lowe, *The Hebrew Student’s Commentary*, 33. Whatever options are chosen, it seems worth considering that the turban and the garments given by God are hardly accessible physically outside the vision. The whole discourse appears to transpire on a higher level, which confirms that the scene is located in heaven.

¹⁷¹ As noted by Petersen, Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 198–199.

¹⁷² The washing seems to be taking place in the spiritual realm, as the Lord removes the iniquity and the angels dress Joshua in special clothing (מַחֲלָצוֹת), Zech 3:4.

¹⁷³ Verses indicating the heavenly sanctuary as the dwelling place of God are as follows: Exod 15:17; Ps 68:36[35], 73:17, 74:7; 78:69; 96:6; Isa 63:18; Ezek 5:11; 23:38, 39; 24:21; 25:3; 37:26, 28; 44:7–9, 11, 16; 48:10; Dan 9:17; cf. Exod 25:8; Ps 60:8[6]; 63:3[2]; 68:18[17]; 108:8[7]; Isa 57:15.

¹⁷⁴ Dan 7–12; Isa 6; etc.

¹⁷⁵ For more information, including the list of authors and HB passages, see the section Backgrounds and Themes of Zechariah 3 in this study.

¹⁷⁶ Also, note a difference between the clothing of Joshua and that of the high priest in Exod 28–29; 39. Aaron is clothed in בְּגָדֵי־קֹדֶשׁ לְכְבוֹד וְלִתְפָאֲרָה, “holy garments for glory and beauty” (Exod 28:2), but Joshua receives מַחֲלָצוֹת, “rich robes” (Zech 3:4), the clothing “reminiscent of headgear and apparels worn

The interlocking backgrounds identified in the previous chapter of this thesis also demonstrated such intermingling of the spheres.¹⁷⁷ They emphasized the supernatural divine aspect of the fourth vision of Zechariah (Zech 3)¹⁷⁸ via the kaleidoscopic view related to the central object of that vision: “the one stone.” The anthropocentric interlocking backgrounds—especially the fourth one (“ark of the covenant”)—also suggest that the stone is associated with the holy of holies in the sanctuary, reinforcing the Day of Atonement setting, since the ark’s ultimate place was supposed to be in “the Most Holy place, under the wings of the cherubim” (1 Kgs 8:6; 2 Chr 5:7).

A question could be raised as to whether the ancient readers or hearers could comprehend a message requiring insight into the complex backgrounds provided by the HB. The answer is yes; in all probability, they could. The primary readers of Zech 3 are the high priest and his priestly colleagues (vv. 6–8), a knowledgeable audience who most likely would be aware of the sophisticated utterances recorded in their cultural and literary tradition. Therefore, the picture that emerges with the help of either the intertextual polyvalent kaleidoscopic view described earlier or with the conventional exegetical investigation conducted in this section probably could have been understood and appreciated by the priests. Being responsible for teaching the Israelites (e.g., Mal 2:7), they would explain the message contained in the vision in more accessible terms to the post-exilic community who needed encouragement and instruction bearing divine authority.

by wealthy ladies and royalty” (Exod 28:4, 37, 39; 29:6; 39:28, 31; Lev 8:9; 16:4). VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 557.

¹⁷⁷ The interlocking backgrounds 1–3 (“crushing stone,” “rejected stone,” “two tablets”) are theocentric and eschatological. They reference the crushing stone coming from heaven, the rejected stone becoming the chief cornerstone through divine providence, and the writing of God’s covenant law. The backgrounds 4–6 (“ark of covenant,” “golden plate,” “two onyx stones”) are theanthropic. They focus on human salvation and depict the ark of the covenant and some elements of the high priestly attire, crafted by Israelite workers shortly after the exodus from Egypt.

¹⁷⁸ The leading interlocking backgrounds 1–3 with the divine “primary operator” attribute.

As an apposite historical reference with a vague resemblance to the current reflections, the Mishnah reports that a stone substitute in the most holy place replaced the ark during the Second Temple period.¹⁷⁹ However, since the transcendent aspect is paramount for the vision in Zech 3, the core message of the elements in this setting should prioritize meaning connected with the heavenly sanctuary and God’s unique movements, not the earthly temple and the efforts produced by the post-exilic society in the late sixth century B.C., although both spheres are found in mutual interdependence.

The following exegetical analysis is grouped into three sections. In the “Eschatological Markers” section, “the day” and the principle of “dynamic universalism” are discussed. Then in the second section, Joshua’s companions and “the Branch” are analyzed as “Arrangers of the Future.” Finally, under the section “Attention on Main Object,” the “seven eyes,” “one stone,” and its inscription are interpreted, followed by brief theological implications.

Eschatological Markers

“That Day”

As will now be demonstrated, “that day” in Zech 3 is final in two senses: (1) it is cultic, as it connects to the Day of Atonement that was taking place at the end of the religious Jewish year, and (2) it is semi-eschatological, as it contains both immediate political relevance for the post-exilic community and eschatological connotations.

First, (1) the dual mentioning of “the day” in the consecutive phrases **בְּיוֹם אֶהְיֶה** **בְּיוֹם הַהוּא**, “in one day; in that day” (Zech 3:9–10), refers, in all likelihood, to a remote day, as opposed to **בְּיוֹם הַיּוֹם**, “on this day,” e.g., in Lev 16:30.¹⁸⁰ By mimicking the nearly

¹⁷⁹ “Once the ark was taken away, there remained a stone from the days of the earlier prophets, called Shetiyyah. It was three fingerbreadths high. And on it did he put [the fire pan].” Mishnah, Yoma 5:2.

¹⁸⁰ The NET Bible correctly translates as “this day,” as opposed to NKJV “that day.”

positioned phrases referring to “one,” עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת ... הִנֵּה הָאֶבֶן, “behold, the stone... on the one stone” (Zech 3:9), “the stone” appears to be associated with “the day.”

These two physical and time-bound phenomena are related to the Jewish Day of Atonement (a) through the earlier demonstrated background of the chapter and the complex object; (b) via the textual pattern in vv. 9–10, where the ultimate guilt removal happens after the Lord’s dealing with the stone has been finalized; and (c) due to the similar (although not remote) expression בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה, “on this day,” of Lev 16:30 in the chapter that describes that Jewish ancient ritual.¹⁸¹ Moreover, (d) the number in the unique phrase “seven eyes,” found only in Zech 3:9 in the HB,¹⁸² creates a connection to the total of forty-nine (7 x 7) blood applications¹⁸³ during the Day of Atonement’s complex of sacrifices in Lev 16, which were performed in the seventh month.

Second, (2) eschatological influence on some aspects of Zechariah can be identified through the following. (a) Although the book of Zechariah is not apocalyptic per se, the considerable involvement in its fabric of symbols, which a divine revelator uses to predict (any type of) coming events¹⁸⁴ in a vision (transsemiotism), creates an affinity to the book of Daniel. This affinity could allow for partial reuse of apocalyptic ideas in the signs/symbols of Zechariah, but not condition the exegetical methodology for analyzing this book in terms of its genre. (b) Micah 4:1–5 refers to אַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, “the end of days,” and contains numerous parallels to Zechariah.¹⁸⁵ Specifically, the same scene in

¹⁸¹ The parallel between בַּיּוֹם אֶחָד, “in one day” (Zech 3:10) / בַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה, “on this day” (Lev 16:30) is mentioned by Živković, Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 268. For more information, see footnote 36.

¹⁸² The “seven eyes” are discussed later in more detail in the exegetical section of this study.

¹⁸³ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 1038–1039. Besides, “seven” also appears in rituals in the sanctuary, such as a sevenfold sprinkling of blood in Lev 4:6, 17.

¹⁸⁴ A transsemiotic approach as defined in this study is neutral to eschatological connotations.

¹⁸⁵ Some of the parallels between Mic 4:1–5 and Zechariah are the Lord’s compassion to Jerusalem and its nation (Mic 4:2; Zech 1:16–17; 2:4–5[8–9]), his judgment on the surrounding nations (Mic 4:3; Zech 1:15; 2:1–4[1:18–21]; 2:16–17[2:12–13]), and the nations seeking the face of the Lord (Mic 4:2; Zech 2:15[11]).

which יִשְׁבוּ אִישׁ תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְתַחַת תְּאֵנָתוֹ, “everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree” in Mic 4:4 appears in Zech 3:10: תִּקְרְאוּ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ אֶל-תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְאֶל-תַּחַת תְּאֵנָה, “everyone will invite his friend under his vine and under his fig tree.” Such a parallel suggests that Zechariah contains another eschatological hint to the interpretation of “that day.” (c) Taken from the perspective of the whole book of Zechariah, “that day” (Zech 3:10; 11:11; 14:9) will affect כָּל-הָאָרֶץ, “all the earth” (14:9) and “all the peoples (of the earth)” (11:10, 11; 12:2, 3[x2]),¹⁸⁶ indicating a global extension of the divine activity.¹⁸⁷ (d) Finally, the kaleidoscopic view presents Dan 2:31–35 and the eschatological crushing stone as a strong parallel to “the one stone” in Zech 3, guiding the connotations of “that day” in v. 10 to the end-time.

However, all of the indicators listed above are derivable via intertextual comparisons. The immediate context of Zech 3 seems to emphasize the situation of the nation returned from exile, where “nothing... appears to be connected to the distant future”¹⁸⁸ and “intense interest in the angelic world and a robust, imminent eschatology”¹⁸⁹ is missing. Thus, one may speak about the duality of the timing, which includes both the most apparent local and limited meaning and the implied end-time related and global connotation visible only through intertextual parallels. So “that day” in

¹⁸⁶ On Zech 3:8–10, “the message of Zechariah demonstrates that the prophecies about a postexilic Joshua go beyond that time in history. These verses give the culmination of the vision by pointing to the coming of Messiah and the end-time spiritual and national restoration of Israel.” Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1241.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Mic 4:1 בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים, “in the latter days,” and v. 6 בְּיָוֶם הַהוּא, “in that day.” As noted by Osten-Sacken, “the phrase ‘at the end of days,’ בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים (Dan 10:14), is used as an eschatological formula in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament (Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1; Jer 23:20; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Hos 3:5).” This idea appears also in “Dan 12:1, וּבַעֲת הַהִיא, ‘at that time’... in Ezek 38:18, 19, by בְּיָוֶם הַהוּא, ‘on that day’;... since the early days of prophecy, ‘on that day’ has been used as a coined formula to describe the day of Yahweh.” Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik in ihrem Verhältnis zu Prophetie und Weisheit* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969), 39, cf. 41. Scholars view “the one day” in Zech 3:9 as a literal day. Tiemeyer, “The Guilty Priesthood (Zech 3),” 9; Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 261; Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8*, 170; Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 258, n. 68.

¹⁸⁸ Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 102.

¹⁸⁹ Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism*, 33.

Zech 3 can be regarded as a semi-eschatological expression, which is best explained in terms of “dynamic universalism.”

Dynamic Universalism

There is substantial data to support the view of the distribution of physical space from local to universal¹⁹⁰ and universalism¹⁹¹ in Zechariah. However, there are also arguments against it.¹⁹² One is the locality of the specific land, Shinar, to which the woman symbolizing wickedness is taken in Zech 5.¹⁹³ Nevertheless, the distribution of guilt and holiness across the earth does not need to be static in the book’s theology, despite the specific local aspect of that chapter. The transition to globalism appears to be an overarching motif inherent in the whole book of Zechariah, where the Lord’s action gradually spreads from the local geographical application to the universal scope, as supported by the following reasons.

(1) The lexical form of the reference to the land in Zech 3:9 suggests a blurry interpretation of its scope. To avoid the uncertainty, the writer could have used the HB typical phrase *הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת*, “this land,”¹⁹⁴ bearing the explicit nuance of the locality. Instead, he uses *הָאָרֶץ הַהִיא*, which typically should be rendered as “that (remote) land.”¹⁹⁵ In Zechariah, the only time either of those phrases occurs is in Zech 3:9 (*הָאָרֶץ*

¹⁹⁰ Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 78.

¹⁹¹ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 249; Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 131.

¹⁹² Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 79, 269; Wolters, *Zechariah*, 57.

¹⁹³ Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 79, n. 65.

¹⁹⁴ As elsewhere in the HB: Gen 12:7; 15:7, 18; 24:5, 7; 26:3; 31:13; 42:33; 48:4; 50:24; Exod 32:13; Num 14:3, 8, 14; 32:5, 22; 34:2, 13; Deut 3:12, 18; 4:22; 9:4; 26:9; 29:23; 34:4; Josh 1:13; 11:16; 13:2, 7; 17:12; Judg 1:27; 2:2; 1 Kgs 9:8; 2 Kgs 18:25; 2 Chr 7:21; 20:7; 30:9; Isa 14:26; 36:10; Jer 13:13; 14:15; 16:3, 6, 13; 22:12; 24:6, 8; 25:9; 26:20; 32:15, 22, 41, 43; 36:29; 37:19; 42:10, 13; Ezek 47:14, 21; 48:29.

¹⁹⁵ As elsewhere in the HB: Gen 2:12; 10:11; 26:12; 35:22; Exod 3:8; Deut 29:21, 26; Judg 11:21; 1 Kgs 10:13; 2 Chr 9:12; Jer 25:13; 45:4; Ezek 14:17, 19; Zech 3:9.

אֶרֶץ). In the rest of the cases, either the local land is called by name¹⁹⁶ where the context helps to determine its boundaries,¹⁹⁷ or it is globally identified as כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, “the whole earth,” which is referenced on several occasions.¹⁹⁸ The obscurity of אֶרֶץ הָאָרֶץ in 3:9 appears to be as functional and intentional like the earlier discussed literary articulation of “the one stone,” since the stable and unequivocal alternatives were available for the author’s use. As mentioned earlier, taken from the perspective of the whole book, “that day” (3:10; 11:11; 14:9) will affect כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, “all the earth” (14:9) and “all the peoples (of the earth)” (11:10, 11; 12:2, 3[x2]). Thus, in the general setting in Zechariah, with numerous apparent universal overtones and the stone’s interlocking transitioning denotation in the immediate scene, the expression could also be functionally polyvalent, neither local nor global, but implying a move from the restricted to a universal territory.

(2) The robust thematic parallels to Zech 3:9–10 depicting bliss in the natural landscape in 1 Kgs 4:24–25 (regional) and Mic 4:1–5 (worldwide)¹⁹⁹ support the spatial polyvalence and the universal trajectory.

(3) “The accuser” is silenced in the book of Job and in Zech 3:1–2 in the shared contextual element of inspecting the whole earth, not merely a piece of land. Therefore, the spatial undercurrent of the specific chapter Zech 3 seems to coincide with that in the book of Zechariah, which demonstrates an upsurge from the level of the nation in the process of restoration to the climax of “all nations of the earth” (Zech 12:2–3; 14:2).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Zech 2:4, 10; 5:11; 6:6[x2], 8; 9:1; 10:10[x2].

¹⁹⁷ Zech 7:5, 14; 11:6, 16; 12:12; 13:2.

¹⁹⁸ The global aspect for the land in Zechariah is discernable in the following verses: Zech 8:7; 9:10; 12:3; 14:17. The author chooses the phrase כָּל־הָאָרֶץ, “the whole earth,” specifically in these verses: Zech 1:11; 4:10, 14; 5:3, 6; 6:5; 13:8; 14:9, 10. Note the resemblance of 14:10–11 to 3:9.

¹⁹⁹ Živković notes the connection of these verses only in terms of agricultural connections. Jacob and Jacob, *ABD* 2:807, 810; Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 272. But these can also be used to show the local-global polyvalence or transition as described in this study.

²⁰⁰ Both in the context of the antagonistic attitude of the gentiles against Jerusalem. Cf. Zech 14:12, 17.

The nations are gathered against God’s people “from the land of the east and from the land of the west” (8:7),²⁰¹ resulting in the victorious Lord’s “dominion... to the ends of the earth” (9:10). Ultimately, in the theology of this book, “the eyes of all humanity, especially of the tribes of Israel, are toward the Lord, as are those of Hamath also... Tyre and Sidon” (9:1–2, NET Bible).²⁰²

(4) The book of Daniel, which shares the transsemiotic approach with the book of Zechariah and contains a strong interlocking background to Zech 3, mentions, analogously and universally, the same phrase, “(abroad) like the four winds of heaven” (Dan 8:8; Zech 2:6).²⁰³ Here in Daniel, as in Job, the controversy reaches “the host of heaven” (Dan 8:10; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6; Zech 1:12–13; 3:1–2; 6:4), and the shared time-related question עַד-מָתַי, “until when...?” (Dan 8:13; Zech 1:12) is asked.²⁰⁴

As mentioned above, the delineated transition from local to universal can be termed “dynamic universalism.” Thus, the perceived eschatological connotations of the expected “day” (Zech 3:9) correspond to the worldwide anticipation of the project symbolically described in this verse.

If the spatial and temporal dimensions of Zech 3 transition to being universal and eschatological, then the ministry of atonement indicated by it may also suggest an ongoing shift toward a global atonement. This would involve establishment of peace

²⁰¹ Cf. Ps 50:1; Mal 1:11; Cf. Zech 8:20–23.

²⁰² The NET Bible’s translation is given, as being the closest to the original text with the crucial nuance of the correct interpretation of the preposition ל in לַיהוָה עֵינַי אֶדְרֹם, “to the Lord are the eyes of man [humanity].” Also, Zech 9:2 adds the neighboring nations to the previously referenced Israel; the eyes of both are fixed on the Lord.

²⁰³ Cf. Zech 6:5 and “four spirits of heaven” located “before the Lord of all the earth.”

²⁰⁴ Cf. Gen 30:30, the first HB reference to מָתַי in relation to Jacob’s timing for building his own house, for which he needs to return back to his homeland, distantly related to the motifs in Zechariah and Daniel.

beyond the immediate national setting, mitigating the cosmic conflict between the heavenly council²⁰⁵ and the earth.

Arrangers of the Future

Joshua's Companions

The word used to mention Joshua's closer company, אָרֵךְ, "friend, comrade, companion, neighbor"²⁰⁶ in the plural, points to their earthly nature.²⁰⁷ In Ezra 3:2, in a similar setting, Joshua is explicitly said to have "his brethren the priests,"²⁰⁸ and in an Aramaic papyrus of the fifth century B.C., there is a notable example of the chief priest and "his colleagues," who also are identified as priests.²⁰⁹ The fifth (or the second theanthropic) interlocking background, Exod 28–29; 39, expands on the consecration of "Aaron and his sons with him" (28:1). In the light of this data, the angel's expression "they are a sign" (Zech 3:8), a parenthetical explanation should be recognized as the standard HB literary device of switching from a second to a third person while referencing the same group of people.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ A reference to the "standing company" in Zech 3 and the heavenly council in Job 1.

²⁰⁶ Ludwig Koehler et al., "אָרֵךְ," *HALOT*:1253.

²⁰⁷ "[They] cannot be angelic beings since the word 'colleagues' would be too strong for such a relationship to a human being. They must be subordinate priests under Joshua's direction." Stallard, "The Messiah," 1241.

²⁰⁸ KJV. Alternatively, "his priestly colleagues" (NET Bible).

²⁰⁹ "To our lord Bigvai, governor of Judaea, your servants Yedoniah and his colleagues, the priests who are in Yeb the fortress," A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 113. "Yedoniah" is identified several pages earlier in the translation of the same papyrus: "It is a (draft or copy of a) letter from Yedoniah, who thus appears to be the chief priest (see below) and head of the community at Yeb, to Bigvai the Persian viceroy of Judaea." Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, 108.

²¹⁰ Lowe, for example, agrees that inclusion of Joshua in the symbol is "probably" the case, and illustrates it with a verse from Zeph: "'You Ethiopians will also die by my sword!' Zeph 2:12, literally: 'and you Cushim, slain by my sword are they.'" Lowe, *The Hebrew Student's Commentary*, 36. Stallard "presumably" includes Joshua into the sign as well, Stallard, "The Messiah," 1241. Cf. Isa 8:18: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts..."

Within the blurred mixture of the mortal and immortal worlds,²¹¹ the high priest simultaneously participates in the comradeship of his priestly colleagues (Zech 3:8) and the heavenly company (3:7). Apparently, he is not alone in the earthly temple. However, he could be addressed individually as the representative of his friends to carry out the task devolved on him by the angel (3:6–7). In an *inclusio* constructed by means of the root הלך (הלך), “to walk,” at the beginning of the inclusion and מהלכים, “paths, places [to walk],” in the end of the same in 3:7) that embraces the foremost condition and reward—“if you walk in My ways... I will give you paths among these who stand here.” The commission of the one being consecrated and his helpers is to “keep that which [the Lord] entrusted to [them],” “judge [his] house,” and “keep [his] courts,” of which the first assignment (אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶתִי תִשְׁמֵר, “keep that which [the Lord] entrusted to [them]”) is also a condition. The noun מִשְׁמֶרֶת is interpreted as “what is to be held in trust or guard,”²¹² that is, apparently, both the ministry in the temple and related activities, which Joshua and his colleagues are supposed to שמר, “keep,” and to abstain from any violation of the Lord’s commandments.²¹³

In light of the comparison with the third interlocking background, Exod 31, one could infer that by keeping that ministry, the high priestly team would become “a sign” in the same way as the Israelites, by keeping (שמר) the Sabbath, were also participating in the arrangement of a “sign” (Exod 31:14, 16–17). The similarity between the two

²¹¹ As Živković correctly observes, “the boundaries between earthly and spiritual realms [are] completely blurred.” Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 259, especially in regards to Zech 1–6, Živković, “Rites In and Out of Place,” 67 n.31.

²¹² Ludwig Koehler et al., “מִשְׁמֶרֶת,” *HALOT*:649.

²¹³ Jacob Milgrom observes that in the earlier scripts, the term means “‘guard duty’ and nothing else” and, “in construct with YHWH,... ‘guarding’ against the violations of the Lord’s commandments” (e.g., in Lev 18:30; 22:9; Num 9:19, 23; 18:7). However, the meaning “service unit” is found in later usage in Neh 12:9, 24; 13:30; 1 Chr 25:8, Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 7, 541. Cf. Ezek 44:14. The usage of this term in Zech 3 correlates well with that later connotation, but the multiple intertextual references to Leviticus also suggest that the older meaning of keeping oneself against trespassing the Lord’s commandments may be referenced simultaneously.

commands appears to be stronger than the perceived difference since both symbols only materialize when the “kingdom of priests” (Exod 19:6) or Joshua with his fellow priests (Zech 3:8) remain devoted to their calling.²¹⁴ Both signs pertain to the Lord who, in the language of Exodus, “sanctifies” them (Exod 31:13) and, in the expressive style of Zechariah, invests them in “rich” and “clean” attire (Zech 3:3–5).

The events for the sign of Zech 3 appear to be a matter of the expected future since the word מוֹפֵת, used there to denote a sign, occurs in the HB as a referent to future events with a distinct religious connotation.²¹⁵ Further, in the immediate setting, מוֹפֵת is joined with הִנְנִי, “behold,” and a participle מְבִיא, “bringing forth,” indicating an eschatological outlook.

The Branch

In the scholarly literature, “the Branch” is interpreted immanently as Joshua or Zerubbabel and transcendentally as the Messiah or a future heir.²¹⁶ The early church fathers refused to construe Joshua as the ultimate Branch because he was not a Davidide.²¹⁷ The

²¹⁴ The Sabbath is “a sign *between*” God and Israelites (Exod 31:17, italics added). It would cease to exist as a sign in the absence of the human party’s loyalty. Similarly, Joshua and his priestly team are not “a sign” in their own virtue, but in the context of the entrusted ministry which includes a series of services, one of which would be keeping the Sabbath in the context of the sanctuary service.

²¹⁵ 1 Kgs 13:3, 5; 2 Chr 32:31 (cf. 2 Kgs 20:8); Ezek 12:11, 24; Isa 8:18; 20:3. See also: Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, “מוֹפֵת,” *BDB*:69. Yorgev explicitly underscores this idea in his translation: “...you and your companions seated before you, who are *men symbolic of things to come*,” Yorgev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 308, italics supplied. “*No secular usage of mōpēt is attested; the Hebrew term functions exclusively in theological contexts*,” Siegfried Wagner, “מוֹפֵת,” *TDOT*:174, italics supplied. The only other HB instance containing a similar combination of אִישׁ, “man,” and מוֹפֵת, “sign,” is found in 1 Kgs 13:5, where a prophet’s action was the sign of a coming destruction of false worship, while “the men of a sign” of God (Zech 3:8) are the sign of a future restoration of true worship (cf. 6:15). Mitchell also concludes that the priestly team “are prophetic of good to the community they are serving,” Mitchell, Smith and Bewer, *A Critical Commentary*, 156.

²¹⁶ See the section Backgrounds and Themes of Zechariah 3 for more details.

²¹⁷ Wong, “The interpretation,” 14. Realizing that the crowning of a priest was unusual, Meyers, nevertheless, support Joshua’s installation, referring to extraordinary and new postexilic circumstances, Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 351.

identification of the symbol with Zerubbabel remains the scholarly majority view.²¹⁸

However, there are several challenges to locally-scoped—priestly or secular—readings for the following reasons.

While Hag 2:23 applies the title “my servant” (Zech 3:8) to Zerubbabel, he is absent in the setting of Zech 3. He had been in Jerusalem for years before God announced that “the Branch” was coming,²¹⁹ and so had Joshua.²²⁰ The governor is not named by the prophet who, customarily, does not hesitate to mention the leaders unequivocally if needed. Besides, Zerubbabel is already a builder (4:6b–10a), while the building achievement of the person behind the metaphor is still in the future.²²¹ Lastly, Zerubbabel is not a king and does not fill the role reserved for “the Branch.” Therefore, the governor must be considered the Lord’s “servant” in a reduced, symbolic sense, pointing to a more excellent builder, just as the priestly team discussed earlier portends a priestly group higher and above them. If the latter statement is correct, there is hardly any place for another symbol representing them in the same context.

On the contrary, Zech 3 contains clear transcendent elements.²²² (1) Despite the parallels between Zech 3 and the investiture ceremony in Exod 28, an essential difference separates them. In the latter, the Israelites and Moses are told to make the garments, and Aaron bears the people’s guilt, but in Zech 3, the Lord performs all of the action,²²³

²¹⁸ Wong, “The interpretation,” 17, 19.

²¹⁹ Ezra 1–5. Zerubbabel had been there for 18 or 19 years before the announcement of “the Branch.” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 561.

²²⁰ Ezra 3:1–2. “Shortly after their arrival in Palestine, probably in the summer of 536 B.C., the newly returned exiles assembled at Jerusalem to inaugurate the new Temple service.” “The seventh month” [Ezra 3:1], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC:Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 3:338.

²²¹ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 561.

²²² J. Baldwin, expects an eschatological figure: “Both Joshua and Zerubbabel contributed to the work of the coming Branch, while neither alone adequately represented him.” Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 135.

²²³ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 212.

which means that Joshua's investiture is not merely or exclusively performed after Moses' order.

(2) Zech 3:8 identifies "the Branch" further as "My Servant," which comes from the "messianic use of the terminology in Isaiah... in particular, the four 'Servant Songs' (Isa 42:1–4; 49:1–6; 50:4–9; 52:13–53:12)," which "present an individual who will judge the nations, atone for sin, and restore Israel."²²⁴ This Servant is identified in Isaiah with "a shoot... out of Jesse's root stock, a bud... from his roots" (11:1, NET Bible). Thus, Zech 3 contains two outstanding messianic terms.²²⁵

(3) There are two divine persons in the immediate introduction in Zech 2:8–9[12–13], where God speaks, but one is dispatched by God. Once again, in Zech 3:2, the Lord speaks about the Lord and, in v. 8, about the Branch, who, in all probability, is also divine.²²⁶

(4) Since the Branch unites political,²²⁷ vegetative,²²⁸ and divine atoning, including purging of the land, it must be a messianic symbol.

²²⁴ Stallard, "The Messiah," 1241–1242. Also the LXX seems to contain a messianic allusion: In Zech 3:8 *אֲנִי עַבְדִּי צֶמַח*, "My Servant, the Branch," is translated as τὸν δοῦλόν μου Ἀνατολήν, "My Servant, the dawn/rising/star." See also, Wong, "The interpretation," 14ff.

²²⁵ M. Brown observes priestly language in other central messianic OT passages. Both the Branch, Servant and priestly terminologies of Zech and Isa are combined in this quotation: "Isa 53 connects to the priestly ministry of the Messiah, an essential and important part of his work (see Zech 6:9–13), and the chapter is filled with priestly language," Michael L. Brown, "Isaiah 52:13–53:12: The Substitution of the Servant of the Lord," eds. Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019), 972. Zech 3:8 is "a clear Messianic prediction and recognized as such by the Jews." Cf. "Speak unto him" [Zech 6:12], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary (SDABC)*, rev. ed., ed. Francis D. Nichol (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 4:1099. The commentators who deny the messianic overtones in this context, on the other hand, seem to be forced to the conclusion that "[Zechariah's program] never matured. The crown deposited in the temple after the ceremonies never stood on the head of a messiah." (Herbert G. May, "A Key to the Interpretation of Zechariah's Visions," *JBL* 2 (1938): 183) calling it "the failure of a part of [Zechariah's] prophecy." May, "A Key to the Interpretation," 184.

²²⁶ In Zech 3:1, 2 the Angel appears to be divine.

²²⁷ Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, 254.

²²⁸ Compare with Isa 4:2; 5:1–7. Petterson, *Behold Your King*, 88.

(5) The two consequent כִּי הִנֵּה, “for behold,” phrases²²⁹ split Zech 3:8–9 into three linked parts—Joshua’s companions as a sign, the arising Branch, and the stone laid before the high priest. Thus, the ultimate eschatological sphere, signified by the priestly team, discussed earlier, includes the Branch and “the stone” as a unity.²³⁰ The interlocking framework has already shown that “the stone” has both humanly immanent and, simultaneously, emphatically transcendent divine associations. Consequently, the nature of the Branch, which is closely linked to “the stone,” should also be human and divine.

(6) The noun צֶמַח, “branch,” when taken in a personal sense in the HB as in Zech 3, is exclusively used elsewhere for a glorious righteous Davidic king. Isa 4:2 contains two verbal parallels to Zech 3.²³¹ Other parallels include Jer 23:3–5 (“righteous branch”), 33:14–26 (“righteous branch of David”), and Zech 6:12 (“the Man whose name is the Branch”), where “the Branch” is front and center. In Jer 23:5–6, the “righteous Branch” is mentioned after the “doom against the evil kings” as a result of divine intervention and salvation,²³² as well as in Jer 33:14–16, where a Levitical priestly title is added to the title

²²⁹ The first of them is slightly different (כִּי־הִנֵּה) and indicates an additional nuance of the presence of the speaker, Ludwig Koehler et al., “הִנֵּה,” *HALOT*:252.

²³⁰ The NET Bible translation links the future coming events with the Branch but lacks the link to the stone. VanderKam recognizes that the priestly team are the sign of both the Branch and the stone. VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 561.

²³¹ Isa 4:2: “In that day [בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא] the Branch of the LORD [צֶמַח יְהוָה] shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped.” This passage has two links to Zech 3:8–10, as both “the Branch of the Lord” and “that day” are found in both places. Some assume that Isaiah merely speaks about a vegetation product, but, as summarized by Wong, “the Branch” of Isa 4:2 is the historical apex of the narrative between God’s doom and his salvation. It could not simply be a “luxuriant wild growth or a good harvest,” which would not even be a “remarkable thing” in Palestine. Wong, “The interpretation,” 15. Also, the LXX seems to express a messianic connotation: In Isa 4:2, יְהוָה צֶמַח יְהוָה, “the Branch of the Lord will be,” is translated as ἐπλάμψει ὁ θεὸς (“God will shine”). M. Brown observes that the messianic motif appears in numerous verses in Isa (40:3–5; 41:17–20; 42:14–16; 43:1–3, 14–21; 48:20–21; 49:8–12; 51:9–10; 52:11–12; 55:12–13), the book where the Branch motif is interwoven (Isa 4:2; cf. 11:1; 61:11). Brown, “Isaiah 52:13–53:12: The Substitution of the Servant of the Lord,” 962.

²³² Wong, “The interpretation,” 16.

of a restored Davidic king.²³³ It is logical, therefore, to see “Joshua and his fellow priests foreshadow a perfect priestly mediator” in Zech 3:8 and 6:12—“a harmonious rule of the priest and king.”²³⁴

Thus, the unfulfilled realization of the Davidic king²³⁵ should find its fulfillment in the king who appears in a remote future,²³⁶ meaning that the temple that the Messiah will build is not identical to the one being constructed by the earthly builders, who are encouraged for this work in the book of Zechariah.

Attention to the Main Object

“Seven Eyes”

The phrase שִׁבְעָה עֵינַיִם, “seven eyes,” is found only once in the HB (Zech 3:9; cf. 4:10). The noun שִׁבְעַ has several meanings, two of which seem to be interrelated, namely, the word “seven”²³⁷ and the terms “completeness,” “abundance,” or “perfection.”²³⁸

²³³ Wong, “The interpretation,” 17.

²³⁴ Wong, “The interpretation,” 17. It may seem that Joshua possesses the crown (Zech 6:12). However, the fact that the priestly temple builder will “sit and ... be a priest on his throne,” is a hindrance to such understanding, since priests serving in the temple were not allowed to sit there. On the other hand, Ps 110 suggests that in the service held in the messianic temple, he is assumed to be sitting in the temple.

²³⁵ His real historical substitute was the person of the king of Persia, as observed by Wolter Rose, Rose, “The Ambiguity of Kingship,” 119–120.

²³⁶ So, the positions of Rose and Petterson may be correct. Rose, “The Ambiguity of Kingship,” 248–251; Petterson, *Behold Your King*, 247–248. The church fathers applied it to Jesus, which, to Wong, seems to be a strained argument, because Christ was not a Levite. Wong, “The interpretation,” 14, 20. However, Christ would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps 110).

²³⁷ David J. A. Clines, ed., “שִׁבְעַ I,” *DCH* 8:243.

²³⁸ “Abundance,” “full measure,” Ludwig Koehler et al., “שִׁבְעַ II,” *HALOT*:1399. “Abundance,” “perfection,” Ludwig Koehler et al., “שִׁבְעַ III,” *HALOT*:1400. It stands to denote a calendar week (as a minimal full measure of days) (cf. Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, “שִׁבְעַ,” *BDB*:988). See also Prov 3:10 [HB], Gen 41:29 (interplay of שִׁבְעַ, “seven,” and שִׁבְעַ, “abundance”); Gen 4:15 (where שִׁבְעַתַּיִם denotes “a seven-fold [complete] vengeance,” Ludwig Koehler et al., “שִׁבְעַ I,” *HALOT*:1400). Although *HALOT* assigns the idea of fullness to the numeral twelve (p. 1397), it does not seem to present evidence for this case, but, nevertheless, creates a strong biblical case for this connection to the numeral seven. It is also possible that the name that Isaac gave to his fifth well in Gen 26:33, means “abundance” (שִׁבְעָה) on account of multiple wells that he had managed to dig, not “oath,” since שִׁבְעַ as “oath” (LXX, cf. Kottsieper, “שִׁבְעַ I,” *TDOT* 14:312) is not mentioned in the chapter (v. 28). This is supported by Vulg., Pesh., Tg., and according to Zorell *Lexicon* 181ff also by Aquila, Symmachus, which

Opinions vary concerning the number of eyes and their meaning, which could be (1) metaphorically God’s attention, (2) spirits of God, (3) physical facets of the stone, (4) the mix of the previous two views implying that the latter symbolizes the former, (5) the reference to the fourteen stones of the Aaronic apparel, (6) the contents of the stone’s inscription, and/or (7) seven openings. Here, taking the arguments in nearly reversed order, I argue that the first and oldest interpretation holds the firmest grounds and is compatible with the second view.

Eyes as Seven Openings

Lipiński argues that the phrase *פִּתְחוּ פְתָחַי* in Zech 3:8 should be rendered “opens openings.”²³⁹ The difficulty with this translation is the absence of the meaning “opening” for *פִּתְחוּ* in the HB,²⁴⁰ and, therefore, it is rejected in this study.

Eyes as Inscription

Peterson suggests that “the seven eyes” are the meaningful contents of the inscription. He identifies the seven eyes with the letters of the inscription, *קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה*, “the holiness to the Lord,” carved in the golden plate of the high priest.²⁴¹ This proposal forces him to resolve the ensuing dilemma of having eight consonants in that phrase instead of seven, as expected by “the seven eyes,” which he solves by the statement that the phrase “can be construed as having seven consonants,” subtracting the last letter.²⁴²

support the meaning “abundance, overflow” (see Ludwig Koehler et al., “*שָׂבַע*,” *HALOT*:1401). Additionally, *TDOT* shows plenty of cases in which every aspect of the similar verb *שָׂבַע* and renderings in every translation group indicate an idea of fullness. The word *שָׂבַע* (satiety, DCH) seems to be derived from *שָׂבַע*. Connected with the idea of “completeness” is the sabbatical use of the number 7, which appears in the weekly Sabbath, sabbatical years, and the jubilee year (50th year after 49 = 7 x 7 years). Seven also appears in rituals in the sanctuary, such as a sevenfold sprinkling of blood in Lev 4:6, 17. For multiples of this number in the rituals of the Day of Atonement, see the earlier section on “That Day” in this study.

²³⁹ E. Lipiński, “Recherches sur le Livre de Zacharie,” *VT* 1 (1970): 25–55.

²⁴⁰ The exhaustive list of references for *פִּתְחוּ* in the HB other than Zech 3:9 is: Exod 28:11, 21, 36; 39:6, 14, 30; 1 Kgs 6:29; 2 Chr 2:6, 13; Ps 74:6.

²⁴¹ Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 212.

²⁴² Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1–8*, 212.

VanderKam rejects this alternative because he disallows “identifying the stone with the Aaronic plate,”²⁴³ expecting, however, that, in some way, “the eyes... [are] inscribed on the stone.”²⁴⁴

Against the two alternatives, the text appears to convey the idea that “the seven eyes” are עַל, “on,” the stone prior to the announcement of the inscription process, which means that they cannot be that writing.²⁴⁵

Eyes as Reference to Fourteen Stones

VanderKam suggests that the seven eyes are seven pairs of eyes, making fourteen in total, referencing the twelve stones of the high priestly breastpiece and the two stones resting on his shoulders (Exod 28). Although this idea is related to the previous view, it has a distinct justification. It reasonably builds on the fact that morphologically עֵינַיִם, “eyes,” has a dual form.²⁴⁶ However, the noun must also extend this denotation to the context of the stone in Zech 3 to be accepted as such. There are four hindrances to such an extension.²⁴⁷

(1) Another Hebrew word, יָד, “hand,” like עַיִן, “eye,” originates from body part language and stays in singular or dual as long as it remains within the semantic domain of body parts. The canonical usage of יָד in plural shifts to considerably different

²⁴³ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 563–564.

²⁴⁴ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 569.

²⁴⁵ Also noted by VanderKam. “That stone has already been set before Joshua, but the Lord has yet to engrave it.” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 562.

²⁴⁶ VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 567–568.

²⁴⁷ The first two arguments were also developed by Christopher J. Thomson, who expands on the “pseudo-dual” problematics. Thomson, “The Meaning of the Dual Form,” 116–124. The overview of the arguments in this study is given from independent research and therefore contain other sides of the issue.

meanings.²⁴⁸ Therefore, it is logical that the biblical author would have been limited to the dual form to denote “hands” or “eyes” in plural.

(2) When עַיִן is used in the plural in the HB, it departs from body part semantics.²⁴⁹ So, if a biblical writer wanted to describe multiple “eyes,” not “springs” or “wells,” it seems that he would be limited to a dual form.

(3) In Ezek 10:12, there appears to be no semantic necessity to utilize dual morphology for “eyes” of the cherubim if this noun allows plural form because their “whole body, with their back, their hands, their wings, and the wheels that the four had were full of eyes all around.” Obviously, there were more than two eyes in this picture. Nevertheless, the author uses the dual form. Therefore, only language limitations could have demanded this literary choice, which is identical to the preference in Zech 3:9.

(4) When the biblical writers intended to say “pairs,” they used specific words²⁵⁰ that Zechariah does not use.

In summary, the dual form of “eyes” appears to be a fixed form with regard to this body part, regardless of their actual number, whether it is one, two, or many. Therefore, when the author mentions “seven eyes” in Zech 3:9, the most natural interpretation should coincide with the direct reading of this phrase, meaning that there are simply seven instances of objects referred to as “eye.”

²⁴⁸ All HB references to עַיִן in plural bear meanings “times,” “parts,” “armrests,” “flanges,” “tenons,” etc., but never “hand(s).” The exhaustive list is: Gen 43:34; 47:24; Exod 26:17, 19; 36:22, 24; 2 Sam 19:44; 1 Kgs 7:32, 33, 35, 36; 10:19; 2 Kgs 11:7; 2 Chr 9:18; Neh 11:1; Dan 1:20.

²⁴⁹ The five existing OT references to עַיִן in plural bear meanings “well of water,” “springs of water,” “fountains.” Exod 15:27; Num 33:9; Deut 8:7; 2 Chr 32:3; Prov 8:28. For the primary range of meanings, “eyes” in general (dual or singular forms): Gen 27:1; 29:17; Job 28:7; Mic 4:11; “eyes of God:” Deut 11:12; 1 Kgs 3:10; Jer 24:6; Ezek 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:10; 20:17; Amos 9:4; Ps 32:8; 33:18. Ludwig Koehler et al., “עַיִן,” *HALOT*:818.

²⁵⁰ E.g., “pairs [עַיִן] of horsemen” in Isa 21:7; “pair [עַיִן] of tails” in Judg 15:4.

Eyes as Facets or Circles

The Hebrew preposition **עַל** has a diverse range of meanings and has given room to multiple suggestions about the location of **שִׁבְעָה עֵינָיִם**, “seven eyes,” that are said to be **עַל־אֶבֶן אַחַת**, “on the one stone.”²⁵¹ Therefore, several authors construe the seven eyes to be the stone’s seven facets²⁵² (or, in another variation, circles²⁵³ or other reproductions).²⁵⁴ This view seems problematic due to the following reasons.

(1) The idea of “seven facets” appears to be a transferred meaning of **שִׁבְעָה עֵינָיִם** from elsewhere, not an alternative translation in the context of Zech 3. This interpretation could be argued from Exod 10:5, 15 and Num 22:5, 11. However, the expression in those instances, taken literally, is “the eye of the earth” in the singular, which appears to be a metaphor for “the surface of the earth,”²⁵⁵ not a facet of a gemstone, a meaning that never appears in the HB.

²⁵¹ VanderKam proposed that the seven eyes were inscribed on the stone (VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 569), which might be inconsistent with his other observation that appears to be more in harmony with Zech 3:9: “That stone has already been set before Joshua (נָתַח), but the Lord has yet to engrave it (הִנְנִי מַפְתֵּחַ),” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 562, unless the seven eyes and the inscribing in process are understood as two distinct engravings.

²⁵² Petitjean, “La Mission de Zorobabel,” 49–50; See also, NLT Bible Translation: “Now look at the *jewel* I have set before Jeshua, a single stone with seven *facets*” (Zech 3:9, NLT, italics added).

²⁵³ Yogev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 312–313. See also Kurt Galling, “Serubbabel und der Wiederaufbau des Tempels in Jerusalem,” in *Verbannung und Heimkehr: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theologie Israels im 6 und 5 Jahrhundert v Chr* (Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1961), 93–94.

²⁵⁴ One of the broader connotations of the word “eye” in ANE literature relates to a deity. In this context, approval or disapproval, heavenly or independent forces, “reproduction of eyes” on amulets, and “incantation against eye diseases” are attested. In Egypt the “eye” is called “eye of Re” and “healing eye.” F. J. Stendebach, “עֵי, I,” *TDOT* 11:29–30. This “locus of personal attitudes and actions” (Stendebach, *TDOT* 11:36–42) is also discernable in the HB, where numerous texts speak of finding favor (מָצָא חַן) in the eyes of Yahweh: Gen 6:8; 18:3; 19:19; Exod 33:12, 13, 16, 17; Num 11:11, 15; Judg 6:17; 2 Sam 15:25. However, as will be demonstrated later, the HB does not appear to inherit the iconographic representation, it only shares the idea.

²⁵⁵ This transferred meaning is probably derived from **עַיִן הָאָרֶץ** (“surface of the land”, literally, “the eye of the land” [Exod 10:5, 15; Num 22:5, 11]), *Koehler et al.*, *HALOT*:818; Stendebach, *TDOT* 11:45. BDB specifies that this interpretation “surface” is a transferred meaning, as well as the denotations “appearance,” “sparkle.” Francis Brown, Samuel R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, “עֵי, I,” *BDB*:744–745.

(2) The eye as an inscribed circle, on the other hand, is based on the abundant archaeological evidence exhibited by Yogev, which shows circle-shapes in iconography. These were widespread and common in ancient times when the letter ayin , “Ayin,” originally was a pictograph of an eye. Hundreds of early tablets show seven circles corresponding with “the sign for the letter ‘Ayin.’”²⁵⁶

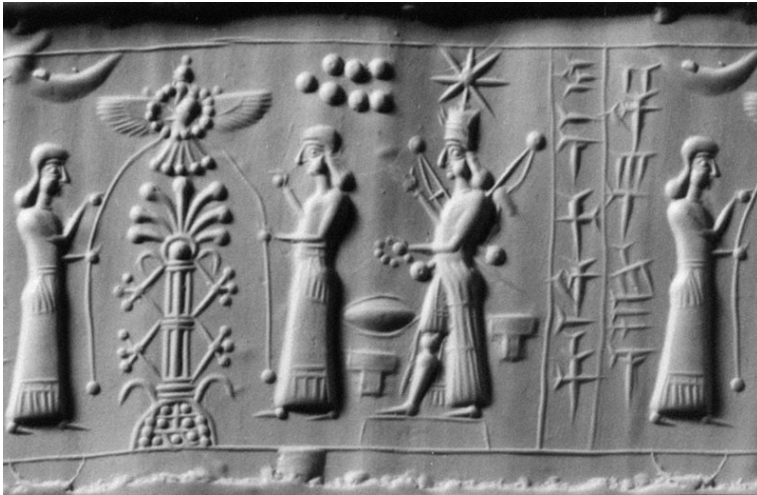


Figure 2. Cylinder seal, 45×17.6 mm, Neo-Assyrian, from the article by Yogev²⁵⁷

Yogev points to the possibility of “the most logical interpretation of this image,” which is “the Babylonian kalû ritual,” coming from “the well-known mythological [deity] Sibittu iconography that was familiar and accepted by the returning Babylonian exiles.”²⁵⁸ The “seven dots” are identified by some scholars with “the Pleiades, a cluster of seven stars in the Taurus constellation,” that, due to its “mystic value,” connects to this

²⁵⁶ Yogev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 313, cf. 315. Galling “thinks this refers to a precious stone of a sort familiar from seals. The ‘eyes’ are an engraved wreath of seven small circles— ayin (‘ayin) being a circle in Old Hebrew script,” Stendebach, *TDOT* 11:39, see also Galling, “Serubbabel und der Wiederaufbau des Tempels in Jerusalem,” 67–96.

²⁵⁷ Yogev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 314.

²⁵⁸ Yogev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 307.

deity, who “may have a sevenfold nature, or it might be a group of seven gods.”²⁵⁹ Temples were built “in its honor.” Professional singers performed the ritual, and it was, in essence, reconciliation with gods concerning an abandoned but soon-to-be restored temple.²⁶⁰ Notably, the people would take a stone from the previous temple to use in the new construction, which could provide a background for both chapters 3 and 4 in Zech.

However, this attractive view appears to have internal contradictions since, as the author admits, “it is clear that the imagery in the book of Zechariah is not fully compatible with Babylonian imagery.”²⁶¹ Indeed, it is also at odds with numerous canonical examples (see further below).²⁶² Thus, although they are helpful, archaeological and cultural backgrounds should not be determinative for the ultimate meaning of the biblical text. Instead, when at the crossroads of interplay between a

²⁵⁹ Yogevev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 315.

²⁶⁰ Yogevev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 310–311.

²⁶¹ Yogevev, “The Seven Eyes of God,” 318.

²⁶² The canonical examples of the discussed Hebrew phrase will be given later in this study. The following comment applies to the discussion about usage of historically established contexts in the biblical interpretations. Among the HB examples that substantiate the usage of culturally accepted behaviors are God’s use of the ancient ritual of suzerainty, in which the lesser party had to go between dissected animals, but God went among those, thereby having transformed the whole ritual (Gen 15). “The historical context of a passage, as far as is ascertainable, may make vital contributions to understanding. However, canonical theology is wary of taking, for example, an ancient Near Eastern parallel and reading it into the biblical text. Consider treatments of ancient Near Eastern parallels regarding so-called ‘covenant love,’ wherein the supposed meaning of the cognates of the primary OT word for love (אהב) in ancient Near Eastern covenant contexts was imposed upon similar forms in the biblical text only to later have many scholars question the supposed meaning in comparative contexts and reject the view that the meaning of such cognates in the ancient Near Eastern texts requires a similar meaning in biblical contexts... // Extrabiblical extant texts and artifacts shed considerable light on the interpretive options of the text but are themselves not determinative for the interpretation of the text.” Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 204–205, n. 27. Another cultural background that appears to be external to Zech 3 is given by Hans Schmidt: “The key to the interpretation is to be sought in Mesopotamian symbolism. One can point to several analogies. There are the seven gods, deified weapons of Ninurta and Ningal, later identified with the Pleiades. In the epic of creation, after the completion of Esagila, Marduk’s temple, the seven gods of fate fix the fates. The Pleiades are the sibitti ilâni, the seven gods, and are associated with the fates in some manner.” May, “A Key to the Interpretation,” 182. Cf. Schmidt, “Das vierte Nachtgesicht,” 54.

possible ancient Near Eastern background and the perception of the primary passages of the canonical sources, the latter should be preferred in exegesis.

Mixed View

Neither the present study nor Yogev's position deems archeological material the final word to draw decisive conclusions on "the seven eyes." Extracting the textual definition of the phrase from Zech 4:10,²⁶³ he suggests a new turn: "Zechariah gives this iconography a new, elegant, and public interpretation, as the all-seeing eyes of God, *ignoring* the former meaning of this symbol."²⁶⁴ While this approach recognizes the biblical perspective on the meaning of "the seven eyes," it assumes that the iconography of the seven circles is simultaneously present on the stone. Hence, the seven eyes merely represent the prophetic interpretation of the typical pagan symbolism and God's involvement. The weakness of this view is the substantiation of the iconography exclusively from the extra-biblical findings, imposing it onto the text.

This hypothesis can affect how God is portrayed to act and communicate in Zech 3, as well as the nature of the seven eyes and "the one stone"—the relevant areas of this study. It remains to investigate the canonical position on the subject and see how it is compatible with this or any of the views mentioned above.

Eyes as God's Providence

"The seven eyes" in Zech 3:9 appear to metaphorically represent an attitude, not an inscription artifact, namely, God's heavenly attention and active involvement for the

²⁶³ Zech 4:10 seems to describe another type of stone among the eight existing in Zechariah. "An early interpretation was suggested by the Aramaic translation (Targum Yonatan), that saw the stone as **אבן משקולת**, a plummet that was used by architects to measure the angles and slopes of a structure, and in this case, the new temple of God. This opinion was accepted by Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra in the Middle Ages." Yogev, "The Seven Eyes of God," 309.

²⁶⁴ Yogev, "The Seven Eyes of God," 319, emphasis supplied. "It is suggested by Jeremias that *Zechariah systematically transformed familiar imagery to fit his own purpose and agenda*. Rothstein argues that the original meaning of Babylonian imagery in Zechariah is not as important as the new interpretation that Zechariah provides, and it seems to me that this is also the case here." Yogev, "The Seven Eyes of God," 318, emphasis supplied.

benefit or the destruction of earthly affairs in a context of judgment. The following considerations substantiate this thesis.

(1) In every HB instance where the writer mentions God’s eyes on an object with the preposition לַעֲלֵי, as in Zech 3:9, it is exclusively a metaphor, representing God’s providence.²⁶⁵ Not once is this combination represented as iconography in the rest of the Bible.

(2) Ezekiel attaches the placement of the eyes to the whole body and the living wheels of the cherubim near God’s throne (Ezek 10:12), not on an inanimate or earthly object.

(3) In a similar sanctuary setting, 1 Kgs 8:29 mentions “[God’s] eyes... open night and day toward his house.”²⁶⁶

(4) These backgrounds in Ezekiel and 1 Kings appear to be the best HB sources for understanding both “the eyes of God” in Zech 4:10 and “the seven eyes” in 3:8, where the former points to the divinity of the eyes and the latter to their completeness. Thus, there is a common biblical ground for both chapters in Zechariah; hence, there is no need to impose the reading in chapter 4 onto chapter 3 to discern this connection. Furthermore, neither in Zechariah nor in Ezekiel is the phenomenon connected to an engraved surface.

(5) The Septuagint contains the translation “eyes,” not “surfaces,” in Zech 3:9.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁵ In all OT instances where “eyes” are לַעֲלֵי, “on,” an object with God as the actor (2 Sam 22:28; Jer 16:17; 24:6; 32:19; Ezek 7:4; 20:17; Amos 9:4; Ps 32:8, 139:16; Job 24:23; 34:21), God’s attention and active involvement to benefit or destroy are depicted in a context of a judgment. Deut 11:12 provides an interesting instance of the same imagery with God as the actor, used with (another) preposition אֶל, in a context similar to Zech 4:10. See also positive and negative connotations of this imagery as God’s attention, including omnipresence, omnipotence and judgment, as described in Stendebach, *TDOT* 11:40–41. Hans Schmidt deduces that the “eyes” are above the stone, not on the stone. Schmidt, “Das vierte Nachtgesicht,” 54.

²⁶⁶ Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 209. They mention more texts about divine presence in the temple: Ps 11:4; 5:6–8[5–7].

²⁶⁷ Some authors see the seven lamps of the lampstand (Zech 4:2) in the seven eyes of Zech 4:10 (for example, see Stendebach, *TDOT* 11:42; Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 273–275, see also pp. 208–209). The literary connection, however, seems to be much stronger between Zech 3:9 and 4:10, because both use the same unique expression “seven eyes,” (with a modifier in between in 4:10)

(6) There is hardly any other HB reference to gemstone surfaces, possibly due to the general absence of faceting in the canon.²⁶⁸

(7) The broader HB expression “the eyes on” consistently appears to refer to divine or human attitude or action²⁶⁹ and, in these cases, עֵינָיו, “eyes,” are, essentially, simply “eyes” or “eyes of God.”²⁷⁰

(8) Zech 3:9 contains a contextual key to resolve this point on its terms. The Lord is the actor for every action here: he brings the stone, engraves its inscriptions on it, will remove the guilt of the land, and declares “[thus] says the Lord....” He “confronts the Accuser and issues a resounding pronouncement that affects the subsequent action”²⁷¹ in this chapter.

(9) As opposed to the archeological context of the circle-shaped inscriptions utilized for the previous two views, another historical perspective appears to be

while in Zech 4:2 there are “seven lamps” and “seven pipes”—altogether different phrases. In this study the weight of evidence seems to indicate that 3:9 and 4:10 should be read in a common context in relation to “the seven eyes.” This symbol is not the only one joining the verses. After considering several options, Wong also notes that the Alexandrian text uses “eyes,” not “surfaces” or “springs,” see Wong, “The interpretation,” 175–176, so “some of the problems discussed above are not apparent to the early church... Thus the word *ayin* is interpreted as eyes.” The LXX also reads: ἐπὶ οὗτοι ὀφθαλμοὶ κυρίου εἰσὶν οἱ ἐπιβλέποντες ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν, “these are the seven eyes of the Lord looking upon all the earth.” (Zech 4:10, LXX).

²⁶⁸ A separate question could be raised whether the craftworkers made facets on gemstones in ancient Israel.

²⁶⁹ Even in the verses structured in a similar way where God is not the actor, “eyes” consistently depict eyes of people in contexts of their attitudes or actions (Gen 44:21; Deut 7:16 (cf. 13:9); 19:13; 2 Kgs 4:34; 19:22; 2 Chr 20:12; Job 24:23; 34:21; Jer 3:2; 39:12; 40:4). 2 Chr 20:12 depicts people’s eyes “on God” in the context of judgment and anticipation of help from God.

²⁷⁰ For “eyes” in general, see Gen 27:1; 29:17; Job 28:7; Mic 4:11. For “eyes of God,” see Deut 11:12; 1 Kgs 3:10; Jer 24:6; Ezek 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:10; 20:17; Amos 9:4; Ps 32:8; 33:18, *Koehler et al., HALOT*:818.

²⁷¹ Meyers and Meyers comment that Yahweh’s presence is not as sharp in other visions and chapters in Zech as it is in the fourth vision of the third chapter, discussed in this study, and observe that although he refers to himself “by name in the third person... it is clear that he is the speaker,” Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 214.

supportive of the purely canonical framework focused on God’s omniscience: the Persian ruler’s “reconnaissance network,” too, were called the emperor’s “eyes and ears.”²⁷²

Therefore, “the seven eyes” appear to be a pure metaphor for God’s eyes, not a carved representation. They stand for a separate signifying idea of “God’s providence.”²⁷³ This symbol is depicted in movement as seen in Ezek 1:18; 10:12. In positive and negative contexts of judgment—where the presence of the Lord manifests itself with *הָאֵפוּנַיִם מְלֵאִים עֵינַיִם סָבִיב*, “the wheels full of eyes all around” (Ezek 10:12), under a moveable throne of the omnipresent God,²⁷⁴ “the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2 Chr 16:9). In this sense, this expression can be related to Job 1:7; 2:2 and Rev 5:6, allowing for the interpretation that God’s providence functions, in part, through the spirits (heavenly beings) he sends to explore the earth.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Leuchter and Lamb, *The Historical Writings*, 387, 419; Bart B. Bruehler, “Seeing through the ‘YNYM of Zechariah: Understanding Zechariah 4,” *CBQ* 3 (2001): 430–443; Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer, *Zechariah’s Vision Report And Its Earliest Interpreters: A Redaction-Critical Study of Zechariah 1–8*, eds. Claudia V. Camp, et al., Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 159–160.

²⁷³ “The seven eyes as denoting God’s special, yet all-embracing Providence, which is being directed towards the stone to watch and protect it.” Lowe, *The Hebrew Student’s Commentary*, 38. Schmidt has mentioned that God’s eyes are *above* the stone, on the grounds that the stone set before Joshua is a huge stone, so the eyes must be high above the stone because of its size. Schmidt, “Das vierte Nachtgesicht,” 54. May also sees the eyes being above the stone, ascribing the divine personality to Sibittu, not the Lord: “The Pleiades are the sibitti ilâni, the seven gods, and are associated with the fates in some manner.” May, “A Key to the Interpretation,” 182.

²⁷⁴ God’s glory is approaching Israel in Zech for salvation and restoration, but departing from Israel in Ezekiel. Stendebach writes in relation to Ezek 1:18, 20: “‘eyes’ on the rims of the wheels... symbolizing Yahweh’s all-seeing presence... The Ezekiel passage also refers to eyes in the literal sense. They are the counterpart to the faces of the four living creatures; like these, they establish omnipresence.” Stendebach, *TDOT* 11:38–40.

²⁷⁵ Tidwell, “Wā’ōmar (Zech 3:5) and the Genre of Zechariah’s Fourth Vision,” 343–355.

“One Stone”

The precise shape,²⁷⁶ type,²⁷⁷ and size of “the one stone” are not directly inferable from the text. Schmidt interprets the phrase *נִתְּתִי לְפָנָי*, “I have laid before” (Zech 3:9), as “the idea of a large, yes, an enormous a huge stone, a boulder, for example.”²⁷⁸ However, *לְפָנָי*, “before,” also appears concerning small objects as well, such as bowls set before the altar—those that weighed less than two pounds (Zech 14:20).²⁷⁹ The combination of *נִתְּתִי* and *לְפָנָי* in several other HB cases is used with small or comparatively small objects (Exod 30:36; 2 Kgs 4:43–44; cf. Jer 35:5).

Among the basic facts about *אֶבֶן*, “stone,” in the HB is that the object “had a central place in the religious cult,” bears “the qualities of hardness and firmness,” it “could serve as a memorial and witness,” “as a symbol for God,” “sometimes appears in the OT as a metallic stone [ore],²⁸⁰ and in many contexts dealing with precious stones”²⁸¹ is used as an “engraved object.”²⁸²

²⁷⁶ The interpretation of “the seven eyes” as facets could suggest a shape. However, this view must meet challenges described in the section Eyes as Facets or Circles, Mixed View, and Eyes as God’s Providence.

²⁷⁷ As further discussed, the object in focus could be a singular-type mineral compound or a precious stone.

²⁷⁸ Schmidt, “Das vierte Nachtgesicht,” 54. One could cite examples of larger objects with the preposition *לְפָנָי* in the book of Zechariah, a person or a huge mountain (Zech 3:1, 3; 4:7).

²⁷⁹ The Liddell Greek-English Lexicon specifies that it could mean a basin weighing 70 shekels of silver (70 x 12 grams = 840 grams), Num 7:13; in Jer 52:19 translated as *ὑποχυτήρας* by LXX, which means “vessel to pour oil into a lamp.” Henry George Liddell et al., “ὑποχυτήρ,” *LSJ*:1902.

²⁸⁰ Job 28:2; Deut. 8:9, likely in the capacity of an iron ore.

²⁸¹ Arvid S. Kapelrud, “אֶבֶן,” *TDOT*:50. For more information on the meaning of a “precious stone,” see David J. A. Clines, ed., “אֶבֶן,” *DCH* 1:112.

²⁸² “For tables of the law: Exod 24:12; 31:18; 34:1, 4; Deut 4:13; 5:22; 9:9, 10, 11; Josh 8:32; 1 Kgs 8:9; as divine image: Lev 26:1=11QT 522; 11QT 5121; generally: 2 Chr 2:13; engraved precious stones: Exod 28:11; Zech 3:9.” Clines, *DCH* 1:110. For a stone as a symbol for God: Deut 32:4; Isa 17:10; Hab 1:12; Ps 31:3, Edward F. Siegman, “Stone Hewn From the Mountain (Daniel 2),” *CBQ* 4 (1956): 364–379.

The function of “the stone” can be deduced from several factors. The first functional purpose of the present item can be deduced from the fact that the Lord **נָתַחֵ לְפָנַי**, “has laid [it] before,” Joshua. Schmidt notes that the verb **נָתַן**, “to give/put/set,” combined with the preposition **לְפָנַי**, “before,” is used in the HB “when something comes to stand in front of someone that entails a task for him, such as... [taking over a] land.”²⁸³ My further investigation of HB passages with **נָתַן** and **לְפָנַי** when they describe what is done with an inanimate physical object given to a person indicates that they signify delivering interdependent physical²⁸⁴ and spiritual²⁸⁵ benefits, including making people face their moral obligations and choose their destiny, conditioned by God’s law.²⁸⁶ The general HB context of spiritual commitment or apostasy measured by the divine commandments is expressed by **נָתַן** and **לְפָנַי**. This observation coincides with my earlier investigation of the conditional blessings for the priestly team, entailing agricultural and national bliss in Zech 3, where everything is focused on “the one stone” that the Lord has **נָתַחֵ לְפָנַי**, “laid before,” vaguely suggesting that the divine moral charge and expected human priestly loyalty are interwoven in the same symbol.²⁸⁷

This exegetical insight is further enriched and confirmed by the interlocking backgrounds that inform the possible contents of the charge—the Ten Commandments

²⁸³ Schmidt, “Das vierte Nachtgesicht,” 54.

²⁸⁴ **נָתַן** and **לְפָנַי** in regard to eating and drinking: Gen 18:8; 2 Kgs 4:43, 44; Jer 35:5; taking over the land or fight enemies: Deut 1:8, 21; 2:31, 33, 36; 7:2, 23; 23:15; 31:5; Isa 41:2; Neh 9:35. Cf. the same in another context: Ezek 4:1.

²⁸⁵ **נָתַן** and **לְפָנַי** in regard to spiritual benefits: God “sets before” the nation of Israel his “statutes and righteous judgments [that] are in all this law” (Deut 4:8; 11:32; 1 Kgs 9:6; Jer 9:12; 26:4; 44:10; 2 Chr 7:19; especially, Dan 9:10 [in the same transsemiotic style]). Cf. an apostate deed that antithetically mirrors the Lord’s blessings: Ezek 16:18, 19.

²⁸⁶ **נָתַן** and **לְפָנַי** in regard to the nation’s moral obligations and the choice of destiny concerning God’s law: Deut 11:26; 30:1, 15, 19; 1 Kgs 9:6; Jer 9:12; especially 21:8; 26:4; 44:10; 2 Chr 7:19; Neh 9:35; especially Ezek 3:20 (with a stumbling block to test the righteous).

²⁸⁷ In the section Dynamic Universalism in the present study, the connections between Zech 3:10, 1 Kgs 4:24–25 and Mic 4:1–5 were given in relation to a bliss in the natural landscape. These blessings, however, as discussed in the earlier section Joshua’s Companions, are available to the high priest Joshua and his priestly colleagues on the condition of them being faithful to their calling.

(background 3) and the holiness requirement (background 5). In summary, the task of the post-exilic priesthood, as suggested by “the stone” symbol, is to provide the law-conditioned, spiritual foundations of allegiance on the part of the nation for the second inheritance of the same land.

A second functional purpose of “the one stone” arises from analysis of the general literary context of Zech 3 and the primary elements surrounding the object, which will now be analyzed. The restorative theanthropic backgrounds (4–6) of the interlocking environment create a sense of the presence of the total number of tribes (6), the imparted holiness (5), and the ark of the covenant (4), suggesting a cleansing atoning process (Lev 16:16, 30, 33). The controversy and judgment-related theocentric backgrounds (1–3) reveal the retributive side of God’s law and align with the negative consequences of the Day of Atonement for those who are disloyal to him (Lev 23:29–30). Related to this is the eschatological Day of Atonement,²⁸⁸ which, from the perspective of dynamic universalism,²⁸⁹ happens on “that [distant] day.”²⁹⁰ It is primarily linked to the heavenly realm, but is not unrelated to the condition of the returned Jews in the late sixth century B.C.²⁹¹

Joshua’s companions are the priestly team, signifying the cultic events that are coming, on the condition of faithfulness to their calling. They are, textually, also the omen for the Branch and stone-related religious service.²⁹² Within the atonement setting, they and “the one stone” are also related to the Most Holy place of the temple. The above-rendered analysis of the *לְפָנַי לְתַתֵּי* phrase associates them with the tension created

²⁸⁸ See the section Background of the present chapter for more details.

²⁸⁹ See the section Dynamic Universalism of the present chapter for more details.

²⁹⁰ See the section Eschatological Markers of the present chapter for more details.

²⁹¹ See the section Background of the present chapter for more details.

²⁹² See the section Joshua’s Companions of the present chapter for more details.

by the uncertainty of an answer that humanity²⁹³ would give to God's preconditions. The interlocking backgrounds expand on this, suggesting that the answer could either be rejection of God (background 2, 3) or the opposite, observing God's law (3), participating in the covenant (4), becoming God's "holiness" via the high priest (5) and personally as members of the whole nation (6).

While Joshua and his companions inevitably create hesitation that always accompanies the outcome of human choice, the nature of "the Branch" appears to be more reliable, since it is predominantly divine, being intertextually linked to God's "Servant" with the anticipated power to bring about global political, natural, and cultic shifts, overseeing the construction of his own, alternative, and, therefore, flawless, temple.²⁹⁴ "The Branch" is also closely connected with the nature of "the stone" as it portends a divine change. However, the symbol of the stone evokes the idea of a final sweeping action taken by a transcendent actor (aligning with the interlocking backgrounds 1–3), while "the Branch" metaphor mainly suggests a gradual and imminent aspect of growth (aligning with the interlocking backgrounds 4–6). Both divine portrayals relate the present situation to the rebuilding of the second temple. The priests and "the Branch"/"the stone" collaborate from different angles—present and future, human and divine, earthly and heavenly, Jewish and universal—to restore God's law and covenant.

Thus, "the stone" appears to be the counterpart of "the Branch," introducing a sudden final overturn of events via the primary interlocking background. Both symbols describe the Messiah's principal actions revealed to the nation in the sixth century B.C., for describing, succinctly and across several dimensions, how God works through history

²⁹³ Here the priestly team is called "humanity" emphasizing the more unreliable part in God's covenant with Judah and their representing the whole earth in the eschatological dimension, in contrast with the absoluteness of God's ultimate plan as demonstrated in the theocentric interlocking backgrounds (1–3). See the section Joshua's Companions of the present chapter for more details on the expectation of the answer the nation would give to God.

²⁹⁴ See the section The Branch of the present chapter for more details.

with patience and determination, and which role the temple of the returned exiles plays in the emerging messianic age.

Finally, the seven eyes are God's attention and manifestation of divine providence to fulfill his intentions²⁹⁵ and, in interlocking fashion, explain God's will to consummate his plans via the ordained eschatological change (interlocker 1), to evaluate the rejection (interlocker 2) by nations of the divine law (interlocker 3), and to eradicate the guilt of the eschatological global "land" through the covenant (interlocker 4) with the chosen priest (interlocker 5) and his people (interlocker 6).

Consequently, the second function of "the stone" is related to God's initiative and leadership. Both of its functions, in combination, are the anticipation of human choice mixed with the inexorable divine control of events until the eschaton and relate to the contents of the Ten Commandments. The two aspects of meaning described—the ontological (God-to-humans) and the functional (the sudden or gradual ways to implement a change)²⁹⁶—can be positively interpreted as an encouragement toward a renewed covenant with God or negatively as a warning against delaying acceptance of his covenant.

As a result of this conclusion, there is no need to impose Zech 4 on Zech 3²⁹⁷ to decrypt the meaning of "the stone." Neither the exegetical nor interlocking approach has shown it to be the physical foundation stone of the temple. In the same vein, both types of arguments were found against the interpretation involving the breastpiece of the high priest. Instead, the older interpretations of the stone as a metaphor for the Messiah—the crushing stone, rejected foundation stone, God's kingdom, and selected parts of the

²⁹⁵ See the section "Seven Eyes" of the present chapter for more details.

²⁹⁶ The ontological and functional aspects of meaning were initially described in the section Kaleidoscopic View, and the functional aspect was further developed in the present exegetical analysis.

²⁹⁷ As suggested by Schmidt and criticized by VanderKam; see the chapter Literature Review of this study for more details.

newer explanations of the vestments approach,²⁹⁸ combined with the commandment tablets and the ark of the covenant backgrounds identified by the current study—have demonstrated the interrelatedness and mutual validation of these concepts.

Inscription on the Stone

The perceived obscurity of “the one stone” in Zech 3 is part of the reason its inscription is not transparent. As discussed earlier, it should not necessarily be associated with any groups of seven elements, such as seven eyes, letters, or circles. A suggestion regarding the inscription’s contents seems to flow directly from the text, namely, that the stone bears the following words: “And I will take away the guilt of this land in a single day.”²⁹⁹ However, this approach fails because it takes the conjunctive clause as the inscription’s contents instead of taking it as a regular consecutive future clause in a contingent discourse.³⁰⁰ There are no rapid solutions for identifying the inscription, either by focusing on the immediate semantics or by describing the engraving’s contents according to a background of choice. However, exegetical and interlocking reasons suggest that a combination of references is needed to show the divine signature.

The polyvalence inherent in “the stone,” “that day,” seems to extend to the verbal choice of “writing” in Zech 3. In the HB, when facing the task of making a record on a

²⁹⁸ Due to the perceived purposefulness of plurality of contexts and meanings, the other interpretations of “the one stone” as the metaphor for the foundation stone of the temple would correspond with the interlocking background (2) the symbolism for Christ and his kingdom, along with (1), the image of the personal Messiah, in the overall redemptive picture of (4–6). The vestments approach links to (5–6), although only in connection to the golden plate and the two onyx stones.

²⁹⁹ Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1242.

³⁰⁰ “It is impossible to take ‘And I will remove...’ as the sentence engraved on the stone, as many have done; for such an inscription could not possibly commence with *vāv* conversive and the Perfect.” Lowe, *The Hebrew Student’s Commentary*, 37. Better alternatives for the translation of a consecutive perfect (as a future clause) seem to be either “And I will [do so and so],” or: “To the effect of [doing so and so].” For examples of similar structures, see Gen 44:22; Exod 19:5; 1 Sam 11:3; 17:32, Merwe, Naudé and Kroeze, *Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar*, 194–195.

surface, people פתח, “inscribe,” but God simply כתב, “writes.”³⁰¹ The only exception to this rule is Zech 3:9, where God says he is מִפְתֵּחַ, “engraving.” On the one hand, this underscores the connection of the mentioned chapter to the vestments background in Exod 28–29; 39, where the craftworkers similarly toiled (or, “engraved”) to leave marks on jewels or gold. Besides, this Exodus backdrop contains both the earliest occurrences and half of all canonical instances with פתח and פְּתוּחָה, “inscription”³⁰²—the two words comprising a phrase in Zech 3:9. On the other hand, this unique parallel should not be stretched too far, since a prominent difference is that in Exodus the inscribers are human, but in Zech 3, the writer is divine. This reminds the reader of another context: the narrative of God giving the Ten Commandments (Exod 31; 34). However, no background from these chapters alone provides a complete answer. Nevertheless, a merged view of these two backgrounds is informative.

In the earlier discussion of the contextual elements of “the one stone”—“that day,” Joshua’s companions, “the Branch,” and “the seven eyes”—the interlocking framework played a supportive role, but it appears to be the principal tool for resolving the question of the writing. The interlocking backgrounds (3–6) convey three written messages in the following priority order: the Ten Commandments as a stand-alone object (Exod 20; 31; 34, interlocking background 3) and as a part of the אָרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה, “the ark of the covenant of the Lord” (1 Chr 22:19), interlocking background 4), the “holiness to the Lord” inscription on the high priest’s golden plate (Exod 28:36; 39:30), and the names of the tribes of Israel on his breastpiece (28:11; 39:6). All of these writings and contexts are associated with the sanctuary, especially the Most Holy place. Therefore, they implicitly direct the attention of the reader to the Israelite Day of Atonement.

³⁰¹ God כתב, “writes,” irrespectively of the hardness of the surface: Exod 24:12; 32:32; 34:1; Deut 5:22; 10:2, 4; 2 Kgs 17:37; Job 13:26; Hos 8:12. For spiritual application, Jer 31:33.

³⁰² The noun form occurs eleven times: Exod 28:11, 21, 36; 39:6, 14, 30; 1 Kgs 6:29; 2 Chr 2:7, 14; Ps 74:6; Zech 3:9; the verbal form occurs nine times: Exod 28:9, 11, 36; 39:6; 2 Chr 2:7; Zech 3:9; 1 Kgs 7:36; 2 Chr 2:14; 3:7.

A synthesized concise depiction of the idea contained in the inscription on the stone in Zech 3 could appear as “I am the Lord your God, [keep my ten commandments] (20:2–17)... holiness to the Lord [you are, as represented by your high priest (28:36) and mentioned by your names (28:11)].” A similar idea is found in Lev 11:44a: “I am the LORD your God. You shall, therefore, consecrate yourselves.” The latter part of 11:44a—“You shall be holy; for I am holy”—encapsulates the concept and could be a fitting expression of the inscription on the stone in Zech 3. This statement is relevant to the Day of Atonement description in Lev 16 and is repeated five times in Leviticus.³⁰³ The inscription’s implied contents resemble the ideas regarding this specific sacred occasion, which should not be strange for Zech 3, as this chapter has the Day of Atonement as its significant background.³⁰⁴

At times, it is in the Lord’s order to use a written text to prophesy unconditional, pre-ordained events (Dan 10:21; Ezek 2:9–3:1).³⁰⁵ Writing on earthly stones could signify concretizing a contract with God’s people (Exod 31:18; 34:4, 10; Josh 8:32). However, in Zech 3, the Lord had not started the writing, or at least, he had not completed it (Zech 3:9) at the time when Zechariah saw his vision.³⁰⁶ The only other HB instance in which God is about to write in the unspecified future is in Jer 31:33, where he intends to implant his law in hearts and minds at the dawn of the new covenant. In Zechariah, by using the same temporal uncertainty formula for upcoming events, the prophet may be reminding the returned exiles of the true meaning of the divine-human covenant, which is conditioned on acceptance of God’s requirements in the hearts of his people.

³⁰³ Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Zech 14:20, where the “holiness to the Lord” phrase is written “on the bells of the horses.”

³⁰⁵ Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik*, 49. Cf. Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik*, 21. Cf. Ps 139:16.

³⁰⁶ “That stone has already been set before Joshua, but the Lord has yet to engrave it,” VanderKam, “Joshua the High Priest,” 562.

Later in the book of Zechariah, the words קִדְּוָה לַיהוָה, “holiness to the Lord,” are explicitly written even “on the bells of the horses” (Zech 14:20) in the context of the eschatological consummation, when all the nations will come to celebrate a Jewish festival. Thus, Zechariah seems to indicate that the engraving process commenced in chapter three will not be completed there, but will gradually encompass objects outside of the sanctuary precincts and engage people other than Israel or Judah.

Theological Implications

The nation of Judah in 520 B.C. was at the “turning point of the two worlds,”³⁰⁷ signified in Zech 3 by the crossroads between what had been written—the Ten Commandments, “holiness to the Lord,” and the names of the Israelite tribes—and what was to be written by the Lord from that time on until the eschaton, with its universal scope. At this time in history, this reiteration of the Lord’s intentions decisively targets the future and involves structures, such as his temple, that are controlled only by the deity. The nation’s choices will not deter the divine intentions.

“That day” (Zech 3:10; 11:11; 14:9) will affect “all the earth” (14:9; cf. 11:6) and “all the peoples (of the earth)” (11:10, 11; 12:2, 3[x2]).³⁰⁸ Such an act is hardly expected from a local Jewish authority. So, the pieces of this picture, in harmony with other chapters in Zechariah, show that a heavenly Messiah is in view and Joshua’s role is secondary. The צֶמַח, “the Branch,” is the main character of Zech 3 concerning the eschatological temple, so the Branch is meant to play a significant role in the new covenant, expressed by the holiness springing forth from the time of the Joshua the high priest and consummating in the end-time, when another prophetic symbol, the crushing stone (Dan 2), takes over the scene of events.

³⁰⁷ Osten-Sacken also notes “the sharp demarcation between past and future in Deutero-Isaiah,” Osten-Sacken, *Die Apokalyptik*, 21, n. 24.

³⁰⁸ Stallard, “The Messiah,” 1241.

At the time of Zechariah, the Jewish people must adopt this refreshed and more extensive picture of history. The transition from non-felicitous to felicitous rituals for the transitioning nation would depend on a more transparent comprehension of the spiritual meaning of the eschatologically-oriented heavenly temple—the counterpart of the previously standing sanctuary of Moses, temple of Solomon, and the new temple being erected. The earthly cult needs a more fervent heavenward focus than it had in the time of their ancestors.

The interlocking backgrounds to Zech 3 appear, therefore, to have an additional function: to awaken the thoughts of Zechariah's hearers to the limits of their habitual earthly cultic perception. Zechariah's vision shows the connection between the earthly and heavenly spheres, thereby highlighting the importance of the temple in Jerusalem for the Jews and simultaneously revealing the primary focus of their service to the Lord: accepting his law in the heart and remembering that the ultimate scope of their ministry includes the universal dimension of God's mission for the surrounding nations.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has observed the inadequacy of the existing biblical backgrounds used to interpret “the one stone” symbol in Zech 3. Assuming the primacy of the canonical base necessary to uncover a cluster of implicit associations, this study has developed a two-staged—technical and conceptual—methodology for detecting and verifying HB backgrounds that apply to the symbolic object and its context in the surrounding passage and has identified a procedure to evaluate, filter, and amalgamate aspects of relevant background passages into a coherent composite view that can be termed “kaleidoscopic.”

Prior to the current research, due to the shortcomings of backgrounds that scholars had proposed, the meaning of “the one stone” appeared unclear, so the theological impact of an object placed so dominantly within the central vision in this section of Zechariah seemed relatively low. In addition to removing the irrelevant backdrops from the synthesis, the proposed framework equips theologians with the perspective of matching biblical references in a way that enables them to decipher the rich import of analyzed object. A significant quality of this perspective is the ability to prioritize the backgrounds into main and subordinate concepts. This ability helps to construct a synthesis that allows one to deduce a coherent message. This approach also paves the way for resolving similar conundrums in other sections in the book of Zechariah, in other prophetic and apocalyptic books, and other literature where transsemiotism—the literary feature where a transcendent messenger communicates a future via symbols in a vision—occurs.

At the core of the proposed method, the backgrounds are sorted or filtered away based on how well the conspicuous descriptors of the main object—“the one stone”—

match the descriptors of corresponding objects (e.g., “the plate” in Exod 28, the crushing stone in Dan 2) in potential background passages. The closeness of a particular background to the descriptors of “the one stone” in Zech 3 (the quantity of the stone, the material of the stone, the person operating the stone, and the manner the object is used), condition how influential that background is. Thus, this study has demonstrated that no isolated background corresponding to the “complex object,” i.e., “the one stone,” is adequate and backgrounds having no matches to the descriptors of “the one stone” had to be removed from the scope of further analysis.

The resulting picture absorbed some of the known parallels to the high priestly clothing in Exod 28–29; 39, accepting the relevance of the sign on the high priestly headdress and the shoulder stones and rejecting those located on the breastpiece. The final picture included the apocalyptic stone from the vision of Dan 2 and the “disregarded” stone of Ps 118. The present study also added two new correspondences: the ark of the testimony in 1 Chr 21–22 and the two stone tablets in Exod 31. At this stage, the current research finds that the emerging meaning emphasizes the final, divine overturn of events, aided by God’s salvation plan for humans via their covenantal relationships. This is because the three most significant backgrounds (Dan 2; Ps 118; Exod 31) focus on God’s final perspective and retribution for his rejected law and the three additional backgrounds (1 Chr 21–22; Exod 28–29; 39) reference God’s patient education of the Israelites through sanctuary-related artifacts.

Further, this study conducted exegesis of the crucial concepts encircling “the stone”: “that day,” the dynamical portrayal of changes in Zechariah from local to universal and eschatological purposes, the role of Joshua’s associates, the character behind “the Branch,” and “the seven eyes.” I have joined previous insights of the scholarly community with new suggestions and have demonstrated that the outcome is either connected to or corroborated by the kaleidoscopic view. This synthesis was

productive for completing the exegetical procedure and for reinforcing the results already articulated via that integrative view.

At this stage, Joshua's companions, as embodiments of the feebleness of the human condition, were found to prefigure the ministry of the coming, divine, and reliable, messianic "Branch," with his separate sanctuary and ongoing growth of holiness extending to the universal end-time dimensions, within the context of the Day of Atonement. The Messiah and "the stone" emerged as the immanent and transcendent realities that Joshua and his fellow priests symbolized. Although these elements are closely related, God's attention and initiative, expressed as "the seven eyes," is on "the stone," as the conspicuous representation of the divine warning and determination to use the second temple restoration as the beginning of a messianic era, at the watershed point between the two epochs.

The kaleidoscopic view's most indispensable function was to generate a suggestion for "the stone's" inscription, as all of the existing scholarly suppositions about its contents were found wanting, and the purely exegetical approach in the immediate context did not yield any result. The engraving that God had yet to inscribe on "the stone" appeared to encapsulate concepts from the Ten Commandments, the text of the golden plate from Exodus 28, and the names of the Israeli tribes. In summary, the statement links God's character with the holiness requirement for the high priest and his people, who, in the atmosphere of the book of Zechariah, will involve mission to all the nations of the earth in the eschatological future.

By laying that "one stone" before Joshua, God did what was found in the HB to be his usual procedure: to command a task to his people. It became apparent that this task consisted of two parts. On the one hand, God proposed to the remnant Jews a propitiatory mentality that would include keeping in mind the universal mission centered on the true king of the temple, the Messiah, whose meek role was depicted as "the shoot" out of Jesse's stump (Isa 11:1; cf. the "Branch" in Zech 3:8). On the other hand, the symbolism

of “the stone” is more than a task; it is also a bolder role of the Messiah: the cosmological consummation of history that would not depend on human decision. Thus, God gave his people a choice and a warning, challenging them to see if they, as represented by their high priest, were going to “walk in his ways” (Zech 3:7) or not.

By intending to write on the stone, God invokes known associations to his actions in the past (Exod 34:4, 10; Josh 8:32) and connects them to the present (Zech 3:9–10). If the post-exilic Jews are willing to cooperate with the divine intention, the stone-solid promise of a prosperous future belongs to them once again. Indeed, a new, clean, historical page is opened for them by God after he has countered Satan’s implicit accusation against their nation, as represented by their high priest (3:1–2), and has forgiven them, as represented by changing the clothing of their high priest from filthy garments to rich and fine robes (3:3–5).

God’s forgiveness that is extended to the returned Jews is linked with God’s condition of obedience (3:6–7). It is also linked to the earthly temple-building project conducted by Zerubbabel and Joshua, with a necessary heavenly spiritual focus, and to the restoration of the Jewish nation in its homeland, with God’s chosen people called to serve the world at large in this phase of their history and beyond.

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