

Prophecy Concerning ‘Foreign Nations’ in the Hellenistic Period?

Zech 9 as a Test Case

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1. Oracles Concerning Foreign Nations and Hellenism?

Is there something like Israelite prophecy in Hellenistic times and, if so, what are the criteria for its identification in the biblical books? Can its specific intention or typical stylistic and theological features be discerned?

With respect to the well-known oracles concerning foreign nations,¹ often neglected in the research on prophetic books, the answer to these questions turns out to be quite diverse. It depends on whom you ask. In this context, I always like to refer to the grand seigneur of prophetic studies in the early 20th century, Bernhard Duhm. According to Duhm, the answer to our questions would be a twofold: On the one hand, he attributed most, if not nearly all of the literary material found in the corpora of oracles concerning foreign nations to the Hellenistic period. To be more precise, regarding the major prophets “all” holds true for the Book of Jeremiah,² and “most of” holds true for the Book of Isaiah.³ As for Ezekiel, whom Duhm obviously did not hold in very high esteem as a prophet, he did not address the matter of chapters 25–32 at all.⁴ In his view, we have been provided with plenty of literary material that ought to be dated to Hellenistic, or rather, to Maccabean times. But this does not mean that we can speak of Hellenistic *prophecy*. Duhm regarded the respective oracles concerning foreign nations as the merely epigonic product of uninspired scribes. He considered them the result of work desk activity, totally different from “real prophecy” as brought forth orally by the great inspired poetic geniuses of the 8th through 6th century. In short: In the oracles concerning foreign nations, Duhm found lots of Hellenistic material but little or nothing of prophecy.

During the course of the 20th century, this estimation changed significantly. With the discovery of the royal archives of Mari and Nineveh, it gradually became clear that in the Ancient Near East, the phenomenon of prophecy, under-

¹ Cf. SWEENEY, Foreword.

² Cf. DUHM, *Jeremia*, 337.

³ Cf. DUHM, *Jesaja*, 12.

⁴ Cf. DUHM, *Israels Propheten*, 227–233.

stood as divination of different types, was not restricted to Israel and Judah but was rather a common pattern. This led to a revision, still ongoing, of the image of the “historical” prophets behind the biblical books. Was it not likely that the historical Isaiah or Jeremiah would have been rooted in a milieu that was similar to the one that we would learn about in the letters of Mari or the tablets from Nineveh?⁵ Is it not plausible that at least at some stage of their career, the biblical prophets would have sounded quite similar to their Assyrian colleagues? And, since one important part of those prophets’ business was to declare the imminent victory of their king over his respective enemies, is it not logical to assume that the oracles concerning foreign nations represented the oldest literary material of the prophetic books? Especially with respect to the Book of Jeremiah, this turn took place from the late 1960s onwards.⁶ Prominent examples of this view appear in the commentary of Robert Carroll from 1986,⁷ the monographs by Beat Huwylar from 1996,⁸ and Konrad Schmid from 1995.⁹ Regarding our question today, their result is in short: There is considerable “prophecy” to be found in the oracles concerning foreign nations – but rather sparse literary material having anything to do with Hellenism or Hellenistic times. So, in a manner of speaking, Duhm turned upside down.¹⁰

However different these perspectives may seem at a first glance, it is noteworthy to see what they have in common. Both share the view that “prophecy” is to be understood first and foremost as an oral, or at least pre-literary, phenomenon, as words uttered or symbolic actions performed by a religious specialist. However, it is a truism that we encounter biblical “prophecy” only in the form of written texts, of literature, of prophetic books.¹¹ This has been the point of the redaction-critical approach of the late 20th century: “Prophecy” appears in texts – and whether a text is prophetic or not is a question of the respective text’s self-conception. Therefore, whether the respective writer’s desk was carpentered in the 8th or in the 2nd century BCE is not a criterion for determining ‘prophecy’. For us this means that our question needs to be simply whether or not there are prophetic texts that can be dated to the Hellenistic period. Unfortunately, this is not as easy to answer as it sounds. The dramatic turnabout in the relative and absolute dating of the oracles concerning foreign nations from Duhm’s point of view to Carroll’s illustrates the problem. What criteria can be found that make

⁵ On prophecy concerning foreign nations in the Ancient Near East, see STÖKL, *Fremde Völker*; NISSINEN, *Prophecy*, 263–265; BEZZEL, *Gerichtsprophetie und Fremdvölkerorakel*, 237–239.

⁶ Cf. HAYES, *Oracles*.

⁷ Cf. CARROLL, *Jeremiah*, 751.

⁸ Cf. HUWYLAR, *Jeremia und die Völker*.

⁹ Cf. SCHMID, *Buchgestalten*, 337.

¹⁰ With regard to this change of paradigm in the research on the so-called oracles concerning foreign nations, cf. BEZZEL, *Gerichtsprophetie und Fremdvölkerorakel*, 234–237.

¹¹ Cf. BECKER, *Wiederentdeckung*.

it possible to assign a prophetic text to the context of Hellenism? The heuristic problems associated with this question have been poignantly addressed by Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer.¹² Basically, the epistemological crux is the lack of data. Absolute dating of prophetic texts can be done rarely at best. Any historical interpretation is constantly in danger of falling prey to the vicious circle of creating its own rationale. In our context, this would mean that Hellenistic prophecy is defined on the basis of those texts which have been dated on the basis of a preconceived opinion about the nature of prophecy in Hellenistic times. The existence of this trap is commonplace, but nevertheless it appears to be hard for any historical exegete not to fall into it. What can be done, though, is to weigh the probabilities of a Hellenistic dating for a certain passage and then ask, always subjunctively, whether there is any interaction with Hellenistic thought or whether the assumption of a late 4th – early 2nd century dating would contribute to a better understanding of the respective passage. In the following, this shall be undertaken by means of a classic example: Zech 9.

2. On Firm Ground? Zech 9

Not long ago, discussing prophecy in Hellenistic times on the basis of Zech 9 would have meant treading on relatively firm ground, at least in German scholarship. Since Stade's ground-breaking analysis, the designation of the chapters following Zech 9 as Deutero-Zechariah and, with recourse to Eichhorn,¹³ their dating to the Hellenistic era based on the reference to the "sons of Greece" (בְּנֵי יוֹן) in 9:13,¹⁴ seemed to be more or less agreed. Since Elliger and Delcort's articles from 1950 and 1951,¹⁵ it has been widely accepted that Zech 9:1–6 with its list of toponyms – starting with Damascus and then following the coastline in a north to south-direction – mirrored the campaign of Alexander the Great in 333–332. On this basis, it also seemed plausible and natural to understand the announcement of the coming of the peace-bringing king and his worldwide reign in 9:9f. against the backdrop of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem¹⁶ or the Hellenistic conceptions of kingship in general.¹⁷

This more or less classical view, and with it the bundle of historical interpretations from Alexander's campaign, from the wars of the Diadochi, to the Maccabean struggles, has been challenged in recent years. The current tendency

¹² Cf. TIEMEYER, *Prophetic Texts*, 264; see also her contribution to the volume at hand.

¹³ Cf. STADE, *Deuterozecharja I*, 4, n. 1, mentioning Eichhorn's *Einleitung* in its 4th edition, Göttingen 1824.

¹⁴ Cf. STADE, *Deuterozecharja III*, 275.

¹⁵ Cf. ELLIGER, *Zeugnis*; DELCORT, *Allusions*.

¹⁶ The historicity of this visit is hotly disputed since the only source for its reconstruction is Ant. 11,325–339s. Kasher, however, defends Josephus's reliability in this context and makes a good case for it, cf. KASHER, *Further Revised Thoughts*.

¹⁷ Cf., for example, KUNZ, *Ablehnung*, 233–239.

is to date Deutero-Zechariah, as a whole or parts of it, to the early, middle or late Persian Period.¹⁸ The argument for this case is, as far as I can see, largely based on counter-arguments against a Hellenistic dating. Positive evidence is mustered to a considerably lesser extent. Bonfiglio attempts it by comparing the archer imagery of 9:13 with Persian royal iconography. However, the subject of the divine king shooting arrows at his enemies is by no means restricted to “Darius’ reign”.¹⁹ Bonfiglio himself refers to Assyrian imagery,²⁰ and one could adduce Ramesses II likewise, without being tempted to date Zech 9 to the 9th or 13th century.

The majority of exegetes who maintain a Persian Period dating of Deutero-Zechariah take the approach of questioning the two main points which have been invoked in favour of a late 4th – mid 2nd century dating: a) the toponymical list in 9:1–6 and b) the “sons of Greece” in 9:13.

As to a), they rightly point out that any conqueror of the Levant who would attack it from the North would be forced to take this or a similar route, not only Alexander or the Diadochi. That is to say, if it is to be understood as a route at all and not as the description of “the borders of the coming new kingdom of God”.²¹ However, this objection, too, is as old as the late 19th century and was articulated by no less than Stade himself:

Denn es muss zugestanden werden, dass keinerlei Nothwendigkeit vorliegen würde, die Weissagung 9,1–8 in die griechische Zeit zu versetzen, wenn sie uns allein überliefert wäre und nicht schon aus ihrer Abhängigkeit von älteren Weissagungen ihr junges Alter hervorginge. Der Zug eines durch Syrien wider die Städte Phöniciens und Philistäas heranziehenden Heeres würde sich auch aus den Verhältnissen der assyrischen und chaldäischen Zeit erklären.²²

It is – according to Stade – first and foremost due to the “sons of Greece” from 9:13 that a post-333 background for Zech 9 is compelling. As to these בְּנֵי יוֹן, however, it is correctly asserted that Alexander’s campaign did not represent the first appearance of Greek soldiers in the Levant. On the contrary, the region had seen lots of Greek mercenaries as well as the repercussions of the Greco-Persian

¹⁸ Cf. REVENTLOW, Haggai, Sacharja und Maleachi, 88; MEYERS/MEYERS, Zechariah 9–14, 174; REDDIT, Redactional Connectors, 211; idem, Zechariah 9–14, 29; BODA, Book of Zechariah, 35; RISTAU, Reconstructing Jerusalem, 168; more differentiated, with a first layer in the Persian Period and Early Hellenistic reworkings, WÖHRLE, Abschluss, 161; idem, Israel’s Identity, 156.

¹⁹ BONFIGLIO, Archer Imagery, 512.

²⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 515 with figure 2.

²¹ REDDIT, Zechariah 9–14, 38.

²² STADE, Deuterozecharja III, 299. (“It has to be admitted that there would be no necessity to date the prophecy 9:1–8 to the Greek era if it would have been transmitted to us independently and without betraying its young age by means of its dependence of older prophecies. The campaign of an army marching through Syria against the cities of Phoenicia and Philistia would also be explainable from the situation in Assyrian or Chaldean times”).

wars. Curtis makes a case for this setting and refers as a case in point to the “390s: the successful Egyptians now invade Persian Palestine from the Sinai; their Cypriot and Athenian allies occupy the northern coastal plain of Palestine – a Greek invasion of Palestinian territory sixty years before Alexander.”²³ The detailed list of military activities along the Eastern Mediterranean coastline during Persian times provided by Curtis is impressive, and with respect to Zech 9:1–6 one must agree that “[a]lmost any date in the first millennium BCE could suit these geographic terms”²⁴ But some of the military expeditions in question suit the Zecharian roster better than others. As far as I can see, an army marching up from Egypt in combination with a landing operation at “the northern coastal plain” (somewhere between Sidon and Akko?) would suit it less well, not to mention that Damascus would scarcely have been affected by it. With respect to Alexander’s campaign, on the other hand, Willi-Plein has recently illustrated that the line from Zech 9 fits the reconstruction of the various operations of 332 BCE even better than often stated.²⁵ When it comes to 9:13 and the Greeks, one ought to realise that what is talked about is the opposition of “us and them”, the “sons of Zion” as YHWH’s weapons against the “sons of Greece”. This means that Greece is estimated to be a veritable global player and the one and only enemy of relevance at present. This is a role that seems a little bit too big to be filled in by some Greek mercenaries. Within a supposed Persian Era setting, these כְּנִיָּיִן are understandable only on the additional supposition that the author of the paragraph was among the most fervent “Persian loyalists”²⁶. A Hellenistic dating can be sustained without any such unsubstantiated premise.

All in all, I think that although there is good reason to question any overly exact attribution to a certain historical context for Zech 9, the idea that the making of this pericope has something to do with the earthquakes that shook the Ancient Near East in the course of the decline of the Persian empire, should still be regarded as an option – and perhaps not the worst one. When Reddit states, with Zech 9:13 in view, that “[n]othing in the text requires that interpretation [viz. a Hellenistic Dating], however, though it is possible”²⁷ – I would rather turn the tables and state, with a view to Zech 9 as a whole, that nothing in the text requires a Persian Period dating, though it is possible. Hence, the following considerations shall leave it at that and try to avoid the abovementioned trap of a historically biased interpretation. “Prophecy and Hellenism” in Zech 9 therefore will be handled in the subjunctive mode of if-clauses.

²³ CURTIS, *Mas’ot Triptych*, 199.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 197.

²⁵ Cf. WILLI-PLEIN, *Deuterostacharja*, 30–45.

²⁶ CURTIS, *Mas’ot Triptych*, 201.

²⁷ REDDIT, *Zechariah 9–14*, 46.

3. A Diachronic Look at Zech 9

If we are not on totally firm ground concerning the dating of Zech 9, we are on even less firm ground when it comes to the text itself and its translation. The Masoretic version is in some instances very difficult or nearly impossible to translate, and the *Vorlage* of the Septuagint seems to have been a slightly different text in some instances. But even this,²⁸ as along with the question of whether the MT or the LXX represents the oldest reading, is a matter of debate. As is well known, the most important differences between the two versions can be found in 9:9 f. and 9:13: The coming king of 9:9 f. is depicted in a much more active way in the Greek text than he is in Hebrew. Judah is directly addressed in 9:13^{LXX} whereas it is an accusative object in 9:13^{MT}. These two observations led some scholars to the idea that while the (older) MT was speaking of a messianic figure not further identified, the LXX associated him with a concrete historical person: Judah Maccabee²⁹ or his brother Simon.³⁰ If one wants to follow this suggestion, it provides us with a good example for one well-known aspect of “Prophecy and Hellenism”: Prophetic texts are read as directly pointing to the readers’ or translators’ contemporary situation, which by no means can be regarded as a new hermeneutic invention of the Hellenistic era.

But let us go diachronically backwards from this kind of inner-biblical or rather inner-scriptural interpretation by means of translation to the inner-scriptural interpretation which the passage underwent by means of redactional activity like additions and *Fortschreibung*. For even though Zech 9 – or 9:1–10 or 9:1–13 is often treated as a literary unit,³¹ it may be worthwhile to question this view. Of course, several suggestions for the layering of the chapter have been made. Reventlow, for example, operates with three independent pieces in 9:1–8, 9:9–10, 9:11–17.³² Willi-Plein also regards 9:1–8, 9:9–10 as separate small units (with some minor glosses and additions), whereas 9:11–17 is seen as redactional material with v. 11–13, (15, *16a, *17), as relatively the oldest *Fortschreibung* of v. *9–10.³³ Wöhrle, on the other hand, reconstructs a diachronic stratigraphy with 9:1, 14–17* as the oldest piece and 9:2–6, 8*, 11–13 as belonging to one redactional layer and 9:9–10 as the most recent verses of the chapter.³⁴ In general, the main lines of the literary-critical argumentation are clear and well-known. Let the most important observations be summed up once again:

²⁸ Willi-Plein for instance, does not assume a significantly different Hebrew *Vorlage* of the Old Greek but rather a damaged version of the protomasoraic text with respect to Zech 9:9 f., cf. WILLI-PLEIN, Deuteriosacharja, 55.

²⁹ Cf. POLA, Sach 9,9–17^{LXX}, 250 f.; followed by EIDSVAG, Old Greek Translation, 171.

³⁰ Cf. VAN DER KOOIJ, Septuagint of Zechariah, 62 f.

³¹ Cf. as a prominent example, STECK, Abschluß, 73–76; BOSSHARD-NEPUSTIL, Rezeptionen, 428 f.

³² Cf. REVENTLOW, Haggai, Sacharja und Maleachi, 90–100.

³³ Cf. WILLI-PLEIN, Deuteriosacharja, 8. 57. 92.

³⁴ Cf. WÖHRLE, Abschluss, 69–76.

If we take the entire chapter 9 as a literary unit, as it is commonly done, we find a slightly irritating mixture of moods and attitudes regarding the events depicted.

- 1) V. 1–7 are about the fate which several cities are about to suffer by an enemy – or by God himself,³⁵ who
- 2) is mentioned once in the 3rd person singular (v. 4),³⁶ and in another instance speaks himself (v. 7).
- 3) What the eventual fate of the mentioned cities will be, seems to be ambiguous too. Will the Philistines be utterly destroyed (v. 5) – or will there be a remnant with a salvific perspective (v. 6? v. 7)?
- 4) V. 8 makes it clear that God himself will prevent Jerusalem or at least the temple (my house, ביתי)³⁷ from sharing the fate of its neighbouring cities – whereas the famous verses 9–10 speak of a king entering Jerusalem abolishing the weaponry – or having it abolished by YHWH according to LXX – and erecting a worldwide reign of peace.
- 5) This peaceful outlook, however, seems not to be the end of the story, since v. 13–16 speak of the necessity for YHWH's people to be (on the level of the final texts) rescued from an enemy – the already mentioned “sons of Javan”, and this will be done not by the shalom-king of v. 9–10 but by God fighting himself.
- 6) V. 14–16 shift the perspective in more than one way. As already mentioned, now we are told in a 3rd person singular narration what is going to happen, no longer in a 1st person singular speech. Furthermore, talk is no longer of anyone or anything coming from the North, but it is clearly YHWH himself who appears in a theophany – from the South (Teman, v. 14).
- 7) V. 17, enigmatic as it is with its praise of the fineness of the fruits of the land, clearly gives the impression, either entirely or parts of it,³⁸ to be a scribal gloss.

³⁵ The text is opaque in this respect. Tiemeyer and others regard the movement of 9:2–8 as “the mythological march of the theophany of YHWH” (TIEMEYER, *Prophetic Texts*, 275). I would say that that the motif of a theophany is much more obvious in 9:14–17, when YHWH appears from the South (“in the whirlwinds of Teman”, בסערות תימן), and not so obvious in 9:1–8 where something is coming from the North. Willi-Plein is, I think, right, though, when she emphasises that in 9:1–8 there is no talk – at least directly – about a foreign army or a conqueror but of the progress of the word or matter (דבר) of YHWH (cf. WILLI-PLEIN, *Deuteriosacharja*, 24, referring to 9:1).

³⁶ Wöhrle's main source-critical argument is the difference between a speech of the prophet in 9:1–13 and divine speech in 9:14–17. This is an important observation, but v. 4 seems to contradict it. Wöhrle avoids this problem by a conjecture of “behold, the Lord” (הנה אדני) into an (unwitnessed) “behold, I” (הנה אנכי), thus transforming the sentence into a 1st person singular speech of YHWH (cf. WÖHRLE, *Abschluss*, 72, n. 22). V. 5 with the 3rd m. sg. Hiphil הבייש might pose a problem, too, but commonly, the verb form is understood as a Hiphil II with a passive meaning. LXX reads a passive form (ἤσχεθη) accordingly.

³⁷ For the discussion of other interpretations of what “house” might mean, see WILLI-PLEIN, *Deuteriosacharja*, 48.

³⁸ Cf. WILLI-PLEIN, *Deuteriosacharja*, 88.

One may argue that this ambiguous and enigmatic muddle of speakers, agents and envisaged endings are intended by the author as a stylistic equivalent to the confusing times he or she was living through – or one may argue that he or she didn't know how to do it any better. Or one may distinguish several hands in this text. This is the option that I would like to strengthen, along with many colleagues before me.

Where to start? I think that one more important observation should be added to the seven points listed above: Already with v. 10, not only with v. 13, one has come to the original ending of the text, or at least to a caesura. There is a movement from the North to the South. Having reached Jerusalem, it comes to a standstill, because with this destination the “ends of the earth” and thus the entire world is included. Based on this observation, I think that there is some good reason *not* to either separate v. 1–8* from v. 9–10* or to include v. 11–13* in the same literary unit.³⁹

At the same time, within this section 9:1–10*, one can pretty well isolate a voice which describes the ongoing events from an observational – and interpretive – point of view. However, the voice does not speak with a 1st person singular voice of God. Where it does so, in v. 6b–7a, it is obviously an addition⁴⁰ or, more to the point, an addition to an addition: In the context of the salvific perspective for the enigmatic “mamzer” in Ashdod (v. 6a, and, referring to this half-verse and at one time directly connected with it, v. 7b), added secondarily, it adds the purification of the Philistines as a condition, if you will, for their expected final privileged status:

- 6 But a “bastard” (ממזר) shall dwell in Ashdod.
 And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.
 7 And I will take away his bloodguilt from his mouth and his abominations from between his teeth,
 and he too shall be a remnant for our God, and he shall be like a chief in Judah, and Ekron like the Jebusite.

V. 8 does not stand out as prominently as v. 6b–7a. But to my mind, it should also be regarded as an addition. It takes the 1st person singular point of view of God and in so doing it reduces the shalom-king in Jerusalem to a mere puppet. Here, we can already sense the same intention that also lies behind the MT-reading of v. 9 and 10.

Together with these observations on the connection of v. 1–10* and the caesura between v. 10 and v. 11–13 as well as with the diachronic interpretation of v. 6–7 and 8, the main difference between Wöhrle's analysis and my own becomes visible: Whereas Wöhrle regards the 1st person singular speech of YHWH to be the older piece (and therefore includes v. 11–13 into this stratum), I would

³⁹ Pace, among others, WÖHRLE, Abschluss, 69–76.

⁴⁰ Cf., albeit with respect to v. 7 only, WÖHRLE, Abschluss, 72f.

argue the case the other way round. Having v. 6b–7 identified as a secondary addition, the 3rd person narration within v. 1–10* appears to be the basic layer of the chapter. At the same time, any conjecture of the text of v. 4 as Wöhrle carries it out,⁴¹ becomes unnecessary. The 1st person singular of v. 10aα seems to disrupt the coherence of the passage – if one does not want to read with LXX (“he will cut off”, ἐξολεθρεύσει, instead of “I will cut off”) in this one instance for the sake of necessity. But a dubious text-critical decision will not be necessary to undergird the argumentation: Willi-Plein has made it plausible to regard this one third of v. 10 in question, 10aα, as a gloss.⁴²

V. 8, with its attitude of emphasising YHWH’s sovereignty and will to act, fits v. 11–13 much better than 9–10 in their assumed older Septuagint reading. In addition, by taking v. 8 out of the basic layer, a nice antithetical connection between verses 5 and 9 is revealed: The king of Gaza will be taken away, but to daughter Zion her king is about to come.

With these decisions made – and with the verses 1–2, which are not easy to translate, left more or less untouched⁴³ – one gains a basic layer that describes a movement or progression beginning with Damascus and ending in Jerusalem in 9:1–5*, 9–10*. It implies the famous movement from North to South and terminates with a turn to the left which has as its result the coming of the peaceful king to Jerusalem.

Now the time has come to consider the if-clauses mentioned above. If one follows the literary-critical analysis proposed here, one may ask about the way “foreign nations” are regarded in the different layers of the chapter. In the basic layer, the attitude towards “foreign nations,” i. e., those neighbours mentioned by name, is such that their destruction by the unnamed enemy (or by God, cf. v. 4), is understood as the necessary prelude for the coming of the salvific king.⁴⁴

But is this peaceful king who is said to demilitarise Ephraim and Judah and say “shalom” to the nations the same person by whose hand YHWH has devastated all the neighbouring cities, or is it someone else? If we were to assume the former, we would have a scenario that comes very close to the view of Cyrus reflected in the book of Deutero-Isaiah. Alternately, the designation of this king as “humble” or “poor,” (עני, v. 9), points to someone else, even if still not so different from the image of Cyrus in Deutero-Isaiah. I tend to favour this interpretation. The campaign along the coastline is regarded as an action of YHWH himself, executed by means of his instrument, the foreign military leader. This

⁴¹ Cf. WÖHRLE, *Abschluss*, 72, n. 22.

⁴² Cf. WILLI-PLEIN, *Deuteriosacharja*, 56.

⁴³ See the detailed discussion of possible readings in WILLI-PLEIN, *Deuteriosacharja*, 17–18. Willi-Plein reads the nominal clause of v. 1a with a constructus connection of מִשָּׂא דְבָר־יְהוָה as its subject. Furthermore, she regards v. 1b and “Tyre” in v. 2 as glosses (cf. *ibid.*).

⁴⁴ That this “messianic” figure should be imagined as “a new Davidic king” (REDDIT, *Redactional Connectors*, 211, emphasis Bezzel), is nowhere said in the text itself.

will ultimately result in the homecoming of Jerusalem's king. Again, this view is not far from that found within the book of Deutero-Isaiah.

It has often been remarked that the king of v. 9–10 is depicted as a kind of an anti-Alexander:⁴⁵ Be this as it may, – if the segment in v. 1–5 does reflect Alexander's campaign, our basic layer does not regard it as the great catastrophe that drove away the beloved Persian world order.⁴⁶ Rather, it interprets it along the same lines that Deutero-Isaiah looked at the Persian takeover of the Babylonian empire. This turn of the events is seen positively, as governed by God, with a salvific result for Jerusalem, and the whole world. This layer represents an adaptation of the idea of *translatio imperii* of the Persian Period with an eschatological outlook.⁴⁷ Except that the “end of history” is not induced by the Persians and represented by the Persian empire, but initiated by Alexander, and represented by whomever the king of v. 9–10 signifies.

It is only a minor alteration of this concept that is taken in two steps with v. 6b and 7. The salvific perspective is widened, first in opposition to Deut 23:3 (“no bastard [ממזר] shall enter into the congregation of YHWH”). Then, attempting to harmonize it with this passage, the remnant of the Philistines is integrated into the group of those who are saved – after an act of purification is performed.

The salvific perspective changes slightly, however, with the addition of the other verses which articulate YHWH's voice in direct speech: V. 8, (10α), 11–13. Again, we are confronted with major text critical and translation problems in v. 11–12.⁴⁸ But regardless of whether one reads with MT or LXX – in both versions it is clear that a) the addressee (2nd person feminine) is still daughter Zion, as in v. 9; b) there is reference to some former “prisoners” (of hope or of the congregation)⁴⁹ who shall return to, or sit in,⁵⁰ a stronghold to be rescued. The character of Jerusalem as a safe place is now no longer primarily due to the fact that there is a king inside her who says “shalom” (v. 10), but that YHWH himself guarantees the protection of “his house” (v. 8) – suddenly the temple comes into play – and that YHWH will guard it against any ascending or descending army (read with MT).⁵¹ V. 13 takes up the offensive: YHWH himself will defeat – not some ascending and descending army, but a definite enemy, viz., the already mentioned בני יוֹן, the Greeks. Once more, final peace for daughter Zion is in

⁴⁵ Cf. STECK, Abschluß, 36, 73f.; BOSSHARD-NEPUSTIL, Rezeptionen, 428.

⁴⁶ With v. 13 not belonging to the basic layer, 9:1–5, 9–10 does not reveal any Persian loyalist attitude, *pace* CURTIS, *Mas'ot Triptych*, 201.

⁴⁷ For the concept of “*translatio imperii*” cf. KRATZ, *Translatio*, 267–270; WILLI, 1 Chronik, 1,1–10,14, 324.

⁴⁸ Cf. WILLI-PLEIN, *Deuteriosacharja*, 84f.

⁴⁹ MT reads התקרה אסירי, LXX reads δέσμοις συναγωγῆς.

⁵⁰ MT reads שבו, while LXX obviously found a form of the root שׁב and reads καθήσασθε (which represents the imperative שבו).

⁵¹ LXX has no equivalent for the “army” (מצבָה), but knows something of a sentry instead (ἀνάστρημα). The translators may have read מצבָה. The difference is rather marginal.

view. But this time it is not achieved by demilitarising Ephraim and Jerusalem, as in v. 10aβb. To the contrary, now YHWH is using Ephraim, Judah and the sons of Jerusalem themselves as his weapons.

But even this second ending with v. 13 is not yet the final ending. V. 14–16 once more take an external perspective and, once more, all text critical problems notwithstanding, describe the almost certainly final battle in terms of a theophany. Once again, it is about “salvation” (וְהוֹשִׁיעֵם יְהוָה, v. 16). This time, though, the object of God’s salvation will not be the daughter Zion, but “his people” (עַמּוֹ). Of the enemy, nothing remains left at all. They will be totally devoured (v. 15). V. 17, the praise of the quality of the land, may be regarded as an even later scribal gloss on the catchword “soil” (אֲדָמָה) of v. 16.

To sum up: Within Zech 9, I think we can make out four different attitudes against what we usually call “foreign nations”. In a first step, the wave of destruction which is rushing from North to South is understood as an action governed by YHWH himself. The conquering army does not come into view, but the devastation of Judah’s contiguous neighbours to the East and to the North is interpreted as the beginning of what Odil Hannes Steck used to call “Heilswende”,⁵² the salvific turn of history. There is no utterly negative view of the Greeks (if they are in view here). They are YHWH’s tool for bringing about the possibility for the “messianic” king to come to Jerusalem, and the world, at last. This is nothing less than an actualisation of Persian period theology in other terms.

A second step tends to include, to some extent at least, some of the destroyed nations in the congregation, in contrast to Deut 23:3.

However, it seems that the turn which had been brought about by the conquering army did not result in re-establishing a king in Jerusalem. Nor is this king’s peaceful reign extended unto the ends of the earth. By now, the “sons of Greece” (בְּנֵי יוֹן) have become a problem. If v. 8 is to be translated in that sense, there are armies marching up and down in front of Jerusalem instead of everlasting peace. What had been a tool in the hands of YHWH, now has to be defeated itself – by YHWH himself.⁵³ For this writer, or these writers as the case may be, the neighbouring nations need not be mentioned, as in the basic layer, but rather the Greeks. It is tempting, as it has been done before, to hear in this instance an echo of the Wars of the Diadochi.

The last *Fortschreibung* of the chapter, however, transcends the sphere of events that could be identified historically. This theophany, though scarcely a basis for interpretation, seems to transform the traditional theology of history into an eschatological outlook. It is a perspective that bears some features of apocalyptic thinking. It seems as if the hope of a salvific turn of history finally

⁵² For this term which is crucial for the thinking of Steck’s, cf., for example, STECK, Studien, *passim*.

⁵³ With this change, there is a kind of similarity with the emphasis of Isa 63:1–6, by which YHWH states that nobody was with him but his own arm when he smashed the nations.

has been given up. The enemy, no longer named, are neither God's catalyst for the coming of the messianic king nor are they a distinct nation that has to be defeated by God's direct intervention. They have become the typological great enemy that have to be utterly annihilated in the last battle at the eschatological day of YHWH.

Taken together, the development of a theology of history, as it could be described in the course of these four redactional stages of Zech 9, displays some similarities with the development of the Book of Daniel from an eschatological to an apocalyptic perspective.⁵⁴ For this reason alone, it is more than tempting to find in both cases similar views on similar contemporary events expressed with similar theological concepts.

4. Less Firm Ground?

It is clear by a look at more recent publications on the chapter that Zech 9 can no longer be taken as an undisputed basis for defining what "prophecy" in Hellenistic times might have meant. However, contrary to the current trend to understand "Deutero-Zechariah" as part of a book that was written in the (early) Persian period, I would state that the arguments brought forth against Stade's classical dating are not in any way cogent in themselves.

Even if Zech 9 does no longer provide us with firm ground for determining the relationship of "Prophecy and Hellenism", it still can serve as a basis – albeit an unsafe and an unstable one – for a description of how the interrelation between YHWH, Israel and the so-called "foreign nations" was understood in prophetic terms from the 4th century onwards.

Starting with Zech 9, other passages dealing with the Phoenicians and the Philistines would be worth looking at anew. Concretely, this would mean examining Am 1:6–10; Joel 4:4–8; Isa 23; and Ez 26–28. Of course, this has been done before, and in any of these cases a Hellenistic background for at least parts of the texts has been assumed. There is near consensus that both Ez 26–28 and Isa 23 contain at least some material than can only be rationally dated as referring to Alexander's conquering of Tyre.⁵⁵ On the other hand, Joel 4:4–8 and Am 1:9–10 are understood by Jakob Wöhrle as pieces of a framework for the Book of the Twelve in the making which would correspond to Zech 9 (v. 2–6, 8, 11–13 according to his literary-critical analysis of the chapter) and be dated to the late 4th century.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ On this topic, see KRATZ, *Visions*.

⁵⁵ For Ez 26–28 see SAUR, *Tyroszyklus*, 78–79. Saur finds at least small additions referring to Alexander's conquering of the city, mostly in Ez 26 (v. 5b, 8b–12, 14aγ); for respective additions to Isa 23 see BOSSHARD-NEPUSTIL, *Rezeptionen*, 264–267.

⁵⁶ Cf. WÖHRLE, *Abschluss*, 264.

Perhaps the time has come for a re-evaluation of the entire prophetic material concerning Tyre and its dating. However, this must remain a story to be told another time.

5. Oracles Concerning Foreign Nations and Hellenism – Criteria?

At the beginning of this paper I raised the question about criteria that would make it possible to identify “Hellenistic prophetic literature”. A look at Zech 9 has shown that its basic layer, as well as its first additions, are not substantially different in aspects of style or theology from what we know, for example, from Deutero-Isaiah. This is the case apart from the plausibility of dating the respective layers in Zech 9 to early Hellenistic times. There does come a time, however, when prophecy changes into apocalypticism. This change does not come along with Alexander the Great but appears to be a development that took place some time later. As far as determining more closely the particular timeframe, the redaction history of the Book of Daniel might give some point of reference.

In the end, my findings are somehow similar with those of Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer,⁵⁷ at least with respect to the observation that it is not easy to establish unequivocal criteria for designating biblical prophetic texts as “Hellenistic”. The consequences which I would like to draw from these findings are, however, different. With respect to the oracles concerning foreign nations, I would like to encourage a reconsideration of the idea that much more of the material that we have should be understood against a Hellenistic background. Though he did not produce convincing arguments for his radical view, – perhaps Duhm was more in the right in this respect than the three generations after him taught us he was.

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⁵⁷ Cf. TIEMEYER, Prophetic Texts; see also her contribution in the volume at hand.

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