

## THE FLYING SCROLL & THE EPHAH (Zech. 5:1-11)

The psalmist wrote, **Ps. 24:3** Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? **4** He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart. ... **Ps. 5:4** thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. ... **Ps. 34:15** The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous ... **16** The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, *to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* That is what this chapter is about.

There is coming a great judgment when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up (II Peter 3:10) ... **Mt. 24:29** ... sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: **30** And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. ... **Jude 14** ... Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, **15** To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed. ... Until then, **II Tim. 3:13** evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived ... **Mt. 24:12** ... iniquity shall abound ... Before Christ's return, the world will become incredibly more wicked! Life on this earth will reach a climax and then the Lord Jesus will arrive.

Zechariah has been receiving visions concerning the restart of the building of Zerubbabel's temple, and of the restoration of the city and its wall. Great news ... but what about their enemies who plagued them since they returned from Babylon? **Ezra 4:4** the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, **5** And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose ... How could the work be completed if they continued to hound God's people?! ... The wonderful promises in the opening visions are greatly encouraging, but how do we do the work if the enemy hampers our efforts? ... It was a question Jeremiah struggled with too, **Jer. 12:1** Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all

they happy that deal very treacherously? ... and Job, **Job 21:7** Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? ... and the psalmist, ... **Ps. 73:3** I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked ... **12** Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. **13** Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain. And the answer always was that God will deal with the wicked in His own time ... and that is what had to happen before the wall would be rebuilt, the temple rebuilt, and the people settled safely and securely in the restored Jerusalem.

Zechariah lifted his eyes again and saw a flying scroll, - an open roll of parchment, - about thirty feet by fifteen feet. Like the Law of Moses was written on both sides of the tablets (Ex. 32:15), the flying scroll also had writing on both sides (Zech. 5:3). We are not told what was written on the scrolls, but the Jews believe it was the Torah. That is very probable because this was a judgment on sinners by God's Law, **Rom. 1:18** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; **19** Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. ... The flying scroll is proceeding from out of the Holy of Holies, from before the Shekinah, in the Tabernacle. Also, the dimensions of the scroll were the same as the dimensions of the entrance to Solomon's Temple court. This relates to how God is about to judge the world by His holy standards for this flying scroll went over the whole earth (*erets*) quickly, and powerfully, and it would pierce and divide asunder the souls of the ungodly (cf. Heb. 4:12). It also meant God was not judging the ungodly according to their own righteousness, but according to His Word, **Is. 8:20** To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. ... As Jesus said, **Jn. 12:48** He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. ... Judgment upon the whole earth will be on the basis of the Word of God, the flying scroll. The scrolls in Revelation (the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven bowls) similarly indicate the punishment which befalls those who deny God's word and defy His holiness, **Is. 11:4** he

shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

The interpreting angel explained to Zechariah (notice the angel did not ask him, “do you not know what these are”, cf. 4:5,13), **5:3** This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off *Inaqah, wiped out, destroyed* as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. ... This curse is God’s judgment extending throughout the whole earth, and the land of Israel in particular. It prophesies total devastation and destruction, as also in Ezekiel’s vision, **Ezek. 2:9**, lo, a roll of a book was therein; **10** And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.

Specifically, two commandments are referred to for on one side of the flying scroll is written, every one that stealeth shall be cut off, and on the other side is written, every one that sweareth shall be cut off. ... On this large flying scroll, stealing and swearing were displayed, but what about the other eight commandments? The Law had two sides, God wrote His law on one side of the tablet of stone and on the other side He wrote the remainder. There were five laws on one side and five laws on the other side. On one side, the command about swearing falsely is the middle, - the third, - of the five, (**Ex. 20:7** Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain). On the other side, the command about stealing was the middle of the last five (**15** Thou shalt not steal). By referring to the middle one on both sides of God’s law, He is encompassing the whole law. Half of the commandments on one side of the flying scroll define a man’s sin against God and the other half of the commandments on the other side of the flying scroll define a man’s sin against his brother. ... Both sides together represent the whole of God’s Law, and as the scroll went over the face of the whole world, and Israel, the ungodly were being judged and condemned by God’s Word, **4** *I will bring it forth*, saith the LORD of hosts ... An absolute certainty! ... and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my

name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

Next, the interpreting angel spoke with Zechariah again, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth (v.5). ... And again, Zechariah responded, <sup>6</sup> What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth.

An ephah was the largest measure used for calculating grain, or flour, or meat (dry items, not liquids). Here in this seventh vision, it referred to a barrel-type container, which would have held about 7½ - 8 gallons. It was large enough for a smaller person to fit into. And the interpreting angel told Zechariah, this ephah you see going forth, This is their resemblance through all the earth (v.6). ... This ephah is filled to its brim with the sins of Israel, and of the whole earth, - it could not be any fuller! This ephah is the *resemblance* and the *appearance* of how it looks to God. The world, and aspects of Israel, are 'filled to the brim' with their materialism, and their dead religion, and their self-centredness ... and God has decided enough is enough!

Next, the round lid on the barrel was removed, <sup>7</sup> And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead *la lead cover!* and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. <sup>8</sup> And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it *[her down]* into the midst of the ephah *!so she could not get out!*, and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof *(so she definitely could not get out!)*. ... God closed the lid on the barrel-load of evil. All the wickedness is firmly contained, - slammed shut, - with the evil wicked woman fastened inside. In Scripture, wickedness is often described as a woman for it was a woman who first ate the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3), and the false church is described as a woman, the mother of harlots (Rev. 17) ... And here, in the barrel, all the depravity is lumped and kept together.

It is not finished yet though, for Zechariah lifted his eyes again, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they

had wings like the wings of a stork [*very large and very strong and very fast*] and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven (v.9) ... and they flew away with it, containing the wicked woman inside. Zechariah speaks up again, Whither do these bear the ephah? (v.10) ... Where are they taking the ephah, the barrel with the wickedness inside?! And the answer came back, To build it an house [*to make a house, a dwelling*] in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base (v.11). ... They are taking it to Shinar, another name for Babylon, where the Tower of Babel was built, **Gen. 10:8** And Cush begat Nimrod ... **10** And the beginning of his kingdom was *Babel*, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, *in the land of Shinar*. ...

Who were the two women? They were not angels for angels are never referred to as female in Scripture. Who then were these women who had wings like a stork? ... And where did they come out of? It is not clear at first, but wherever they came from, they swooped down and carried away the wicked woman in the barrel to the land of Shinar, Babylon, the place of outright opposition to God (Is. 14:4ff.). ... That gives us a clue as to where they came from ... *Did* they come from God, or were they demons? ... Three women together, - two of them saving the wicked woman in the barrel! Also, they are described as having wings like the wings of a stork (v.9). In Lev. 11:19 and Dt. 14:18, the stork is designated as an unclean animal. What were these two women described as having wings like the wings of a stork doing? ... They lifted the wicked woman incarcerated in the barrel and they carried her away to the vilest and most defiled land of Shinar, Babylon, which is described in the Book of Revelation, as **Rev. 18:2** the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. **3** For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. ... A wicked city where the two women with the wings of the unclean and accursed stork took the evil woman in the barrel ... **Rev. 18:2** the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful *bird*. ... That is where the two women came

from, - they had not come from God, but they had come to rescue one of their own and bring her back to this evil land of Shinar, Babylon.

A helpful comment comes from a Jewish Rabbi Hersh Weinreb. He identifies the popular view of the stork as a big friendly and loving bird, on rooftops and in trees, and is a symbol of childbirth. He quotes though from a famous medieval Jewish rabbi Rashi (1040-1105) who explains while the stork is described as “the kindly one,” the one who does acts of kindness, *the stork is only kind to her own*, ... not kind to all, but kind and generous and protective of members of its own species. ... And this corresponds with Zech. 5:9-11 where the two women with the wings like the wings of a stork swoop down and lifted the barrel to liberate their own to the wicked and ungodly land of Shinar. And there, they will regroup and re-form for they will be set there upon her own base (v.11). God-defying Babylon will be reconstructed and restored and will flourish. In God’s appointed time, His Son will return and completely wipe it out for during His Millennial reign on earth, He will rule with a rod of iron, **Mal. 4:1** behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. ... So, watch this space ... for the eighth and final vision is about to be revealed!