

# Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



## “When It Looks Like They Got Away With It”

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### Devotion and Discussion Questions

**Key Texts (TLV):** Zech. 5:5-11; Deut. 25:13-16; Zech. 3:1-5; 4:6; Ps. 103:11-12; Ezek. 36:25-27; Rev. 17:3-5

A measuring basket does not seem particularly threatening. It was an ordinary household object, something used for measuring grain, conducting business, and distributing the harvest. Yet in Zechariah's seventh vision, the ordinary becomes disturbing. The angel commands the prophet to lift up his eyes and carefully perceive what is coming forth. Zechariah sees an ephah—a measuring basket—and when its heavy lead covering is lifted, a woman is revealed sitting inside. The angel immediately identifies her: *“This is Wickedness!”* (Zech. 5:8). Something that should have contained the abundance of the harvest instead contained wickedness, injustice, idolatry, and everything opposed to the ways of ADONAI.

That imagery speaks to a question we still ask today: What is God doing about the wickedness that seems to persist all around us? We see dishonesty, injustice, idolatry, oppression, and people apparently getting away with things that are wrong. We may even recognize areas of compromise within our own hearts and wonder whether we will ever truly be free from them. Zechariah's vision does not minimize the reality or power of evil, but neither does it leave us without hope. The message is that Wickedness has been seen, exposed, contained, and ultimately carried away. Evil is a force to be taken seriously, but it is not a force beyond the authority of God.

### 1. LIFT UP YOUR EYES AND PERCEIVE THE DISTORTED MEASURE

The angel tells Zechariah, *“Now lift up your eyes and see what is appearing”* (Zech. 5:5). This is the only one of Zechariah's visions in which the prophet is specifically ordered to direct his attention toward the object coming before him. The command is more forceful than simply saying, “He showed me.” Zechariah must look carefully, absorb the scene, and perceive what is happening. Something is coming forth, and God does not want him to look away from it. There are times when we would rather not look at injustice, dishonesty, or spiritual corruption. Yet God sometimes calls us to lift our eyes and see things as they truly are.

What Zechariah sees is an ephah, a common measuring container used for grain. Measurements were closely connected to justice because dishonest merchants could use different-sized containers to cheat their neighbors. ADONAI had commanded Israel, *“You must have a full and honest weight and a full and honest measure... For all who do these things, all who do injustice, are detestable to ADONAI your God”* (Deut. 25:15-16). The oversized, distorted basket pictured the distorted way people had begun to measure things. Their view was out of proportion. Their standard of justice had been twisted. The

vision reminds us that God cares about how we conduct business, speak truth, treat our neighbors, handle money, keep promises, and measure what is right. Injustice is not a small matter to Him.

## **2. WICKEDNESS IS REAL, BUT IT IS CONTAINED**

When the lead covering is lifted, a woman is seen sitting inside the basket. The angel identifies her as Wickedness personified. This may encompass idolatry, economic injustice, dependence upon false gods, and the whole system of evil opposed to God's covenant. To be clear, the vision is NOT making women the source or symbol of evil. In the very next scene, two female figures are used to accomplish God's purpose. The woman in the basket is personification: she represents Wickedness itself, just as Babylon later appears as a woman in Rev. 17. She embodies the idolatry, corruption, and rebellion that seek to establish themselves in opposition to God's kingdom.

As soon as the covering is lifted, Wickedness appears to struggle to escape. The angel must throw her back into the middle of the basket and cast the heavy lead weight over its opening. The scene is forceful because evil is not harmless. It seeks room to move, spread, corrupt, and dominate. Nevertheless, Wickedness proves powerless before the messenger of ADONAI. She is forced back into the basket and held in strict confinement. The vision therefore gives us two truths that must remain together: evil is serious, but evil is limited. We should never treat sin casually, but neither should we imagine that darkness is equal to God. Wickedness may resist, but it cannot escape the boundaries God places upon it.

## **3. BY HIS RUACH AND COVENANT LOVE, GOD CARRIES WICKEDNESS AWAY**

Zechariah then sees two winged female figures emerging with wind in their wings. Their wings are compared to the wings of a stork. The stork was considered an unclean bird under the Torah, making it an appropriate creature to carry the load called Wickedness. Yet there is also a beautiful wordplay in the Hebrew. The word for stork, *chasidah*, is related to the idea of *chesed*—faithful, tender, covenant love. The stork received its name because of its reputation for tenderly caring for its young. The wings carrying Wickedness away are therefore not merely powerful wings; they are wings that remind us of the faithful love of God for His people.

The wind—the *ruach*—is in their wings. Wickedness is not removed by human valor, political strength, religious effort, or natural power. The imagery takes us back to the word ADONAI gave Zerubbabel: "*Not by might, nor by power, but by My Ruach!*" (Zech. 4:6). The basket is carried to Shinar, the ancient land of Babylon, the symbolic home of rebellion against God. ADONAI is not approving idolatry in Babylon. Rather, He is expunging Wickedness from the land and sending it back to the place where it belongs. Wickedness does not belong among God's covenant people. It does not belong in the land where He has promised to dwell. By His Ruach and because of His covenant faithfulness, God Himself removes it.

## CONCLUSION

This seventh vision is another of the good and comforting words promised at the beginning of Zechariah. If we are concerned about the persistence of evil in the community, in the world, or within the individual heart, here is God's answer: He sees it, He exposes it, He restrains it, and He will remove it. Zechariah's fourth vision showed Joshua's filthy garments being removed and replaced with clean festival garments. Now this vision shows Wickedness itself being taken away. Evil has its systems, its worshipers, and its place of operation, but it remains firmly within the power and authority of ADONAI.

Perhaps today the Lord is calling you to lift up your eyes and perceive what has been hiding in your own basket. There may be a distorted measure, a dishonest practice, a hidden idol, an unhealthy dependence, a secret compromise, or an injustice you have tolerated because it seemed ordinary. Do not merely push it deeper into the basket and attempt to manage it. Bring it honestly before Messiah Yeshua. Confess it, turn from it, and ask Him to remove what does not belong in the life where He desires to dwell. The same covenant-faithful God who removed Joshua's filthy garments can cleanse you. The same Ruach who carried Wickedness away can break its hold over your life. Come to Him without hiding, and trust that what you cannot remove by might or power, He can carry away by His *Ruach*.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the angel specifically commanded Zechariah to lift up his eyes and carefully perceive what was coming forth?
2. What does the measuring basket teach us about the relationship between worship, economic honesty, justice, and the way we treat our neighbors?
3. Are there any areas of your life in which your "measure" may have become distorted—such as your handling of money, truth, relationships, commitments, or other people?
4. Is there a sin, compromise, resentment, or unhealthy dependence that you have been trying to contain or manage rather than allowing ADONAI to remove it?
5. How should the knowledge that evil is serious but still firmly under God's authority affect the way we respond to injustice and wickedness in the world?

## CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, give us the courage to lift up our eyes and see what You are revealing. Expose every distorted measure, hidden idol, dishonest practice, and place of compromise within us. Forgive us for the ways we have tolerated what is contrary to Your character. Thank You that Wickedness is not beyond Your authority and that darkness cannot escape the boundaries You establish. Through Messiah Yeshua, cleanse us and remove our guilt. By Your Ruach, carry away everything that does not belong in a life devoted to You. Fill the empty places with Your presence, Your truth, Your justice, and Your covenant love. Make us a people among whom You are pleased to dwell.

*B'Shem Yeshua*, In the name of Yeshua, amen.