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# THE SHEEP MERCHANTS OF ZECHARIAH 11

THOMAS J. FINLEY

*The MT of Zech 11:7 has a phrase which has been translated "hence the afflicted of the flock" (NASB). A nearly identical sequence of consonants occurs in v 11 and has been read, "thus the afflicted of the flock." A survey of the versions and various interpretations shows a great deal of confusion over what the Hebrew actually meant. Further analysis reveals that the grammatical structure of both passages is unique in Hebrew. Therefore, an examination is made of a variant in the LXX which points to the phrase, "sheep merchants," in both passages. It is shown how the LXX gives the more difficult reading. Finally, analysis of the context shows that the LXX reading fits better than that of the MT.*

\* \* \*

**Z**ECHARIAH 11 is one of the more difficult passages of a sometimes enigmatic book. The chapter has been challenging to many because of its high demands on the interpreter's abilities in hermeneutics, language skills, and command of other prophetic passages. Modern commentators have even found a knowledge of Sumerian literature helpful for a new insight on the familiar "thirty shekels of silver."<sup>1</sup>

No less help has been found through the ancient versions. The debate still rages concerning the Greek and Syriac translations of the Hebrew term יצר,<sup>2</sup> but a more far-reaching issue which involves the versions is the phrase הַצֹּאֵן עֲנִיִּי לֶכֶן in v 7 and הַצֹּאֵן עֲנִיִּי כֵן in v 11.

<sup>1</sup>The phrase occurs in the Sumerian "The Curse of Agade" as a sign of contempt (*ANET* [3rd ed.; Princeton: Princeton University, 1969] 648, line 104). See E. Reiner, "Thirty Pieces of Silver," *Essays in Memory of E. A. Speiser* (ed. W. W. Hallo; AOS 53; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1968) 186-90.

<sup>2</sup>For a good summary of the three main views with reference to other literature see Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Tyndale OT Commentaries; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1972) 185-86.

There are two conflicting interpretations of these phrases which may be illustrated by the *New American Standard Bible* (NASB) rendition compared with that of the RSV:

*NASB*: v 7—"hence the afflicted of the flock"  
v 11—"thus the afflicted of the flock"

*RSV*: v 7—"for those who trafficked in the sheep"  
v 11 "the traffickers in the sheep"

The RSV interpretation is listed in the margin of the NASB as "another reading."

Obviously, the two renderings are widely divergent. In the one case the flock itself is being discussed, while in the other the subject is those who control the flock through merchandising. Surely a correct interpretation of the passage must hinge on the right decision about this issue.

Actually, the difference between the readings depends on a variant found only in the LXX. The Greek translator, apparently baffled by the Hebrew, simply transliterated the crucial portions:

v 7—εἰς τὴν Χαναανῖτιν ("for the Canaanites")  
v 11—οἱ Χαναανῖται τὰ πρόβατα ("the Canaanites [shall know] the sheep").<sup>3</sup>

If the words of the MT are divided differently, it is possible to derive the LXX reading:

v 7—(הצאן) לכנעניי  
v 11—הצאן כנעניי

The crucial point for the RSV interpretation (adopted also by the NEV and the JB, among others) is that the term "Canaanite" can bear the meaning "merchant." The BDB lexicon lists the meaning "merchant" under both  $\text{כַּנְעָנִי}$  (Ezek 16:29; 17:4; Zeph 1:11) and  $\text{כְּנַעְנִי}$  (Prov 31:24; Zech 14:21). The development is explained, "because Canaanites, esp. Phoenicians, were traders."<sup>4</sup> A. Haldar, writing on "Canaanites" in the *IDB*, adds Isa 23:8 and Hos 12:8 (Eng. v 7). Additionally, he cites the inscription of Amenophis II, which contains the expression *kyn'n.w* in close connection with the *maryana*, "the Hurrian military aristocracy." Haldar concludes, "If *kny'n.w* is the

<sup>3</sup>There is some variation within the Greek manuscripts. See the edition by J. Ziegler for details (*Septuaginta* [vol. 13; Duodecim prophetae; 2d ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967] 315-16).

<sup>4</sup>BDB (reprinted: Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) 488.

designation of a social group, it would most likely be the class of merchants."<sup>5</sup>

Many recent commentators adopt the LXX reading and interpret the term "Canaanite" as "merchant." Rudolph notes that the MT is "meaningless," as a comparison with the Syriac, Vg, and possibly the Targum shows, and that the Greek points to the correct solution. He explains the development of the MT form as due to the negative attitude toward the "Canaanite" in Zech 14:21.<sup>6</sup> According to Joyce Baldwin, the reading "has found general acceptance."<sup>7</sup>

Yet there are some moderns who still prefer the MT. Among them are Feinberg,<sup>8</sup> Unger,<sup>9</sup> and Leupold.<sup>10</sup> Unger has the strongest statement against the LXX reading: "But this reading, besides being linguistically weak, glibly avoiding a difficult but correct reading, is colorless in its meaning. . . ."<sup>11</sup>

The issue is still open and a detailed examination of the problem is imperative. In what follows I hope to raise some important issues that to my knowledge have not been considered previously and to discuss the different implications of the two readings.

#### THE MT

Of first consideration is the MT. Can the passage in question be interpreted in a manner which is exegetically sound? Is the judgment of David Baron true? "But the Hebrew text in this place [11:7 specifically though later applied to 11:11] needs no emendation or alteration when properly understood."<sup>12</sup> Two lines of evidence will be examined. First, what are the various ways in which the verses have been interpreted? Second, is the reading of the MT grammatically feasible?

#### *The poor of the flock*

The expression which is common to both passages, עֲנִיֵּי הַצֹּאֵן, is the easiest to explain. Wherever the MT has been followed, the phrase has been taken to mean "the poor (ones) of the flock." The

<sup>5</sup>Vol. 1 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962) 494.

<sup>6</sup>W. Rudolph, *Haggai -Sacharja 1-8—Sacharja 9-14—Maleachi* (KAT 13:4; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1976) 202.

<sup>7</sup>*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 180.

<sup>8</sup>*God Remembers: A Study of Zechariah* (3rd ed.; Portland: Multnomah, 1977) 204-5.

<sup>9</sup>*Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963) 194.

<sup>10</sup>*Exposition of Zechariah* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1956) 210.

<sup>11</sup>*Zechariah*, 194.

<sup>12</sup>*The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1919) 391, n. 2.

only controversy is whether the entire flock or only a portion of it is meant. According to the former view, the use of the adjective in construct is for the superlative.<sup>13</sup> Wright translates "the most miserable flock" and says, "It is a description not merely of a certain portion of the sheep, but of the flock in general."<sup>14</sup> The Targum on v 11 points toward the other interpretation: "And they knew, so the humble ones, the poor of the people who had done my will, that it was the word of the LORD."<sup>15</sup> A note in *The New Scofield Reference Bible* gives a similar interpretation:

(11:11) The "poor of the flock" i.e. the "remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11:5), are those Jews who did not wait for the manifestation of Christ in glory but believed on Him at His first coming and subsequently. Of them it is said that they "waited upon me," and "knew."<sup>16</sup>

In other words, the flock as a whole rejected the shepherd's ministry, but "the poor (ones) of the flock" accepted him.

It is not necessary to decide the issue here. What is important, however, is that the main part of the phrase in question in both verses has a meaning which is obvious to anyone familiar with Hebrew. Yet, the very naturalness of the expression could be deceptive. The easy translation of עֲנִי הַצֹּאֵן could obscure any difficulty with the conjunctions לְכֵן and כֵּן which are used.

### *The particle לְכֵן*

First we will treat לְכֵן of v 7. At least four different interpretations have been given. These may be classified as asseverative, conjunctive, prepositional, and pronominal. The asseverative interpretation is known from David Kimchi's commentary, which was written about 1300. Kimchi comments: "'*And I will feed truly the poor of the flock,*' לְכֵן—In truth the poor of the flock I found them, when I took them to feed."<sup>17</sup> Henderson, a commentator of the last century, adopts this view also. He takes the ל as being "redundant" and derives כֵּן from the Arabic *kwn* ("to be"), which "implies reality,

<sup>13</sup>See GKC (2d Eng. ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1910) §133g, h.

<sup>14</sup>C. H. H. Wright, *Zechariah and His Prophecies* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1879; reprinted, Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1980) 325.

<sup>15</sup>My translation from A. Sperber (ed.), *The Bible in Aramaic* (vol. 3, The Latter Prophets according to Targum Jonathon; Leiden: Brill, 1962).

<sup>16</sup>New York: Oxford University, 1967.

<sup>17</sup>A. M'Caul (translator), *Rabbi David Kimchi's Commentary upon the Prophecies of Zechariah* (London: James Duncan, 1837) 121.

*certainty*, or the like, but admits of being variously rendered, according to the context in which it is found."<sup>18</sup> Taken with the ל the meaning would be "with respect to truth, i.e., truly."<sup>19</sup> The KB lexicon gives the meaning *fürwahr* or *wohlan* ("truly," "in truth") for לְכֵן in Judg 8:7 and 1 Sam 28:2. A cross reference listed in KB suggests a connection with a possible, though "*sehr fraglich*," affirmative נָלָה.<sup>20</sup> The BDB lexicon connects these passages with an idiom "in conversation, in reply to an objection, to state the ground upon which the answer is made."<sup>21</sup> Additional examples cited are Gen 4:15; 30:15; Judg 11:8; 1 Kgs 22:19; and Job 20:2. None of these examples have a structure which is similar to Zech 11:7. Wright may be too strong when he says that the word לְכֵן "never elsewhere" has the meaning "truly,"<sup>22</sup> but the usage would be unique for a passage with the overall structure of Zech 11:7.

Another explanation takes לְכֵן as a conjunction which introduces a closer specification of the "flock of slaughter." It is reflected in the NASB translation: "So I pastured the flock *doomed* to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock." Wright describes the reason for the use of לְכֵן: "The latter designation [עֲנִי הַצֹּאן] expresses that which is a logical deduction from the very name just given to them, אֶת-צֹאן הַרְגָה; for because they were 'a flock of slaughter,' 'slaughtered' and not 'fed' by their shepherds, therefore they were 'the most miserable flock.'"<sup>23</sup>

Jerome's Vg takes לְכֵן as a conjunction which evidently refers back to vv 5 and 6. Then the "poor of the flock" is rendered as a vocative: *et pascam pecus occisionis propter hoc o pauperes gregis*.<sup>24</sup> The thought is, "and I will pasture the flock of slaughter; on account of this [that is, on account of the wretched conditions described in vv 5 and 6] O poor ones of the flock." Such a use of conjunctive לְכֵן would be without precedent.

A factor which has been overlooked by many is the syntactic structure of the first half of v 7. If לְכֵן is a conjunction, then it joins a clause with a verb to a construct noun phrase. A check of Mandelkern's concordance<sup>25</sup> convinced me that such a case would be unique.

<sup>18</sup>E. Henderson, *The Book of the Twelve Minor Prophets* (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1845) 421.

<sup>19</sup>Henderson, *The Twelve*, 421.

<sup>20</sup>Pp. 466, 482.

<sup>21</sup>P. 487.

<sup>22</sup>*Zechariah*, 578.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.* See also Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 204.

<sup>24</sup>*Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* (ed. R. Weber and others; vol. 2; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969).

<sup>25</sup>S. Mandelkern, *Veteris Testamenti Concordantiae; Hebraicae atque Chaldaicae* (revised by F. Margolis; Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1977; [reprint of 1925 edition]).

The verses that Keil cites as parallels for his rendering "therewith" (Isa 26:14; 61:7; Jer 2:33)<sup>26</sup> are not really parallel syntactically. The closest comparison I could find is the frequent expression לְכֵן נֵאָם יְהוָה. The term נֵאָם is a noun ("utterance"), but the quotation of Yahweh which follows is to be taken as the predicate. Another possibility is to take 11:7 as elliptical: "therefore (I fed) the poor of the flock." But there are no other examples of לְכֵן introducing a clause with ellipsis of a verb (or of a nominal predicate).

A third way in which לְכֵן has been translated in v 7 is as a preposition. The particle לְכֵן cannot be used as a preposition, but despite this the Peshiṭta translated: "And I shepherded the small flock for the sake of [*meṭul*] the assembly of the flock."<sup>27</sup> The form *meṭul* is usually combined with a demonstrative or the particle *dē* when it translates לְכֵן.

Some editions of the Rabbinic Bible have a notation in the *Masora parva* that לְכֵן is a feminine word (לשון נקבה).<sup>28</sup> The notation is not in the manuscript which is the basis for BHS. According to this interpretation the term is not a conjunction but the preposition ל with a second feminine plural suffix. The result is that "the poor of the flock" are addressed directly (as also in the Vg). The KJV apparently followed a similar tradition: "And I will feed the flock of slaughter, *even* you, O poor of the flock." This translation ignores the preposition completely, however. There is also a grammatical problem with this view. The vocative noun is a construct phrase of which the governing noun is masculine plural. Therefore there would not be proper agreement with לְכֵן as preposition plus feminine pronominal suffix.

### The particle כֵּן

The various translations that have been given of v 7 suggest a certain amount of confusion. For v 11 the possibilities are more limited. The particle כֵּן can mean only "so" or "thus" in the present context. It connects the act of breaking the first staff with the realization that there was some relationship to "the word of the LORD." The Syriac does not translate כֵּן; otherwise there is no hint of any difficulty that the versions (other than the LXX) had with the passage. Perhaps the unusual word order and the possibility for the

<sup>26</sup> *Minor Prophets* (Commentary on the OT in 10 Volumes by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, 10; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 [reprint]) 361.

<sup>27</sup> My translation from *The Old Testament in Syriac According to the Peshiṭta Version* (Part 3, fasc. 4, Dodekapropheton—Daniel—Bel-Draco; Leiden: Brill, 1980).

<sup>28</sup> For example, מְקִרְאוֹת גְּדוּלוֹת (vol. 10, יְחֻזְקָאֵל תְּרִי עֶשֶׂר; New York: Pardes, 1951).

conjunction *w* to function in the same sense as Hebrew  $\text{וְ}$  led the translator of the Syriac to omit any equivalent rendering.

It is the unusual word order (the Hebrew is literally, "and they knew, thus the poor of the flock") that is, however, crucial to the problem. The term  $\text{וְ}$  can function in one of two ways. It may serve as a constituent of a clause, usually as the object. An example is a clause of the type:  $\text{וַיַּעַשׂ יַעֲקֹב כֵּן}$  ("and Jacob did so." [Gen 39:28]). This cannot be the function of  $\text{וְ}$  in Zech 11:11. If it were, the objective clause which follows ("that it was the word of Yahweh") would have to clarify the content of  $\text{וְ}$ : "And they knew so, that it was the word of Yahweh."<sup>29</sup> However, in this usage of  $\text{וְ}$ , the particle refers back to something mentioned or implied previously in the context, not forward. In some cases the reference can be both backward and forward, but never forward only (see Isa 20:2; Ezek 12:7).

The second function of  $\text{וְ}$  is as a conjunction meaning "so" or "thus." But wherever  $\text{וְ}$  has this function it is always the first word in the clause, though it may be preceded by the conjunction  $\text{וְ}$ . In other words, the structure of  $\text{וְיִרְעֵי כֵן}$  points to the meaning of  $\text{וְ}$  as an object, not as a conjunction.

Only two passages might be interpreted as exceptions to this pattern, and both have the verb "to be" as the predicate. They are Exod 10:10 and Amos 5:14, and in both cases the NASB translated  $\text{וְ}$  as a conjunction introducing the verb which it follows:

Exod 10:10  $\text{יְהִי כֵן יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם}$

Thus may the LORD be with you.

Amos 5:14  $\text{וְיְהִי כֵן יְהוָה . . . אִתְּכֶם כְּאֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתֶּם}$

And thus may the LORD . . . be with you, Just as you have said!

An alternate translation of Exod 10:10 is given by Keil and Delitzsch, "Be it so; Jehovah be with you. . ."<sup>30</sup> In this case  $\text{וְ}$  functions as a clause constituent and points back to Moses' statement in v 9. The vacillation on the part of Pharaoh then becomes clear. First, he tells Moses to go and worship Yahweh, but he wants to know who will be going. Moses then says that everyone will go. To this Pharaoh at first assents ("Be it so"), but on reflection he changes his mind ("Not so[!] Go then, you men, and serve Jehovah").<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Cf. the reading by W. H. Lowe, "And they knew that it was so [viz.] that, &c." (*The Hebrew Student's Commentary on Zechariah* [London: MacMillan, 1882] 100).

<sup>30</sup>*The Pentateuch* (Commentary on the OT in Ten Volumes, 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973 [reprint]) 494-95.

<sup>31</sup>Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 495; translation theirs.



Similar constructions with the verb *היה* are frequent (Gen 1:7, 9, 11, 15, 24, 30; Exod 10:14; Judg 6:38; 2 Kgs 7:20; 15:12; 2 Chr 1:12). The Vg is similar to the NASB rendering (*sic Dominus sit vobiscum*), while the LXX and Syriac translate in the same manner as Keil and Delitzsch. The latter translation seems superior because it makes a better connection with v 9 and because it follows the normal word order rule.

Amos 5:14 has been translated in two ways which differ from the NASB. The NEB and JB take *כֵּן* as an adverb:

*NEB:* that the LORD . . . may be firmly on your side.

*JB:* and that Yahweh . . . may really be with you.

Such a rendering finds some support from the KB lexicon, which classifies *כֵּן* into two entries, one of which can have the meanings "fest dastehend," "richtig," or "wahr." Against it is the *כִּאֲשֶׁר* which follows, implying "so . . . just as you say."

Wolff interprets the portion *יְהוָה אִתְּכֶם* . . . as a direct quotation of a saying of assurance used in battle. His rendering of the entire verse is as follows: "Seek good, and not evil, that you may stay alive and (that) it may be so—'Yahweh [God of Hosts] is with you!'—just as you say."<sup>32</sup> Grammatically and contextually his suggestion makes good sense.

No certain examples of *כֵּן* as a conjunction with the verb before it occur in Biblical Hebrew. The construction *וַיֵּדְעוּ כֵּן* most naturally means "and they knew thus," not "and thus they knew." The MT of Zech 11:7 has a reading which is difficult to interpret and which would be grammatically unique. At 11:11 a reading which contains the very same consonants save the initial *ל* is also unique in its grammatical structure. Surely there is justification for looking to the LXX reading for any help it might offer.

#### THE LXX

For *לְכֵן עָנִי הַצֹּאֵן* in v 7 the Greek has *εἰς τὴν Χαναανῖτιν*. The translator was obviously baffled by the text. The expression "into the Canaanite (land)" presupposes a text with *כֵּן* joined to the following word. The omission of *הַצֹּאֵן* may be due to the translator's lack of understanding of the term "Canaanite." It was inconceivable to him that the shepherd would have done his work "for the Canaanites of the sheep." So he saw a place-name instead. Later hands made the reference to the "land" of Canaan more explicit by the addition of the

<sup>32</sup>H. W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977) 231. The square brackets are his as he takes the expression "God of Hosts" as a later addition.

word  $\gamma\eta\nu$ . The LXX translators were not familiar with the interpretation "merchant" for  $\text{כַּנְעָנִי}$ . For all of the references listed above in this connection the translator either ignored the term (Isa 23:8; Ezek 16:29) or transliterated. In one passage (Job 40:30 [Eng. 41:6]) it was interpreted as "Phoenicians" ( $\Phi\omicron\iota\nu\iota\kappa\omega\nu$ ).

In v 11 people are clearly in view, so the Greek translator used the term  $\chi\alpha\nu\alpha\nu\alpha\iota\omicron\iota$  ("Canaanites"), reflecting a *Vorlage* of  $\text{כַּנְעָנִי}$ .<sup>33</sup> But once again the odious "Canaanites of the flock" was avoided: "And the Canaanites shall know the guarded flock, because it is the word of the Lord." In order to arrive at this reading it was necessary to delete  $\text{אֲנִי}$  ("me") and read a construct form as absolute. Possibly  $\text{אֲנִי}$  was read as  $\text{אֵן}$  for the direct object, though the word order would be entirely against it.

T. Jansma suggested that the Greek *Vorlage* might have been written with a continuous script with no final letters.<sup>34</sup> That the script had no final forms seems possible, but it is unlikely that it was without word divisions. Word dividers are attested already in Ugaritic texts, and various means of word division are attested throughout the history of Northwest Semitic writing. For some inscriptions, such as those of Sefire,<sup>35</sup> continuous script was used. But a Hebrew Biblical manuscript of the second or third century B.C. would surely have had some form of word division. The Qumran texts contain extra space between words.

If there was liberty to divide the words it is unlikely that the Greek translator would have had such difficulty with the text. It is often stated that the more difficult textual variant is to be preferred. Unger implies that this rule supports the MT,<sup>36</sup> but the opposite is true. Zech 14:21 states that in the future day when God dwells among men as king there will be no more "Canaanite" in the Temple. So how could it be that the prophet envisions the work of the good shepherd as being "for the Canaanites" or that the "Canaanites" would recognize God's word through the prophet? How much more appropriate if those concepts would be ascribed to "the poor of the

<sup>33</sup>The spelling of the gentile plural alternates between *-im* and *-iyim*. The latter spelling occurs in  $\text{אֲנִי כַנְעָנִי}$  (Exod 3:18). Sometimes the *Ketib* has the consonants for the spelling *\*-iyim*, but the *Qere* reads *-iyim* ( $\text{אֲנִי כַנְעָנִי}$ , Esth 4:7). I was unable to locate any examples of a gentile in construct. This is not unusual, considering that gentiles are not common and are adjectives. However, they often take the article, and the form  $\text{הַכַּנְעָנִיִּם}$  ("her merchants," Isa 23:8) has a pronoun suffix.

<sup>34</sup>"Inquiry into the Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions of Zechariah ix-xiv," *OTS* 7 (1950) 100.

<sup>35</sup>See S. Segert, *Altaramäische Grammatik* (Leipzig: VEB Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1975) 58.

<sup>36</sup>*Zechariah*, 194.

flock"? The term "poor of the flock" is not attested elsewhere, but the word "poor" is coupled with "people" (Isa 10:2; 14:32; Ps 72:4). In a manuscript without final forms it would have been a simple, unconscious process for the words to be divided wrongly in one verse and then influence the other verse by assimilation. The reverse process of changing the Masoretic reading to the Greek reading seems very difficult to accept.

Both the MT and LXX readings can be traced back to approximately contemporary periods. The MT is supported by all the other ancient versions and is represented in a fragment of a Qumran commentary on Isaiah (4Q163 21). The latter contains parts of two lines quoted from Zech 11:11 and parts of Isa 30:1-5. The editor gives the preserved part of line 7 as כן עניי הצואן ה. From the photograph it is clear that the first two words are indeed כן עניי with a final *nun* and a blank space for a word division.<sup>37</sup>

#### THE CONTEXT OF ZECH 11:4-17

One final issue is the way in which the LXX reading fits into the overall context of Zech 11:4-17. The passage is best described as an allegory in which the prophet is first commanded to represent a shepherd who takes positive action on behalf of his suffering flock.<sup>38</sup> After his rejection he is given a new command to represent a "foolish" or "useless" (אִלִּים) shepherd.

The question of the role of the sheep dealers in this passage is interrelated with the role of the other participants. These include Yahweh, the prophet, and the flock. Also of great significance is the relation of Zech 11:4-17 to the rest of Zech 9-14. That is a broader contextual question, and it will be treated first.

Zech 9-14 has an obvious division into two "burdens" or "oracles" (נְשִׂאֵי).<sup>39</sup> The first burden consists of chaps 9-11. Within these limits chap 11 is clearly distinct from 9-10. There is uncertainty about the reference of 11:1-3, some taking it as a conclusion<sup>40</sup> and others as an introduction.<sup>41</sup> Perhaps the important elements of both views can be maintained by calling it transitional.

<sup>37</sup>J. M. Allegro, *Qumrân Cave 4: I (4Q 158-4Q 186)* (DJD 5; Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), pl. 8.

<sup>38</sup>M. Rehm compares the form to Jer 25:15-29 ("Die Hirtenallegorie Zach 11, 4-14," *BZ* 4 [1960] 186). Unger (*Zechariah*, 191) takes it as a symbolic action which was actually carried out; cf. M. Saebø, *Sacharja 9-14: Untersuchungen von Text und Form* (WMANT 34; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1969) 234-52.

<sup>39</sup>I take the term in the negative sense (cf. P. A. H. deBoer, "An Inquiry into the Meaning of the Term נְשִׂאֵי," *OTS* 5 [1948] 197-214).

<sup>40</sup>See Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 177-79; Rudolph, *Sacharja 9-14*, 199-200.

<sup>41</sup>See Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 197-200.

In relation to Israel, chaps 9-10 have a positive tone, while chap 11 is quite negative. The first section can be divided as follows:

1. Judgment on Israel's neighbors (9:1-8)
2. Coming of Israel's king to Jerusalem (9:9-10)
3. Promise of help in battle and other blessings for Israel (9:11-10:12).

After all of these positive assertions it is astonishing to find Israel described as a "flock of slaughter" concerning which Yahweh says, "I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land."

Chaps 12-14 form the second burden. It contains both positive and negative elements dispersed throughout, but there is a significant contrast with the first burden. The emphasis on the entire nation in the latter is unmistakable. The following phrases will illustrate the point:

1. all the tribes of Israel (9:1)
2. Ephraim . . . [and] Jerusalem (9:10)
3. Judah . . . [and] Ephraim (9:13)
4. the house of Judah and . . . the house of Joseph (10:6)
5. the brotherhood between Judah and Israel (11:14)

Therefore it is significant that the second burden is phrased entirely in terms of "Jerusalem," "Judah," or "the house of David." The city of Jerusalem is especially prominent in chaps 12 and 14. Yet the title of the whole section is, "the burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel" (12:1).

The reason for the different way in which Israel is viewed in the second burden must be related to the breaking of the second staff in the vision of chap 11. The result of that action was the breaking of "the brotherhood between Judah and Israel." From that point to the end of the book the northern tribes are never mentioned again, except for a possible indirect reference in the term "Israel" in 12:1. It is as though after the events of chap 11 all of the future hopes of the nation are centered on Judah and Jerusalem.

There is another prominent difference between the two burdens. In the second burden there is an emphasis on spiritual cleansing which is entirely absent from the first. Both sections describe divine deliverance of the people in battle, but in the second part there is always movement towards a climax of spiritual cleansing. The following passages illustrate this point:

1. In that day a fountain will be opened . . . for sin and for iniquity (13:1).

2. I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land (13:2).
3. I will bring the third part through fire (13:9).<sup>42</sup>
4. There will be no more curse (14:11).
5. There will be on the bells of the horses, "Holy to Yahweh" (14:20).

The need for this cleansing also hinges on the events of chap 11. Chaps 9-10 have a positive tone of blessing for the whole nation. Chap 11 totally reverses the situation and puts Yahweh in direct conflict with his people. The remainder of the book describes the restoration of the broken relationship, with an emphasis on the role of Judah and Jerusalem in that restoration. Surely chap 11 is pivotal to Zech 9-14.

Returning to the prophetic narrative of 11:4-17, the role of the participants will be examined now. A very prominent role is taken by Yahweh himself. He directs Zechariah<sup>43</sup> to perform the symbolic actions. First the prophet is commanded to "tend the flock of slaughter." Later Yahweh tells him to cast the money paid as wages "to the potter."<sup>44</sup> The last command is for Zechariah to "take again . . . the equipment of a useless shepherd." It is clear that Yahweh is directing the entire course of events.

It is also Yahweh who introduces the term "flock of slaughter" and gives an elaborate description of it with reference to those who are using the flock for their own selfish purposes (v 5). Also it is his description of the wages as "that magnificent price at which I was valued by them" which demonstrates that the sum was ultimately an evaluation of Yahweh.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, there are two prophecies which Zechariah quotes as the direct words of Yahweh. One of these is vv 16-17 where Yahweh speaks first of a future shepherd who will not care for the flock and then curses him. It is interesting that though the prophet is commanded to represent this second shepherd, nothing is stated concerning how he actually carried it out.

<sup>42</sup>The fact that the section 13:7-9 speaks of the purification of Israel by fire argues against relocating it at the end of chap. 11 as is advocated by, for example, Rudolph (*Sacharja 9-14*, 213-15). Even the NEB rearranges the text, but the evidence is subjective.

<sup>43</sup>It is assumed that Zechariah is responsible for both chaps 1-8 and 9-14. See Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 66-70. Saebø argues for the possibility that the "I" of Zech 11:4-17 may in fact be the Zechariah of chaps 1-8, though only in the sense of an original "kernel" which has undergone later accretions (*Sacharja 9-14*, 252).

<sup>44</sup>Cf. n. 2 above.

<sup>45</sup>There is no external evidence for changing the word  $\text{ׁוָיָחֵיִךְ}$  ("I was valued") to  $\text{ׁוָיָחֵיִכֶם}$  ("you [the shepherd] were valued") as advocated by the apparatus of BHS.

The other prophecy is in v 6, and it is so important that I will discuss it in some detail. Many have taken it to refer to the foreign nations, translating  $\text{יְשָׁבְי הָאָרֶץ}$  as "inhabitants of the earth."<sup>46</sup> If so, the verse is completely extraneous to its context and there would seem to be some force to the argument by many that it is a later insertion.<sup>47</sup> Rather the term should be translated "inhabitants of the land" in reference to "the flock of slaughter" or perhaps even to the flock in addition to the "buyers," "sellers," and "shepherds" of v 5. The main objection to this interpretation is that the prophet's assignment seems to be negative from the outset, "Tend the flock of slaughter . . . for I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land." However, the verse is simply a prophetic declaration based on the results of the shepherd's ministry. It may be compared with Isa 6:9-13 where a positive intent is coupled with negative results. In light of what is going to happen Yahweh declares that there will be both internal ("I am going to deliver the people into each other's hand")<sup>48</sup> and external ("and into the hand of their king") strife. The "king" here probably means a foreign king.<sup>49</sup> The prediction then accords well with the symbolism of the two staffs. On this occasion, in contrast to all other instances of strife described in Zech 9-14, Yahweh declares, "and I will not deliver from their hand."

Turning to the role of the prophet, it is now evident that as the shepherd he is the personal representative of Yahweh. The rejection he experiences is the rejection of Yahweh. That is why the punishment is so severe, and that is why the rest of the book dwells so much on the need for cleansing. The vision of Zech 11 depicts a terrible sin committed against Yahweh himself. When the shepherd is said to have made "a covenant with all the peoples," it is really a covenant that Yahweh has made. Even the act of shepherding itself must represent the care of Yahweh for his people. For this reason it is correct to call the shepherd in 11:4-14 the "good" shepherd. This is further demonstrated by the contrast with the "useless" shepherd of vv 15-17. Rejection of the good leadership of Yahweh's personal representative led to the introduction of a bad shepherd.

A problem arises with the phrase "for the sheep merchants" in v 7. These merchants must be connected with the "buyers," "sellers," and "shepherds" of v 5 who are acting from evil motives. Therefore,

<sup>46</sup>Keil, *Minor Prophets*, 360.

<sup>47</sup>Rudolph, *Sacharja 9-14*, 205-6.

<sup>48</sup>The reading of  $\text{יְשָׁבְי הָאָרֶץ}$  as "his neighbor," in conformity with the pointing of MT, fits the context better than the repointing to "his shepherd" suggested in the apparatus of BHS.

<sup>49</sup>See Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 202-4.

in what sense does the representative of Yahweh act "for" (ל) these men? This very problem was probably the motive for the MT reading (though not necessarily in a conscious way). One proposal is to interpret the ל not as "for" but as an alternate grammatical device for the construct state when a noun governed by a construct is itself governing another noun.<sup>50</sup> GKC (§ 129d) gives an example from Ruth 2:3, חֶלֶקֶת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבוֹאֵז, which means "the portion of the field belonging to Boaz." In like manner, the expression in Zech 11:7 could be, "the flock of slaughter of the sheep merchants." That is, it is the sheep merchants who do the slaughtering. There are actually four nouns to be related in this view, and a construct chain of more than three nouns is extremely rare (see Lev 21:12; 25:29). The logical place to break the chain with a ל would be exactly where it is now.

An alternate explanation is given by M. Rehm. He gives the phrase a theological interpretation. God in his sovereignty permits oppressive rulers because of the sin of the people (1 Sam 8:18; Neh 9:37; Isa 3:4; 19:4; Hos 13:11). In mercy he is willing to send his shepherd to correct the abuses of existing rulers. However, God knows that the shepherd will be rejected. Therefore, the same situation will be true in the end as at the beginning. The oppressive rulers will enrich their own coffers at the expense of the flock. In that sense the shepherd works "for the sheep dealers."<sup>51</sup> Rehm's view seems less likely to me than the previous explanation.

The flock itself is repeatedly given the designation "of slaughter." It represents the great mass of the people of Israel who are being oppressed by their leaders. They are the ones who reject the shepherd initially. They are also the ones to whom the breaking of the first staff is directed. The "covenant with all the peoples" may be taken as the restraint imposed by God which prevents the nations from attacking and overrunning Israel.<sup>52</sup> Under foreign domination the leadership might be able to retain power by compromise with the enemy, but the common people suffer the severest consequences.

If the people rather than the merchants are involved in vv 12-13, there is an immediate problem. It would make more sense for the shepherd to ask for wages from the merchants rather than from the flock itself. Sheep do not pay wages to their shepherd. Furthermore, the flock has already shown its contempt for the shepherd ("and also they loathed me," v 8). Why would a new evaluation be called for?

The merchants are depicted throughout as ruthless and self-serving. They evidently symbolize the temporal rulers and upper

<sup>50</sup>Rudolph, *Sacharja 9-14*, 202; P. Lamarche, *Zacharie IX-XIV*, Structure Littéraire et Messianisme (Paris: Gabalda, 1961) 64.

<sup>51</sup>Rehm, "Hirtenallegorie," 189.

<sup>52</sup>See Feinberg, *God Remembers*, 207-8.

classes of the people. There could be foreign elements as well as native Israelites among them. Zechariah's characterization of them is no different than that of prophets who had preceded him (Isa 9: 19-20; Jer 23:1-2; Ezek 18:10-13; Hos 12:7 (Eng. v 8); Amos 2:6-7; Mic 3:1-3).

The merchants are given their own opportunity to evaluate the shepherd. They had been watching his actions and realized "that it was the word of Yahweh." It is unclear just why they came to this conclusion. Perhaps they saw some tangible evidence of the statement, "so it was broken in that day."<sup>53</sup> Or, there may be some connection with the statement in v 5, "Blessed be Yahweh, for I have become rich!" As Joyce Baldwin puts it,

What the prophet had done at the Lord's command was just what the merchants wanted to be done. They wanted to be rid of the shepherd. Once again God's providence seemed to be favoring them (cf. verse 5).<sup>54</sup>

At any rate, in the actual evaluation the merchants showed their contempt just as the people had previously. The thirty pieces of silver is a symbol of contempt. It should also be noted that the breaking of the second staff would directly affect the merchants. With the onset of anarchy there would be a complete overturning of all positions of privilege. Foreign conquerors might show favor toward leaders who would help enrich them, but internal chaos puts everyone in a dangerous position. It is fitting that the final element of the cleansing of the nation in chap 14 is referred to the merchants, "And there will no longer be a merchant [כַּנְעָנִי] in the house of Yahweh in that day."

#### CONCLUSION

The MT in Zech 11:7, 11 has strong external support. Nevertheless, various considerations strongly favor the alternate LXX reading of "merchant" in both places. The most important argument is the grammatical uniqueness of the structure of the passages if the consonants כַּנְ (כ) are read as conjunctions. For a single passage a grammatical anomaly might seem feasible. But when both passages have the same sequence of identical consonants but differing conjunctions, the coincidence is too unlikely. It is clear how the MT developed from the LXX, but the alternate development cannot be explained adequately. Finally, the LXX reading makes better sense within the context.

<sup>53</sup>See R. Brunner, *Sacharja* (Zürcher Bibelkommentare; Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1960) 150.

<sup>54</sup>*Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 184.