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## **The Pain of Victory:**

### **The Identity of the Pierced One in Zechariah 12:10**

Richard C. Benton, Jr., PhD

#### **Yahweh's Pedagogy**

Yahweh does not rejoice over the death of the wicked. The Babylonian Talmud describes his admonition to the angels upon the death of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea:

“The ministering angels wanted to chant their hymns, but the Holy One, blessed be he, said, ‘The work of my hands is being drowned in the sea, and shall you chant hymns?’” (BT *Megillah* 10b).

In spite of his victory on Israel's behalf, *Yahweh mourns*. Whoever is crushed, he mourns for them as the work of his own hands. This may seem counter-intuitive to us, for in reading the Minor Prophets, which I will be calling here the Book of the XII, we see a god who appears to delight in his ability to smash those who oppose him, whether from among the Gentiles or his own people. In reality, he mourns the death of each person, no matter their lineage, as a father mourns the loss of a child.

Yet, this poses a difficult question for the reader: If Yahweh does not delight in smashing Jerusalem or its opposing armies, why does he initiate so often some sort of conflict? In fact, he does not initiate the conflict. Each instance of violence, whether against his people or the nations, begins with human forgetfulness of Yahweh's grace, engendering pride leading to haughtiness, causing the people to mistreat each other.

The Book of the XII contends that Yahweh crushes man in order to smash his haughtiness, ultimately teaching humility as the basis for how humans should treat each other. Humans demonstrate success in learning this lesson when they manifest unblemished love and sympathy towards the other. We see all too little success of Yahweh's approach, however, among the texts of the Book of the XII, where Yahweh repeatedly smashes the people, only to see them refuse his wisdom.

In spite of Israel's stubbornness, Zechariah 12 offers us a hope that Israel will one day learn from Yahweh's violence and fully accept his teaching of humility. This paper focuses on Zech 12:10, wherein the people weep upon seeing the one they pierced. After Yahweh unexpectedly

offered victory to Jerusalem over their enemies and poured out his spirit on them, they mourned rather than gloated over their opponents' death, ultimately proving themselves better than even the angels in the Talmudic parable above. They saw that they were victorious in battle by killing their enemy. After the battle, they looked on the one they had stabbed, with whom Yahweh identified, and thus mourned the blood spilt for the sake of their own education and correction.

### **Current Approach**

I approach Zech 12:10 with a significant assumption, that a literary work may be understood in its final, literary form. This assumption follows newer approaches to the Book of the XII, though it departs from traditional scholarship, which atomizes texts as it assumes discontinuity of texts. While the traditional approach succeeded in recognizing the gaps and diachronic development among texts, it has not sought an overall meaning for the text. The current study begins with the final canonical form of the Book of the XII.

My approach assumes continuity of each text with the surrounding texts. Thus I view that the problem of Zech 12:10 can be best solved by reading according to the context of the previous verses, 12:6-9. While this raises a new problem—why would they weep after a great victory?—the context of the rest of the chapter and the previous chapter provide a solution.

Most traditional scholarship tends to assume a division among texts. For example, it tends to analyze ch. 12 as separate from ch. 11. Meyers and Meyers 1993, Peterson 1995, and Conrad 1999 represent the mainstream scholarly reading of Zechariah when they read chs. 9-11 and chs. 12-14 as two distinct sections. The Hebrew heading **מִשָּׂא דְבַר יְהוָה** *masa' davar YHWH* “message/burden of the word of Yahweh,” in the beginning of ch. 12 indicates a break. Often in prophetic works such phrases separate out different sections. Because of this heading, these scholars read these sections as separate texts without a meaningful connection.

Furthermore, traditional scholarship focuses on the diachronic development of the book between these sections. Meyers & Meyers 1993 and Peterson 1995 imagine the break between chs. 9-11 and 12-14 exists because the author wrote two distinct texts that addressed different situations. Each text was written at a different time from the other, so one text does not inform the other.

Edgar Conrad 1999 also sees the distinction between these two sections, but against traditional scholarship ascribes the difference not to distinct times of the authors, but to distinct points of view of the texts. The approach of the current paper aligns most closely to Conrad's because he examines the synchronic literary meaning of Zechariah, rather than the diachronic development of the book.

### **The Context of the Book of the XII**

The Book of the XII focuses on suffering as a pedagogical mechanism. Yahweh offers his bounty freely to his people, but they reject him when they habitually forget the gracious nature of

this abundance. Instead of being appreciative, they make themselves lord over this abundance and each other. Yahweh is then forced to educate them with a heavy hand by taking back his abundance for a time. The Book presents this mechanism not as sadism on the part of Yahweh, but as a way for Israel to understand the nature of their prosperity.

I would like to offer several examples of this mechanism in the Book of the XII. Each example plays a part in the same four-step process:

- 1) Yahweh **provides**;
- 2) The people **misuse** Yahweh's gift for their own ends;
- 3) Yahweh **deprives** through disaster;
- 4) Yahweh **restores** the people.

The hope is that this cycle will teach the people that their attempts to hoard Yahweh's bounty will not work and will cause suffering to others.

### **Hosea: Faithless Wife Lured to Desert**

As the first book in the scroll, **Hosea** lays out this mechanism. Yahweh provided for his people like a husband provides for his wife. An unfaithful wife, the people took their beauty on the hunt for a new provider, a new "boyfriend." They did not understand that Yahweh provided it all; as a result, they could not grasp their unfaithfulness. Yahweh therefore sought to teach them by taking back what he provided.

And she did not know that I gave her the grain and the new wine and the oil;  
and I multiplied silver for her, but gold they used for Baal.

Therefore, I will turn and I will take my grain in its time, and my new wine in its season;  
and I will take back my wool and my flax that serve to cover her nakedness (Hos 2:10-11 [2:8-9]).

The text lays out a pedagogical mechanism. After Yahweh's provision (step 1) the people tried to preserve their bounty by going to other gods (step 2). By initiating action and approaching other gods, they could "hedge" their bets; in case Yahweh could not provide or otherwise stopped providing for them, they had another god who might be able to. As they served the other gods, Yahweh deprived them of their bounty (step 3). Later on in this passage we see the final step of this system:

Therefore, behold, I will coax her, and I will bring her to the desert;  
And I will speak to her heart.

And I will give her her vineyards from there;  
And the Valley of Achor for an opening of hope.

And she will answer like the days of her youth,

And as the day of her coming up from the Land of Egypt (Hos 2:16-17 [2:14-15]).

Yahweh wanted to replay the initial grace that he offered them in Egypt, as a reminder of the source of their bounty. Since this bounty was given freely, they do not need to use it to bribe other

gods for more. In the end, Yahweh will relieve them of their suffering and graciously lead them back (step 4) trying to teach them the error of their ways.

This mechanism in Hosea forms the foundation of the Book of the XII, wherein we see several instances of the pedagogical cycle of suffering and return. For the sake of space I will focus on the five books leading up to the book of Zechariah—Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai.

### **Micah and Nahum: Fall of Israel, Rise of Assyria, Fall of Assyria, Rise of Israel**

We see the adjacent books of Micah and Nahum work together to fill out the four steps. The book of **Micah** describes the destruction of Samaria and Jerusalem during the time of the ascendancy of Assyria. Samaria and Jerusalem brought Yahweh's vengeance against themselves in Micah, in the form of the Assyrian invasion.

Fulfilling step 1 (Yahweh's provision), Yahweh first gave the people their very existence as a people in the Exodus, described in detail in Micah 6. Furthermore, he gave strength and riches to the rulers, implied throughout the book by the misuse of this power (e.g., 6:12). Compared to Hosea, Micah spends little time describing the bounty itself.

We see the grace given to them because they use it to oppress rather than act justly. They are not grateful for the power they possess, but use it to gain even more for themselves. Hence they no longer count on Yahweh to provide. The rulers used their position and strength to take even more from the poor in chs. 2-3, which amounts to rejecting the gracious nature of their abundance, step 2 (the people's misuse of grace). Furthermore, the people's basic freedom from Egypt and slavery come from Yahweh's graciousness, but the people reject it by not responding with appropriate justice and goodness (Micah 6).

Much of the book of Micah (e.g., the opening one-third, chs. 1-3) focuses on step 3, disaster at Yahweh's hands. Chapter 7 describes the hope of the prophet, that the disasters at the hand of their enemies will convince the people to accept Yahweh's teaching, Torah.

Then the book of **Nahum** describes step 4: the restoration of Israel and the defeat of her enemies. Even though the violent warfare in Micah was initiated by Yahweh, he didn't let the instrument of war, Nineveh, representing the whole of Assyria, get away with violence; hence, Yahweh turned the tables against Assyria in Nahum. Israel has suffered enough; Yahweh will restore them in victory because of their suffering: "For Yahweh has returned the pride of Jacob, like the pride of Israel; for marauders have marauded them and destroyed their branches" (Nah 2:3). It is time for Israel to be reestablished because they have suffered enough.

### **Habakkuk: Hopeless Prophet Gains Faith**

In the next book, **Habakkuk**, Yahweh sought to bring his people to submission through defeat. Step 1 is only implied in the book, namely, that they have the power and the means for success. For example, when Yahweh states, "The cup of the right hand of Yahweh will come

around against you—and disgrace against your glory. For the violence of Lebanon will cover you” (2:16b-17a), the text assumes the glory that Israel already possesses. Like in Micah, they logically must possess it if it can be taken away.

We see step 2 when the rulers (mis)use their power, glory, and wealth to oppress others. Habakkuk 2:5-10 describes how the powerful only desire more and more. As their appetite (נפש *nefesh*) grows, they devour accordingly. Moreover, they use their silver and gold to create idols, rather than follow Yahweh. Their god must teach them to “be silent before him” rather than follow their own unlimited, unjust desires (2:20).

In the same section, 2:4-10, we see that the increasing oppression against others will encourage the nations to attack, step 3. What the haughty did to others will come back against them, namely, the haughty will be mocked (2:6), risen up against, shaken, and despoiled—by the very ones they oppressed (2:7). The fact that the disasters of step 3 are intertwined with the selfish crimes of step 2 demonstrates the cause-and-effect relationship between the lack of just action and the reaction of their enemies.

The final verses of Habakkuk express restoration of the prophet’s faith and of his hope in Yahweh’s grace, step 4. The text describes how the prophet, as a symbol of the people successfully-educated, moved from despair to faith in Yahweh. After the prophet’s initial cry of “you do not save!” in 1:2, he finally expressed trust:

Yet I will exult in Yahweh,  
I will rejoice in the God of my salvation.  
Yahweh GOD is my strength,  
And He has made my feet like hinds’ feet,  
And makes me walk on my high places (Habakkuk 3:18-19).

Yahweh will restore in the end the one with hope.

### **Zephaniah: Jerusalem Struck and Restored**

We see the final iteration of this model leading up to Zechariah, in the book of **Zephaniah**. The people’s wealth is mentioned in 1:13, though the passage does not refer explicitly to Yahweh as its source. Yahweh’s provision, step 1, is implied in Zephaniah like it was in Habakkuk.

Zephaniah focuses on the sins of apostasy, though not exclusively. In Jerusalem, some people follow Baal, there are idolatrous priests (כמרים *kemanim*), they worship the heavens, they swear by another besides Yahweh, and they turn away from Yahweh outright (1:4-6). Some also engage in gain, with an implication of sitting in comfort rather than protecting others (1:11).

In all cases, however, the people carry out their actions without concern for Yahweh’s teaching or limits, which fits step 2. They sit in their wealth, and assume “Yahweh will not do good or do evil” (1:12). As they disregard Yahweh, they can act completely independently. Thus they use their wealth and power as they desire.

The leaders of the people disregarded Yahweh, step 2, so Yahweh struck Jerusalem via the

nations, step 3. Zephaniah 1-2 describes the attack against the people and the city—and the horrible suffering.

Then Yahweh restored victory to Israel when he used them to strike the nations, step 4, as in 2:9. By the end, Yahweh used the nations to bring down Jerusalem for step 3, but then reversed the action in order to restore the remnant of his people to bring down the nations. Then the remnant will remain, and Yahweh will destroy those who “insulted my people” at the hands of those who remain (Zeph 2:8-9). We read the restoration in the next book, **Haggai**, as a fulfillment of step 4, restoration of bounty. Now that the remnant is restored, the temple will also be restored. This series of actions will prompt the people to humble themselves before Yahweh. The restored remnant will be defined by the humility Yahweh sought to teach them.

### **Yahweh’s Pedagogy**

Pride arising from ignoring Yahweh’s teaching, his Torah, bears concrete, societal consequences: the people inevitably treat each other horribly. In Micah 2:1-2 the people oppress each other, and in 3:1-4 the leaders make virtual soup out of the people. In Nahum ch. 3, Yahweh decries the violence of the Ninevites, and their desire to control those around them, just like the Egyptians before them. Habakkuk 2 describes crimes of theft and oppression and murder, though the agent of these crimes is ambiguous, whether it is Israel or Assyria. Zephaniah 1:9 describes “violence and deceit” in the house of Yahweh, and also many cultic offenses. Zephaniah 3:1-5 ties this violence to rejecting Yahweh’s teaching. In each case, the violence that Yahweh sends is not because of human beings’ virtuous attempts at self-determination, but in response to their terrible treatment of each other.

Yahweh’s seemingly violent response that we find in these books is thus depicted as a *pedagogical corrective* to teach correct treatment of others. Over and over he tried to teach the people a single lesson: they possess plenty and the correct response must be gratitude and faith. They should remember that he is their provider, and not use his gifts to find more providers or to extract bounty from the weak among the people. Instead, his bounty engendered haughtiness and a self-reliant need to keep what they got. They must take care of each other out of abundance, rather than oppress the weak to keep control over and increase what they have. By taking away, Yahweh shows that he has complete control over the people’s abundance. They must learn this lesson so that they depend entirely on Yahweh.

Much of the Book of the XII depicts the violence against Israel and the nations, but the pain and suffering does not usually engender the correction Yahweh intended. That the people’s own actions and attitudes caused this pain and suffering seems to be lost on them. The people repeatedly return to oppress each other; they feel no shame. Many lives of Israelites and Gentiles were lost in each reenactment of Yahweh’s pedagogical response. Until they grasp in the core of their being that their behavior caused this violence, they cannot change. Their stubbornness in self-involvement and ignoring its consequences causes the problem that necessitates Yahweh’s

violent response.

### **Zechariah Disrupts the Cycle**

Grasping this cycle in the Book of the XII is essential for understanding the relationship between chapters 11 and 12 of Zechariah, namely, that the mourning in ch. 12 presents an alternate chastisement for the bad behavior in ch. 11; it breaks step 3. In ch. 10, Yahweh protected the people and allowed the flock to prosper, step 1. However, the leadership was rotten. In ch. 11 they used the flock to enrich themselves, and when Yahweh sent the prophet to lead the flock, the leaders bought him off and the people rejected him. As a result, Yahweh raised up a worthless shepherd who took advantage of the flock, and whom Yahweh cursed. This fulfills step 2. The Book of the XII conditioned the reader by point of Zechariah to expect an invasion to break Jerusalem, step 3, to teach the lesson of humility.

Chapter 12, though, veers off the normal course because the people enjoyed victory rather than suffer defeat. Yahweh brought an invading army, which seemed to initiate step 3. Israel was not crushed, however; Yahweh skipped to step 4 when he intervened to grant Israel victory. The text sets us readers up with a dilemma: Without being crushed, how will the people learn? How will Yahweh teach if he himself granted them victory in spite of their bad behavior?

The beginning of ch. 12 sets up a tension with ch. 11, to be resolved in the latter half of ch. 12. After the people and their leadership rejected Yahweh in ch. 11, ch. 12 offered an eschatological response, for the events of ch. 12 all take place in a single, eschatological time-frame. Everything in ch. 12 takes place “on that day,” both the battle (vv. 3, 4, 6, 8, and 9) and their weeping (v. 11). The action of mourning is marked by the same “on that day” in v. 9, and continues with the stabbing in the following verse, v. 10 (marked by a *vav*-consecutive), and in v. 11, where the mourning commences. The mourning immediately follows the victory chronologically, and so the context of the war informs who the stabbed one is.

The chapter evokes another troubling question: Why does mourning follow on victory? This unexpected emotional outpouring seems to layer an unlikely human response onto Yahweh’s unexpected pedagogical response. What changed their human nature to rejoice in victory? The answer is in two parts. Yahweh first poured out on them a spirit of grace, which then resulted in them finally comprehending how much they and their ancestors had sinned and how much destruction they had caused.

### **Pouring Out the Spirit**

First, Yahweh intervened to create this outcome by pouring out his spirit of “grace and supplication,” **הַן וְתַחֲנוּנִים** (*hen vatahnunim*), on David and Jerusalem’s inhabitants—which Yahweh does only three times in the Hebrew Bible. Yahweh poured out his spirit in Ezek 39:29 when he declared that he would no longer hide his face from the people, right before the section in which the new temple and new Jerusalem are described. He also poured it out in Joel 2:28, which

established Yahweh's presence among the people as every person was able to prophesy or dream dreams. The spirit poured out by Yahweh in these two passages revealed his eschatological presence among the people.

The phrase "grace and supplication," חַן וְתַחֲנוּנִים *hen va-tahnunim*, occurs only this one time in the Hebrew Bible, which, coupled with the rare move of Yahweh pouring out his spirit, helps us understand the peculiar mourning later in the chapter. Not only do the people experience Yahweh's presence, but they experience it by means of supernatural grace and favor manifested among them.

Appreciating the significance of this expression of grace among the rulers and inhabitants of the city brings us closer to comprehending the significance of the unusual mourning in the latter half of Zechariah 12. After granting victory to Jerusalem, Yahweh poured out his presence in the form of grace to the people. They can see Yahweh's presence and grace through the victory that they enjoyed.

### The Stabbed One

The second reason why mourning followed victory is because the people looked on "the one they stabbed." This is not very clear, so scholars tend to focus on who was stabbed and what the significance is. Regarding who was killed, the Hebrew text is not immediately clear. The pronominal references of the Masoretic Text are confusing, because Yahweh is speaking and says, "They will look upon *me* the one whom they have stabbed; and they will mourn for *him*." Textual confusion could have produced this ambiguity, and it would take little for "upon him" to become "upon me" in Hebrew orthography. In any case, the action of how the people would have stabbed Yahweh raises its own problems, which I will discuss below.

The Septuagint matches the Masoretic Text regarding the identity of "who" and the pronouns, but raises a question about the "how" of the action itself. The Septuagint seems to be reading a different verb. The text reads *κατωρχήσαντο* *katōrchēsantō*, "they danced against; they insulted." This translation could be motivated by taboo, namely, a way to circumvent completely the image of Yahweh stabbed. It more likely arose from a graphic confusion. The Hebrew דָּקְרוּ *daqaru*, "they stabbed" could have been read as דָּקְדוּ *raqadu*, "they danced," either by *resh* / *dalet* graphic confusion or by simple transposition. Since Hebrew never employs דָּקַד *raqad* in the sense of "insult," I believe that the Greek reflects graphic confusion in their Hebrew *Vorlage*, so I will assume that the Masoretic Text preserves the original text. "Stabbed" is the correct reading.

Ancient and modern sources inconsistently identify the stabbed one. The Gospel of John identified the one they stabbed with Jesus, though his citation from Zechariah left out the "upon me/him" phrase (John 19:37). John seems to be reading a text similar to the Masoretic text.

The Late Antique exegete, Theodore of Mopsuestia, commented, "At that time those who formerly opted to oppose my decisions and showed such audacity against me will sense their ill-considered lawlessness" (*Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, 584). He seems to be reading a

Septuagint text, for which reason he focuses on the audacity and insult of the people, rather than on violence. He may not have seen the passage in the Gospel of John as a citation of Zech 12:10, as a result. For Theodore, the people insulted Yahweh and the prophet by disobeying them.

Meyers and Meyers believe similarly to Theodore that the one who was pierced (reading with the Hebrew), albeit metaphorically, is the prophet (1993:340). In contrast, they see the violence as real violence that the leaders perpetrated on the people (1993:358).

Conrad cannot find a clear referent. In his commentary on Zechariah he writes, “The passage seems to be associated with information, unavailable to contemporary readers, that both the author and the original audience brought to the text ... But what would it mean for the LORD to be stabbed by a spear or a sword? Could it have some metaphorical significance? I think that this passage will need to remain obscure” (Conrad 1999:183). Like me, he is reading according to the Masoretic Text, but because of the ambiguity, he gives up looking for a recipient of the “piercing.” Peterson looks for an answer outside the present text. He believes that the verse hints that the people may have committed child sacrifice, though his only evidence is the child sacrifice described in 1 and 2 Kings. Peterson supposes that upon seeing the attacking army in the previous verses, they sacrificed a child to ensure victory. Hence they wept for him “like an only son,” that is, the child was in fact a son of their people (1995:121).

None of these scholars identify the stabbed one with the victims of the war in the preceding verses. All of them look elsewhere besides the immediate literary context.

The immediate context provides a clear, plausible identity for the one who was pierced. In the previous verse Yahweh declared, “On that day, I will seek to destroy all the nations coming against Jerusalem” (12:9). The nations are destroyed in the section through warfare; members of the nations are stabbed, and the “one” metonymously refers to the nations. We can fill out this verse in this way: “They will look on me, Yahweh, whom they pierced (during the previous war); and they will mourn for *the nations* like the mourning of an only son.” The people stabbed their enemy literally and Yahweh metaphorically; in other words, Israel stabbed Yahweh when they decimated the nations in war. They should mourn their victory, not celebrate.

### **Grace and the Stabbed One**

The people now grasp Yahweh’s presence through his spirit of grace. They cannot mourn a victory on their own, but require the presence of Yahweh to be poured on them to understand correctly. When they stabbed their enemies in the most recent war, they pierced their god. He brought the people victory, and he brought them his presence through a spirit of grace and supplication so they could react appropriately—not in service of themselves.

Conrad believes that the people by their tears express their despair that their present reality is so unlike the imagined, future reality. The piercing demonstrates the hopelessness of their present situation. He sees a chronological shift in point of view from the first oracle, chs. 9-11, to the second oracle, chs. 12-14. More specifically, the two oracles “address the disparity between

present realities and future expectations” (Conrad 1999:153). In the present reality, the nation is ruled by arrogant rulers who victimize the people and reject Yahweh’s teaching. Conrad writes, “[T]he motif of the Lord as ‘the master of the whole earth’ has been challenged” (Conrad 1999:178). The desired reality is placed in the future with the repeated use of “in those days” (Conrad 1999:178). Conrad writes, “Chapter 12 speaks about the invincibility of Jerusalem. But even this chapter suggests the wistfulness of such a worldview because it ends in mourning and grief for one who has been pierced (or stabbed)” (Conrad 1999:178). “However, whatever [the stabbing] might mean,” he writes further, “it is referring to some situation that stands in the way of future promise” (Conrad 1999:183). The stabbing underlines their oppressed present state, which causes mourning among the people. The turning point, from victory to mourning, takes place in v. 10, but because the identities of the participants in that verse are ambiguous, the nature of the action is confusing.

When the people mourned, everyone “by himself” לבד *lavad*, for the rest of the chapter, we can see that they mourned because Yahweh forced them to see his presence manifested. It was manifested in his teaching around the death of their enemy. He taught them in a typical way through bringing the nations against them, and in an atypical way through allowing them to see that he was manifested in the enemy who was killed.

While on first blush Yahweh went out of his typical pedagogical paradigm and did not crush the people through defeat, we see that he crushed them with victory through his spirit. The outcome proved better this time. To the man and woman, every Jerusalemite, from the rulers to the inhabitants, they all learned the lesson Yahweh had been trying to teach them for generations. Correct behavior must extend not only to one’s neighbor within the community, but even to one’s mortal enemy. Every creation of Yahweh, expended because of the people’s sin, should be mourned.

### **The Cycle in a New Light**

Zechariah 12 forces us to look at the previous cycles of the Book of the XII in a new way. In earlier books, Yahweh graciously fulfilled all the needs of the people, step 1, and the people inevitably took advantage, step 2. He chastised them, step 3, and the people again enjoyed Yahweh’s bounty, step 4. But the system never produced correct results, that is, true repentance and learning so that the system would no longer be needed.

Each generation wasted the opportunity for correcting their ways offered by the previous generation. Many lives from among Israel and the nations were sacrificed so that the next generation might learn that all bounty, peace, and prosperity come exclusively from Yahweh. The people remained hopelessly stubborn in their denial of this fact, and continued in every generation to misuse from fear what came freely. Invasion and death were supposed to change the people permanently.

In the eschaton, as presented in Zechariah, Yahweh changed the system with his own hand.

The people learned because Yahweh taught them from within. He did not chastise them in the normal way in step 3 because he offered them victory instead of defeat. Moreover, he presented his spirit of grace in their midst, which taught more decisively than a normal step 3, because the people changed—observed in their unlikely reaction to their victory. Unlike all previous generations, the people mourned, chastised not from outside but through Yhwh’s spirit from within. They mourned those who were killed because of their sin. The list of the houses in 12:12-13 showed that they mourned the immediate death of the nations as well as all the previous death from the time of David and Solomon—even Pharaoh—that Yahweh offered in order for them to change their ways. Every single individual mourned “by himself” לבד *lavad*.<sup>1</sup>

### **Conclusion: True Chastisement**

This study has shown the importance of reading texts in light of each other because the literary context provides vital information for their meaning. The identity of the pierced one in Zech 12:10 comes from the preceding verses. The meaning of Zechariah ch. 12 comes from chs. 10-11. The pattern laid out in the broader Book of the XII explains the unexpected reaction of the people to their victory.

Israel is not moved to perfection by destruction, but only by the inner movement of their conscience. The melting of the mountains and utter destruction of Israel in Micah cannot change the deep-seated selfishness and self-reference of the people. Yahweh sent army after army at the people, hoping that the destruction could soften their heart towards his Torah. Nothing could move them, however.

At some point the teaching of repentance and chastisement must penetrate into the inner being. As Jeremiah 31:33 and Ezekiel 36:26-27 attest, the people will never change their thinking until Yahweh changes the very core of their conscience through injecting his spirit and removing, as Ezekiel depicts it, their “heart of stone.” In Zechariah the people finally learn to mourn the death of those who have died for their sake. They learn this in the moment of their victory, by direct reception of Yahweh’s spirit of grace and supplication.

The Book of the XII thus takes on broader significance. It mostly tells the story of what does not work, but there is still hope. Yahweh continuously offered to the people the means to change, which the people accept temporarily—at best. As the penultimate book of the XII, Zechariah offers the best eschatological outcome, that is, the people mourn the death and destruction caused by their sin, outwardly displaying that their core has changed forever. The people only show they have accepted Torah when they acknowledge—and weep for—how much Yahweh was willing to sacrifice his own creation to teach it to them.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ulrich [2010:257-59] regarding Zechariah 12 in light of the narrative framework of the Solomon succession account.

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