If the there is evidence of our God as a forgiving God it can be seen in His willingness to forgive Israel (13:1); “In that day”-- a day future to our time-- God is going to cleanse Israel.

Before we delve into the future cleansing of Israel there are two parables for us to look at: Isaiah 5:1-7 which speaks of God owning a vineyard which produced nothing but wild grapes so He let the whole vineyard become a wasteland; it speaks of unbelieving Israel and their rebellion against God; the other is a parable of Jesus in Matthew 21:33-44 where a landowner plants a vineyard and leases it to some vinedressers and then he travels to a far country; at harvest time he sends his servants to the vineyard expecting some beautiful fruit, but one was beaten, one was killed, one was stoned; at last he sent his son and they killed him; in the parable the landowner is God, the vinedressers are Israel’s leaders, the servants are the prophets whom they mistreated, and the Son is Jesus whom they crucified.

The significance of the two parables: it was God’s intention to build His kingdom on the nation of Israel; they mocked and killed His prophets and murdered His Son; God took the kingdom from them and gave it to those who would further His kingdom by producing fruit; that kingdom is His Church.

It appears from these two parables that God is finished with the Jews; that they are no longer His chosen; God has not given up on Israel rather the Church is like a branch grafted into the wild and worthless branch of Israel to be a means of blessing to Israel (Romans 11: 11-26); God is not through with His vineyard; Zechariah 13 speaks of Israel’s future cleansing.

The Defilement of Sin (13:1)
The future of the forgiveness... “In that day...” (13:1a); Israel has rejected Christ (Jeremiah 17:13) but will receive Him and again be called God’s chosen (Isaiah 14:1).

The fountain of cleansing... “... a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem...(13:1b); the fountain is “opened”; it is a continuous or permanent opening; the cleansing fountain was opened at Calvary and it has been purifying ever since (1John 1:7); when we think of a fountain we think of gushing water; water can cleanse the outward filth, but only the blood of Christ can cleanse the inward filth; the Jews had many blood sacrifices but none could cleanse sin; that blood could only cover up sin (Hebrews 9:12-14).

Christ’s fountain poured out water and blood on the cross (John 19:34); He instituted the Lord’s Supper to remind us in the cup that: “This is My blood shed for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28); in Peter’s sermon on Pentecost he reminded the crowd they were guilty of crucifying their Messiah and they need to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38); the waters of baptism symbolize the blood of Christ which cleanses from sin; when one is immersed, one is being dipped in the blood of Christ.

The filth of sin... This fountain is “for sin and for uncleanness” (13:1c); the word for “uncleanness” refers to deep moral pollution like idolatry and following after false prophets; these were Israel’s two greatest sins.

The Deception of False Prophets (13:2-6)

The removal of idolatry and false prophets... “It shall be in that day,says the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the idols from the land... I will also cause the prophets and unclean spirits to depart from the land” (13:2); the two besetting sins were idolatry and false prophecy; idolatry with its evil spirits and occultic practices existed because of false prophets (see 1 Timothy 4:1); God is going to cleanse the land of these evil practices.

The responsibility of the parents... “…if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live for you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD’ And his father and mother shall thrust him through when he prophesies” (13:3); parents have the responsibility to put their child to death if they become a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:6,9,10;18:20); in the days of Elijah the false
prophets of Jezebel and king Ahab of Israel outnumbered Elijah 450 to 1 (1 Kings 18:22).

The reaction of the false prophets... “And it shall be in that day that every prophecy will be ashamed of his visions when he prophesies...But will say ‘I am no prophet, I am a farmer’... And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends’” (13:4-6); the prophets are going to lie, remove their clerical garb; the cuts in their arms were the marks of self mutilation which identified a false prophet; false prophets will not be able to lie their way out of God’s judgment (see 1 Kings 18:20-40).

The recognition of false prophets... Peter and Moses give characteristics of false prophets (see 2 Peter 2; Deuteronomy 18:20-22); Moses said when their prophecies do not come true they are not speaking for God; Peter gives a more detailed description of a false prophet:

1. Concerning their message: It is one of deception as they speak destructive heresies (v1); they blaspheme the truth (v.2); they exploit with false words (v.3); they speak what they do not understand (v.12); it is one of denial as they deny the Lord has come in the flesh (v1; see 1 John 4:3-4 ); they speak great swelling words of emptiness (v.18)

2. Concerning their morals: They are covetous and destructive (v.3); they walk according to the flesh (v10); full of adultery (v.14); greedy (v 15); they allure through the lust of the flesh-- such as material prosperity (v.18).

3. Concerning their methods: They despise authority (v10); they are presumptuous (v.10); they are self willed (v.10); they speak evil of dignitaries (v.10); they make promises they cannot keep (v.17); they allure through the lust of the flesh (v.18).

The Death of the True Shepherd (13:7)

The sword against My Shepherd... “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd... Strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered...” (13:7); Christ was struck with a spear
while on the cross (John 19:34); He died of a ruptured heart as blood and water flowed from the wound.

**The statements from God about the true Shepherd...** “My Shepherd” and “My Companion;” (13:7, see Philippians 2:6; John 10:30).

**The satisfaction of God in the true Shepherd’s death...** Isaiah tells us it pleased the Lord to bruise Him because He became a sin offering and He knew He would be raised from the dead (Isaiah 53:10).

**The scattering of the flock...** “… the sheep will be scattered;” Jesus said this to His disciples at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:31-32); the word “scattered” is more than the disciples fleeing; the verb means “to break in pieces” a reference to the scattering of the Jews in 70 AD when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans; with the scattering of the Jews God selected the Gentiles to make the Jews jealous (Romans 11:14; 25); the Gentiles are “the other sheep” (John 10:16).

**The Devastation of Slaughter and the Decision that is Coming (13:8-9)**

**The devastation of the slaughter...** In the battle of Armageddon two-thirds of the Jews will be cut off and die; a remnant will survive though through fire (13:8-9a; Malachi 3:2-4; Jeremiah 46:28).

**The decision of the remnant...** “They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘This is My people’; and each one will say, ‘The LORD is My God’” (13:9b; see Isaiah 49:13); the Lord will have compassion on His afflicted. Amen!