**Obedience is Better than Rituals- Historic Interlude and Encouragement from the Lord of Hosts**

**There is a time span between chapters six and seven of two years. The Lord had stirred up the hearts of Zerubbabel, Joshua and the remnant, so that they continued working on the temple (Haggai chapter 1) during this interlude and for another 2 years afterward until the Temple was completed. During these four years, the message from the Lord of Hosts switches to the subject of the relationship between the Lord of Hosts and the remnant. The Lord of Hosts gives a series of four messages through Zechariah to instruct and encourage the returnees to Jerusalem.**

**During the 70 year captivity in Babylon, the remnant set up (on their own) fast days commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem, etc. (Ezra 2-5). Now a delegation came from Bethel to Jerusalem to inquire of God if they should continue the fast days as they had, “these so many years”. This is the first message which I entitled “Obedience is better than fasting” and encompasses Zechariah 7:1-7. The second message during this interlude is found in Zechariah 7:8-14 entitled “Disobedience reaps judgment”. The third message found in Zechariah 8:1-17 assures that Israel will return to the Lord of Hosts (The people who do not “Pull away the shoulder”). The Forth message in Zechariah 8:18-23, states that during the Millennium, Israel’s fast days will become feast days and that the Gentile Nations will know God through Israel.**

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| **4 Messages of the Lord of Hosts in Zechariah chapters 7-8** | | | |
| **First Message** | **Second Message** | **Third Message** | **Fourth Message** |
| **Zechariah 7:1-7** | **Zechariah 7:8-14** | **Zechariah 8:1-17** | **Zechariah 8:8-23** |
| **Obedience is better than fasting.** | **Disobedience & “Pulling away the shoulder”**  **reaps judgment.** | **Shunning the things God hates reaps blessings.** | **Encouragement - Israel’s fasts will turn into feasts in the Millennium.** |

1. **God’s First Message To The Remnant – Zechariah 7:1-7**

**Zechariah 7:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, *that* the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth *day* of the ninth month, *even* in Chisleu;**

The fourth year of King Darius was 518 BC. This was 2 years after the events of chapter 6.

**Zechariah 7:2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,**

**The subject of verse two is the people of Bethel (they), who had sent Sherezer and Regemmelech to the house of Yahweh, Lord of Hosts (See verse 3).**

The term “Bethel” is only used as the town that Jacob named in Genesis 28:17-19. It is never used of the Temple.

**Hosea 8:1 *Set* the trumpet to thy mouth. *He shall come* as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.**

A good amount of people had returned to Bethel (A city of the Northern Kingdom or Israel) from Babylon with Zerubbabel. Nehemiah infers that the town of Bethel was soon rebuilt upon their return. The people of Bethel sent delegates to Jerusalem to the House of Jehovah, Lord of Hosts to seek answers from the priests and God.

**Ezra 2:28 The men of Bethel and Ai, two hundred twenty and three.**

**Nehemiah 7:32 The men of Bethel and Ai, an hundred twenty and three.**

The name Sherezer is evidently Assyrian, so that Sherezer was probably born in Babylon.

**Isaiah 37:38 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sherezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia: and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.**

**Jeremiah 39:3 And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, *even* Nergalsharezer, Samgarnebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.**

**Zechariah 7:3 *And* to speak unto the priests which *were* in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?**

**Jeremiah 39:13 So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rabsaris, and Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon’s princes;**

Sherezer and Regemmelech came from Bethel to the House of Jehovah, Lord of Hosts, sent by the people of Bethel. These were returnees from Babylon to Bethel. The people of Bethel sent Sherezer and Regemmelech to the House of Jehovah, Lord of Hosts, but the question concerning fast days was a subject that “all the people” desired to ask God. Note that God addressed this message to “all the people”.

**Zechariah 7:5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me?**

During the captivity, the Israelites had adopted the custom of fasting on certain incidents of the Captivity in the fifth, seventh, fourth, and tenth months.

**Zechariah 8:19 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.**

1. On the fifth month (Ab), on the tenth day, because, Jeremiah 52 states that was the day on which the temple and the city of Jerusalem were destroyed by fire in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, it took 3 days, because the seventh day of that month is the date given in II Kings 25.

**Jeremiah 52:12-13 Now in the fifth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, which *was* the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, *which* served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem, 13 And burned the house of the LORD, and the king’s house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great *men*, burned he with fire:**

**II Kings 25:8-9 And in the fifth month, on the seventh *day* of the month, which *is* the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9 And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king’s house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every**

1. In the 7th month, according to Jewish tradition, they fasted on the 3rd day, because of the murder of the governor Gedaliah, and the people of Judah who had been left in the land.

**II Kings 25:25-26 But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah. 26 And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees.**

**Jeremiah 51:1 Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;**

1. In the fourth month (Tammuz) they fasted on the ninth day, on account of the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in the eleventh year of Zedekiah.

**Jeremiah 39:2 *And* in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth *day* of the month, the city was broken up.**

**Jeremiah 52:6-7 And in the fourth month, in the ninth *day* of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land. 7 Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which *was* by the king’s garden; (now the Chaldeans *were* by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.**

1. Finally, on the tenth month, a fast was kept on the tenth day on account of the commencement of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar on that day, in the ninth year of Zedekiah.

**II Kings 25:1 And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.**

**Jeremiah 39:1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.**

1. Sherezer and Regemmelech only asked about the fasting in the fifth month, because of the destruction of the temple. But they inferred all of the fasts.
2. Now that the rebuilding of the temple was almost completed, they thought they no longer had to keep this these fast days. Remember that God had not established these fast days – They were Jewish traditions

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| **Four “Self-Inflicted Fasts Celebrated by Judean Captives while in Babylon”** | | | |
| **Fast of 5t Month (Ab)** | **Fast of the 7th Month** | **Fast of the 4th Month** | **Fast of the 10th Month** |
| **Observed because Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed on 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar.** | **Jewish Tradition states observed on 3rd day because that is when Governor Gedaliah was murdered along with Judeans left.** | **Observed on the 9th day because the day that Nebuchadnezzar had “broken up” Jerusalem in the 9th year of King Zedekiah.** | **Observed on the 10th day of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar on that day, the 9th year of Nebuchadnezzar.** |
| **Jeremiah 52:12-13**  **II Kings 25:8-9** | **Jeremiah 51:1**  **II Kings 25:25-26** | **Jeremiah 39:2**  **Jeremiah 52:6-7** | **II Kings 25:1**  **Jeremiah 39:1** |

**Zechariah 7:4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,**

**Zechariah 7:5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even* to me?**

**Zechariah 7:6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves*, and drink *for yourselves*?**

**Zechariah 7:7 *Should ye* not *hear* the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when *men* inhabited the south and the plain?**

1. **God’s Second Message to the Remnant – Zechariah 7:8-14 - Disobedience Reaps judgment**

**Zechariah 7:8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,**

**Zechariah 7:9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:**

**Zechariah 7:10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.**

**Zechariah 7:11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.**

**Zechariah 7:12 Yea, they made their hearts *as* an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.**

**Zechariah 7:13 Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:**

**Zechariah 7:14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.**

**Do you think it is any different today?**

**John 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.**

**John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.**

**John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.**

**John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.**

**II Timothy 4:8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.**

**Matthew 22:36 Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?**

**Matthew 22:37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.**

**Matthew 22:38 This is the first and great commandment.**

**Matthew 22:39 And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**

**Matthew 22:40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.**

1. **God’s Third Message to the Remnant – Zechariah 8:1- 17 - Stay Away From the Things God Hates**

**Zechariah 8:1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came *to me*, saying,**

**Zechariah 8:2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.**

**Zechariah 8:3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.**

**Zechariah 8:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.**

**Zechariah 8:5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.**

**Zechariah 8:6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.**

**Zechariah 8:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;**

**Zechariah 8:8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.**

**Zechariah 8:9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which *were* in the day *that* the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.**

**Zechariah 8:10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither *was there any* peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.**

**Zechariah 8:11 But now I *will* not *be* unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.**

**Zechariah 8:12 For the seed *shall be* prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these *things*.**

**Zechariah 8:13 And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong.**

**Zechariah 8:14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:**

**Zechariah 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.**

**Zechariah 8:16 These *are* the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:**

**Zechariah 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these *are things* that I hate, saith the LORD.**

1. **God’s Fourth Message To The Remnant – Zechariah 8:18 – 23 – Israel’s Fast Days Will Be Feast Days in the Millennium**

**Zechariah 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,**

**Zechariah 8:19 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.**

**Zechariah 8:20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; *It shall* yet *come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:**

**Zechariah 8:21 And the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.**

**Zechariah 8:22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.**

**Zechariah 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that* God *is* with you.**