

# **ISRAEL'S SELF-IMPOSED FASTS IN EXILE**

Tenth month (Jan. 10) –the day the siege of Jerusalem began, 588 BC

Fourth month (July 9) –Babylon breached Jerusalem's wall, 586 BC

Fifth month (August 10) –Jerusalem destroyed and burned, 586 BC

Seventh month (October 1) –Gedaliah, the new governor, also slain, 586 BC

(See Jeremiah 52:4-12 and 41:1.)

“The question raised in Zechariah 7-8 was whether those fasts should be continued, inasmuch as they had returned to rebuild the temple. The Lord's answer provided two clarifications concerning fasting (cf. Isaiah 58:4-8):

a. Fasting was designed for God's glory, not for man's merit.

Self-abnegation easily becomes self-pity and an empty ritual of self-worship. (7:5-6)

b. Fasting is worthless unless it is accompanied with acts of justice, kindness, and compassion toward one's neighbors (7:9-10).

Israel's lack of these brought the Lord's judgment of destruction and desolation (7:11-14).

## ZECHARIAH 7-8: INTERLUDE

### The question concerning fasting 7:1-3

FOUR MESSAGES, introduced by "Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying," (*or very similar phraseology*)

MESSAGE ONE                      7:4-7

MESSAGE TWO                      7:8-14

MESSAGE THREE                    8:1-17

MESSAGE FOUR                    8:18-23

## The Question concerning fasting      Zechariah 7:1-3

### Message ONE    A matter of motivation    Zechariah 7:4-7

The LORD's answer in a word: \_\_\_\_\_

God tells Zechariah to ask all of the people of the land 3 questions:

1. . . . did you really fast for Me--for Me?    (*motivation*)
2. . . . do you not eat and drink for yourselves?    (*accusation*)
3. . . . should you not have obeyed My words (earlier)?    (*accusation*)

# Message TWO      A matter of obedience      7:8-14

## The LORD's requirements:      7:9-10

*(positive)* Execute true justice

Show mercy & compassion *(positive)*  
to your brother

*(negative)* Do not oppress the  
widow  
fatherless  
foreigner  
poor

Do not plan evil *(negative)*  
against a brother

## The people's response:      7:11-12a

- refused to heed
- gave a stubborn shoulder
- made their ears heavy
- made their hearts like flint
- refused to hear the law and the prophets

## The LORD's judgment      7:12b-14

- great wrath from the LORD of hosts
- He would not listen to their cries for help
- He scattered the nation with a whirlwind among all the nations  
which they had not known

722 BC

586 BC

- their pleasant land became desolate

Message THREE     A matter of blessing     Zech. 8:1-17

The LORD's jealousy for His people     8:1-2

Jerusalem the Blessed     8:3-6

Return of the Remnant     8:7-10

Blessings for the Remnant     8:11-15

The LORD's requirements for His people     8:16-17

*(positive)* Speak truth to each other

Give (righteous) judgment *(positive)*  
for truth  
justice  
peace

*(negative)* Think no evil  
against a neighbor

Do not love a false oath *(negative)*

Message FOUR Fasting changed to Feasting 8:18-23

Fasting is changed into feasting for God's people (Judah) 8:19

Many peoples from all nations will seek the LORD in Jerusalem 8:20-23

Prayer will be offered in worship of the one true God, the LORD of hosts  
8:21-22