

# Zechariah 7:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

## Analysis

---

**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?** The delegation's question reveals both commendable devotion and potential misunderstanding. They addressed "**the priests... and to the prophets**"—the twin authoritative sources for understanding God's will. Priests interpreted the law while prophets brought fresh revelation. This dual consultation shows proper recognition of religious authority.

The question itself concerns "**weeping in the fifth month**" (ha-ebkeh ba-chodesh ha-chamishi, הָאַבְקֵה בְּחַדֵּשׁ הַחְמִשִּׁי). The fifth month (Ab, corresponding to July-August) commemorated the temple's destruction by Babylon in 586 BC (2 Kings 25:8-9). The phrase "**separating myself**" (hinnazer, הַנִּזֵּר) uses vocabulary related to the Nazirite vow, suggesting consecration or abstinence—they practiced mourning fasts with ascetic rigor. "**As I have done these so many years**" indicates this fast had continued for nearly seventy years during and after exile.

Now, with the temple being rebuilt, they questioned whether to continue. The question seems reasonable—if the reason for mourning (temple's destruction) is being remedied, should the mourning cease? Yet God's response (verses 4-14) reveals that their fasting had been self-focused rather than God-centered. They

mourned their loss, not their sin. True repentance seeks God's glory and produces justice and mercy (7:9-10), not merely ritual observance.

## Historical Context

---

The fifth month fast commemorated the climactic tragedy of 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar's forces burned Solomon's temple (2 Kings 25:8-9, Jeremiah 52:12-13). For seventy years, pious Jews observed this anniversary with weeping and fasting. Other exile-related fasts included: the fourth month (breaching of Jerusalem's walls), the seventh month (Gedaliah's assassination), and the tenth month (beginning of Babylon's siege—Zechariah 8:19). These fasts weren't commanded in the Mosaic law but arose as spontaneous expressions of grief and repentance. By 518 BC, with temple reconstruction underway, the question became pressing: were these fasts still necessary? God's answer transforms the question—He doesn't directly command cessation or continuation but instead addresses heart attitude. When full restoration comes, these fasts will become "seasons of joy and gladness" (8:19), but that requires genuine spiritual transformation, not just ritual adjustment.

## Related Passages

---

**Colossians 1:16** — All things created through Christ

**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

## Study Questions

---

1. Do your spiritual disciplines flow from genuine love for God and concern for His glory, or from self-focused motivations like tradition or emotional catharsis?
2. How can we distinguish between mourning over sin's consequences (which can be self-centered) and mourning over sin itself (which leads to repentance)?
3. What does this passage teach about the relationship between outward religious observance and inward heart transformation?

## Interlinear Text

---

רְאֵם	לְאַמֵּן	בְּכָהָנִים	אֶל	לְאַמֵּן	רְאֵם	בֵּית	הַבָּיִת	הַבָּיִת	הַבָּיִת
And to speak	H413	unto the priests	H3548		אֲשֶׁר		which were in the house	of the LORD	
	H559		H834				H1004		H3068
בְּחַדְשָׁה	לְאַמֵּן	יְמִינָה	וְאֶל	צְבָא	וְתַ	בְּאַבְנָה	בְּחַדְשָׁה	בְּחַדְשָׁה	בְּחַדְשָׁה
of hosts	H413	and to the prophets	H5030	And to speak	H559	Should I weep	H1058	month	H2320
	H6635		H834				H2088		
כִּי	רְאֵם	הַבָּנִים	כִּי	רְאֵם	עֲשֵׂה	יְהִי	כִּי	רְאֵם	כִּי
in the fifth	separating	H5144		myself as I have done	H6213		H4100		
	H2549								
שָׁנִים:									
these so many years									
	H8141								

## Additional Cross-References

---

**Zechariah 8:19** (References Lord): 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.

**Malachi 2:7** (References Lord): For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.