

Zechariah 7:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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?

Analysis

God's challenging question about religious fasting: '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?' The fasts commemorated Jerusalem's destruction: fifth month (temple burning, 2 Kings 25:8-9), seventh month (Gedaliah's assassination, 2 Kings 25:25). For 70 years of exile they fasted, but God asks: was it for Me (haliy samtem tsam)? Or was it self-centered mourning for lost prosperity? True fasting seeks God and His purposes; false fasting is religious performance or self-pity. Isaiah 58:3-7 elaborates: fasting God honors involves loosening injustice's bonds and feeding the hungry. External ritual without heart transformation is meaningless (Matthew 6:16-18).

Historical Context

The question arose in 518 BC (Zechariah 7:1) when delegates asked if they should continue mourning fasts now that the temple was being rebuilt. Their fasts had become traditional rituals divorced from spiritual purpose. God's response (chapters 7-8) emphasizes that He desires justice, mercy, and obedience (7:9-10) more than ritual observance. Pre-exilic ancestors ignored this, bringing judgment (7:11-14). Post-exilic community mustn't repeat the error. The fasts would

eventually become feasts (8:19) when God fully restores His people. This teaches that religious practices must flow from genuine devotion and produce ethical transformation. Jesus later confronted similar hypocrisy in Pharisees (Matthew 23:23-28).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 John 4:8 — God is love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Do my spiritual disciplines (fasting, prayer, worship) genuinely seek God, or are they performances or self-focused routines?
2. How can I ensure my religious practices produce the fruit God desires—justice, mercy, and humble obedience?

Interlinear Text

פְּכַדֵּן יְמִינָה וְאֶל כָּל אֶל לְאַמְּרָה
Speak H413 unto all the people H3605 of the land H413 and to the priests H3548
H559 H5971 H776 H3548

וְזַה וּבְשְׁבִיעַ וּבְקָמִישׁ וְצַמְתָּה נִי וְזַפְּנָה וְדַד צַמְתָּה נִי
Speak H3588 When ye fasted H6684 and mourned H5594 in the fifth H2549 and seventh H7637 H2088
H559 H6684 H5594 H2549 H7637 H2088

אַבְנִי צַמְתָּה נִי צַמְתָּה נִי צַמְתָּה נִי צַמְתָּה נִי
month even those seventy years When ye fasted When ye fasted H589
H7657 H8141 H6684 H6684 H589

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 1:12 (Parallel theme): Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?

1 Corinthians 10:31 (Parallel theme): Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Zechariah 7:3 (Parallel theme): 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?

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