

Zechariah 7:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother—God specifies what the former prophets preached. Kōh 'āmar Yahweh Tsēbā'ōt lē'mōr mishpaṭ 'emet shiphṭū vəchesed vərachamīm 'āsū 'ish et-'āchīw (כִּי אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאֹת לְאָמַר מִשְׁפָט אָמֹת וְחֶסֶד וְרָחָם יְהוָה אֲלֹהֵינוּ אֶל-אֶחָיו, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts saying, true judgment judge, and steadfast love and compassion show each man to his brother'). Three imperatives define authentic covenant life:

1. **Execute true judgment** (mishpaṭ 'emet, מִשְׁפָט אָמֹת)—legal justice based on truth, not bribery or favoritism.
2. **Show mercy** (chesed, חֶסֶד)—covenant loyalty, steadfast love, the bond that maintains relationships beyond legal obligation.
3. **Show compassions** (rachamīm, רָחָם)—tender mercies, the plural intensifying emotional empathy. These three—justice, loyalty, compassion—summarize biblical ethics. Micah 6:8 uses similar language: 'do justly, love mercy, walk humbly.' Jesus called these 'the weightier matters of the law: judgment, mercy, and faith' (Matthew 23:23). True religion isn't ritual but righteousness lived toward 'every man to his brother' ('ish et-'āchīw)—horizontal ethics flowing from vertical relationship with God.

Historical Context

Pre-exilic Israel violated all three: corrupt judges accepted bribes (Isaiah 1:23; Micah 3:11), covenant loyalty failed (Hosea 4:1), and compassion vanished (Amos 5:12). The prophets' consistent message was: fix ethics or face exile. The exile proved they didn't listen. Now Zechariah warns the returned remnant: if you ask about fasts, start by practicing justice, mercy, and compassion. Ritual means nothing without relational righteousness.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. How do 'true judgment,' 'mercy,' and 'compassion' together define comprehensive biblical ethics?
2. Why does God prioritize horizontal relationships ('every man to his brother') in defining vertical piety?
3. Which of the three—justice, mercy, or compassion—do you most neglect in your relationships?

Interlinear Text

לֹאמֶר כֵּה	לֹאמֶר	צָבָא וְתִּהְעַן הָ	לֹאמֶר	מִשְׁפָּט	אָמָת
H3541 Thus speaketh	H3068 the LORD	H6635 of hosts	H559 Thus speaketh	H4941 judgment	H571 true
H559	H3068	H6635	H559	H4941	H571
שְׁפָט	צָדָקָה	עֲשֵׂה	אִישׁ	אֶת	אֶחָיו:
Execute	mercy	and compassions	and shew	every man	to his brother
H8199	H2617	H7356	H6213	H376	H251

Additional Cross-References

Micah 6:8 (Grace): He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Proverbs 21:3 (Judgment): To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

Jeremiah 7:5 (Judgment): For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye throughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour;

Jeremiah 21:12 (Judgment): O house of David, thus saith the LORD; Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

Matthew 23:23 (Grace): Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Jeremiah 7:23 (Parallel theme): But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

Zechariah 7:7 (References Lord): 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?

John 7:51 (Judgment): Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

Luke 11:42 (Judgment): But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Amos 5:24 (Judgment): But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

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