Zechariah 7:8-14

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 7:8–14***And the word of YHWH came to Zechariah, saying, “Thus says YHWH **tseva’ot**, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart.” But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the Torah and the words that YHWH **tseva’ot** had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from YHWH **tseva’ot**. “As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear,” says YHWH **tseva’ot**, “and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and the pleasant land was made desolate.”

1. This second half of chapter 7 builds upon the first. Summarize the main point of the first half of Zech 7.

The people were apparently feeling good about themselves in rebuilding the temple, and wanted to ask YHWH if they should still be mourning and fasting on the annual day of remembrance of the temple’s destruction. YHWH responds that neither their fasting nor their feasting has been done for Him, but rather for themselves. This is the same message given to the people through the former prophets in the good old days before the exile.

1. YHWH now goes on to give the people further instructions on what true worship looks like. List all the things mentioned in Zech 7:9-10. See if you can find out the key Hebrew word for each item, and do a little word study on each to learn more about the meaning of the word, and the kind of worship our Father truly seeks.
2. give **true** **judgments**אֱמֶת **‘emet** “true, honesty, integrity, trustworthiness, faithfulness”  
   מִשְׁפָּט **mishpat** “justice, judgment”
3. show **kindness**  
   חֶ֫סֶד **chesed** “kindness, steadfast love, covenant love”
4. show **mercy**  
   רַחֲמִים **rachamim** “feeling of love, mercy, compassion, pity”
5. don’t **oppress** (take advantage of) **widows**  
   עָשַׁק **‘ashak** “oppress, exploit, take unfair advantage of”  
   אַלְמָנָה **‘almanah** “widow, class of people with low status and few resources”
6. don’t oppress **fatherless** (orphans)  
   יָתוֹם **yatom** “fatherless, class of people without resource”
7. don’t oppress **sojourners** (minorities today)  
   גֵּר **ger** “foreigner, alien”
8. don’t oppress **poor** (**homeless** today)  
   עָנִי **’aniy** “poor, afflicted, lower class”
9. don’t **devise** (even think) about doing **evil** things  
   חָשַׁב **chashav** “consider, think about, plan, devise’  
   רָעָה **ra’at** “evil, wickedness, not morally good, wrongdoing”
10. These instructions for worship were not really new instructions from YHWH, just now given to the people through Zechariah. Although not direct quotes from Scripture, they were really reminders of prior instructions. What other Scriptures can you find where each of the items on the above list had already been taught to the people in the past.

***Ezekiel 18:5–9***If a man is righteous and **does what is just** and right… restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, does not lend at interest or take any profit, withholds his hand from injustice, **executes true justice between man and man**, walks in my statutes, and keeps my rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares Adonai YHWH.

***Ezekiel 45:9***Thus says Adonai YHWH: Enough, O princes of Israel! **Put away violence and oppression**, and **execute justice and righteousness**.

***Isaiah 56:1***Thus says YHWH: “**Keep justice**, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed.

***Isaiah 1:17***learn to do good; **seek justice**, **correct oppression**; bring **justice to the fatherless**, **plead the widow’s cause.**

***Isaiah 1:23***Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring **justice to the fatherless**, and the **widow’s cause** does not come to them.

***Micah 6:8***He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does YHWH require of you but to **do justice**, and to **love kindness,** and to walk humbly with your God?

***Jeremiah 5:28***they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in **deeds of evil**; they **judge not with justice** the **cause of the fatherless**, to make it prosper, and they do not defend **the rights of the needy**.

***Exodus 22:21–22***“You shall not **wrong a sojourner** or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any **widow** or **fatherless child**.

***Exodus 23:9***“You shall **not oppress a sojourner**. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

***Proverbs 22:22*Do not rob the poor**, because he is poor, **or crush the afflicted** at the gate,

***Proverbs 12:20***Deceit is in the heart of those who **devise evil**, but those who plan peace have joy.

***Proverbs 14:22***Do they not go astray who **devise evil**? Those who devise good meet steadfast love and faithfulness.

***Deuteronomy 24:17–22***You shall **not pervert the justice** due to the **sojourner** or to the **fatherless**, or take a **widow’s** garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and YHWH your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the **sojourner**, the **fatherless**, and the **widow**, that YHWH your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the **sojourner**, the **fatherless**, and the **widow**. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the **sojourner**, the **fatherless**, and the **widow**. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.

***Micah 2:1***Woe to those who **devise wickedness** and **work evil** on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand.

1. From Zech 7:11-12, list the four ways that YHWH characterizes the people’s prior response to His instructions. Notice how Hebrew tends to use pictures? What picture (either from this list, or like of another picture) best represents how you sometimes respond to God’s instructions?
2. refused to pay attention
3. turned a stubborn shoulder
4. stopped their ears
5. made their hearts diamond-hard  
   שָׁמִיר shamir “very hard stone (perhaps flint or diamond)”
6. Twice in Zech 7:11-12 the ESV has the phrase “that they might not hear” or “lest they should hear”. In Hebrew this both of these phrases are simply **min-shema**. The preposition **min** can have several meanings but here is probably best translated “without”. What does **shema** mean? What is the consequence of their stubbornness?

The Hebrew **shema** usually means “to hear and take appropriate action”. In other words, “hear and obey”. The consequence of their stubbornness is that they do not obey God’s commands.

1. The phrase “stubborn shoulder” is also found in Neh 9:28-31. How is the message of this passage similar to that of our Zechariah passage?

***Nehemiah 9:28–31***But after they had rest they did evil again before you, and you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies, so that they had dominion over them. Yet when they turned and cried to you, you heard from heaven, and many times you delivered them according to your mercies. And **you warned them in order to turn them back to your law**. Yet they **acted presumptuously** and **did not obey** your commandments, but sinned against your rules, which if a person does them, he shall live by them, and they turned a **stubborn shoulder** and **stiffened their neck** and would not obey. Many years you bore with them and **warned them by your Spirit through your prophets**. Yet they would **not give ear.** Therefore you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands. Nevertheless, in your great mercies you did not make an end of them or forsake them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

God gives many warnings to his people. Over and over his warns them, and shows mercy to them. But they continue to stubbornly refuse to listen and take to hear the warnings. Eventually God disciplines them in an effort to cause them to return to Him.

1. How did YHWH send his previous instructions to the people (Zech 7:12)?

“the Torah and the words that YHWH **tseva’ot** had sent **by his Spirit through the former prophets**.”

1. What was YHWH’s response to the people’s continual stubbornness (Zech 7:12b-14)?

He was **very angry**. He eventually responded to them the same way they had been responding to Him. In other words, **“They called and I would not hear.”** And he scattered them among all the nations, leaving their own land desolate.

1. Does Zech 7:13-14 describe events that took place **prior** to Zechariah’s time or does it describe these that would take place **after** Zechariah’s time? What makes you think so?

It seems to describe events AFTER Zechariah’s time, since it says God scattered them among ALL the nations, and that didn’t happen until after AD 70 when the temple was destroyed. Prior to Zechariah’s time they were scattered, but really just to Babylon and Egypt, not ALL the nations.

1. At first this seems a strange way to end the message. It is like there really is no conclusion. But the message has a point, even though it is unspoken. The point is that the story of the past is very relevant to the present situation of the people. What is the real unspoken conclusion to the message that Zechariah is being given?

Their forefathers were warned over and over again, through the Torah and from the prophets, but they were stubborn and refused to obey. God was patient for a long time, but eventually He became angry and punished the entire nation. The same thing is going to happen again if the people don’t turn their hearts back to God and truly worship Him as he asks.

1. In what ways do you tend to respond to God’s instructions like the people of Israel did? Have you ever experienced His discipline?
2. Notice that God eventually punished the entire nation. Even the few that were righteous were punished with the bad. How should that help us look at the bad things that sometimes happen to us?
3. How does this passage speak to our hearts today?