

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"From Fasting to Feasting"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Zech. 8:9-23; 2:14-15; 4:6; Hag. 1:10-11; Ps. 15:1-5; Is. 2:2-3

Sometimes we can become so focused on the religious thing we are doing that we lose sight of what God is actually trying to produce through it. We can attend the service, keep the fast, say the prayers, and do the work—and still have to ask whether any of it is forming His character in us. That was the issue behind the question that began in Zechariah 7. The people came asking whether they still needed to keep the fast of the fifth month, but the LORD kept turning their attention back to truth, justice, compassion, faithfulness, and care for the vulnerable. They were asking about their fasts; God was talking about their hearts.

By the time we get to Zech. 8:9-23, the LORD has promised to return to Zion and *shachan*—dwell—in the midst of Jerusalem. It will be known as the City of Truth because the God of truth will dwell there. Now He turns to what His people are supposed to do in response. The movement of the passage is powerful: strengthen your hands, sow *shalom*, love truth, and watch as fasting is transformed into feasting and the nations begin saying, *"Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you"* (Zech. 8:23).

1. STRENGTHEN YOUR HANDS: KEEP BUILDING WHAT GOD DESIRES

The LORD begins, *"Let your hands be strong—you who hear these words spoken by the prophets who were there the day the foundation of the House of ADONAI-Tzva'ot was laid—so that the Temple may be rebuilt"* (Zech. 8:9). These people knew difficulty. When the foundation was first laid, the land had been devastated. There were no wages, no economic stability, no *shalom*, and opposition surrounded the work. Yet the foundation had still been laid, and the prophets who spoke then were still speaking now. So the LORD tells those who are listening: strengthen your hands and continue doing what I have called you to do.

Their circumstances could not yet show them everything God had promised, but obedience did not depend on their ability to see how it would all work out. The LORD promised that the vine would give its fruit, the ground its increase, and the heavens their dew. Those who had been treated as insignificant among the nations would become a blessing. *"I will save you and you will be a blessing. Fear not! Let your hands be strong!"* (Zech. 8:13). God says that He has determined to do good to Jerusalem and Judah. So do not be afraid. What seems difficult in our eyes is not difficult in His. As He had already said, *"Not by might, nor by power, but by My Ruach!"* (Zech. 4:6).

2. SOW SHALOM: WHEN FASTING BECOMES FEASTING

Strengthening their hands was about more than placing one stone on top of another. The Temple represented the place of God's dwelling, and He wanted the people surrounding it to reflect His character. He says, *"For there will be a sowing of shalom"* (Zech. 8:12). *Ki zera haShalom*—a planting, a seeding of *shalom*. Then He explains what that looks like: *"Speak the truth one to another; administer the judgment of truth and shalom in your gates; do not let any of you devise evil in your hearts against your neighbor; and do not love false oaths"* (Zech. 8:16–17). God was not interested in a beautiful Temple surrounded by people who did not resemble Him. In the City of Truth, His people were to live truthfully.

Then the LORD finally answers their question about fasting. He names the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months—fasts connected with Jerusalem's devastation—and declares that they *"will become joy, gladness and cheerful moadim to the house of Judah. Therefore, love truth and shalom!"* (Zech. 8:19). This is the great transformation: from fasting to feasting, mourning to rejoicing, devastation to restoration. Yet even here, God brings them back to what matters most: love truth and *shalom*. The feast means little if His character is absent from His people.

3. LET THEM SEE THAT GOD IS WITH YOU: A BLESSING THAT DRAWS THE NATIONS

Then the passage suddenly widens beyond Jerusalem and Judah. The LORD says people from many cities will begin saying to one another, *"Let us go to entreat the favor of ADONAI and to seek ADONAI-Tzva'ot."* Another responds, *"I also am going"* (Zech. 8:21). Then *"many peoples and powerful nations will come to seek ADONAI-Tzva'ot in Jerusalem"* (Zech. 8:22). This was always where God was going. **Israel was chosen, but chosen with purpose.** God promised Abraham that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. His people were never intended to receive His blessing and simply keep it to themselves.

That is why the chapter culminates with this picture: *"Ten men from every language of the nations will grasp the corner of the garment of a Jew saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you'"* (Zech. 8:23). Notice why they take hold. It is not because Israel is inherently superior. It is because they recognize God's presence among His people. They see truth. They encounter *shalom*. They recognize something they desperately need and say, "Can we walk with you?" Isaiah describes the same future when the nations say, *"Come, let us go up to the mountain of ADONAI"* (Is. 2:3). God's people are blessed so that blessing can flow outward. People need to see Him in us.

CONCLUSION

The people began with a question about fasting, but God ended by talking about the nations. They were concerned with whether they should continue a religious observance, while God was concerned with forming a people who reflected His heart. He told them to strengthen their hands, sow *shalom*, speak truth, administer justice, and love what He loves. Then He promised to turn their mourning into rejoicing and their fasting into

feasting. But the transformation was never meant to stop with them. God wanted His presence among His people to become visible to the world.

So perhaps the deeper question is not simply, “What am I doing for God?” but, “What is God producing in me?” Are we sowing *shalom* or tension? Truth or deception? Compassion or indifference? Are there places where fear has weakened our hands or religious activity has substituted for actually becoming like Him? Bring those places before the LORD. Ask the Ruach ha-Kodesh to make you into the kind of person someone could safely take hold of and say, “Can I walk with you? I can see that God is with you.” May His truth define us, His *shalom* be planted among us, and His presence become so evident that others are drawn to Him.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does the LORD twice tell His people to **strengthen their hands** in Zech. 8:9–13, and what promises does He give them?
2. What does “*a sowing of shalom*” reveal about what God wanted to build in Jerusalem beyond the physical Temple?
3. **Personal Reflection:** Where is God asking you to obey Him even though you cannot yet see how the situation will work out?
4. **Personal Reflection:** If someone observed your relationships, words, and reactions, what evidence would they see that God is with you?
5. What does Zech. 8:23 teach us about God's purpose in blessing His people and the way that blessing is meant to reach others?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, strengthen our hands to do what You have called us to do. When Your promises seem difficult in our eyes, remind us that nothing is difficult for You. Teach us to sow *shalom*, speak truth, walk in justice and compassion, and love what You love.

Spirit of the Living God, form the character of Yeshua in us so that Your presence becomes visible through our lives. Turn mourning into joy and fasting into feasting. May our lives reflect Your truth and goodness so clearly that others are drawn to seek Your face and walk in Your ways.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.