



3:8-4:14 The Menorah and the Olive Trees

1. Zecharyah 3:8-4:7 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Hear now, Yehoshua the high priest, you, and your fellows who sit before you: for they are men of great signs: behold, I will bring my servant Tzemach. For behold the stone that I have laid before Yehoshua; upon one stone are seven facets: behold, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. On that day, says the Lord of hosts, each of you shall invite his neighbour to come under his vine and under his fig tree.

And the angel that talked with me came back, and woke me, as a man that is woken from his sleep, and he said to me: What do you see?

And I said: I have looked, and behold a candelabra all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and seven lamps to it, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which were upon the top of it: and there are two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side of it. So I answered and spoke to the angel who talked with me, saying: What are these, my lord?

Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me: Don't you know what these are? And I said: No, my lord. Then he answered and spoke to me, saying: This is the word of the Lord to Zerubavel, saying: Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, says the Lord of hosts. Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubavel become a plain! And he shall produce the headstone from it, amid shoutings of: Grace, grace to it!

2. Zecharyah 4:8-14 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying: The hands of Zerubavel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you. For who has despised the day of small things? For those seven shall rejoice, and shall see the plumbline in the hand of Zerubavel; the eyes of the Lord, they rove to and fro through the whole earth.

Then I answered, and said to him: What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side of it? And I answered again, and said to him: What are these two olive branches which are beside the two golden spouts that empty the golden oil out of themselves?

And he answered me and said: Don't you know what these are? And I said: No, my lord.

Then he said: These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

3. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (11th century Spain), commentary to Zecharyah 4:14

Zerubavel is the 'son of the olive', meaning the oil, for he is the anointed one who will sit on the throne of Israel, as it is written, 'And reigning upon his throne,' and Yehoshua is anointed as the kohen gadol. It says (6:13), 'There will be counsel of peace between the two of them,' and there will be no jealousy between them.

4. Midrash, Shemot Rabbah 15:3

'This month is for you [plural]' – As in, 'These are the two sons of the olive, who stand upon the Master of the world.' Rabbi Levi explained: Gd sought something with which to rescue Israel, and He did not find anything until He found the merit of Moshe and Aharon, which stood on their behalf – this is 'These are the sons of the olive.'

A Question from the Exile

5. Rabbi Baruch Weintraub, *Should We Continue to Cry?*, Toronto Torah Pinchas 5778 (9:41)

Herbert Samuel, the first British High Commissioner of what was then Palestine, who was also a Jew, was appointed to his role on the fifteenth of Tammuz, 5680 (June 11, 1920). Four days later, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, who served as the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, wrote a letter to a Rabbi Yaacov Tzvi Zisselman. In the letter, Rabbi Kook answered Rabbi Zisselman's question – should we continue to fast over the destruction now that we have a Jewish High Commissioner?

Rabbi Kook responded briefly, without citing any sources for his answer. He emphasized that while he identifies with the questioner's strong feelings towards "our brother, the great minister", the fasts are not to be abolished as long as the Temple remains unbuilt.

7:1-3 The Question

6. Zechariah 7:1-3 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Darius, that the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, in Kislev; when Bet-el, Sharetzer, and Regem-melech, and his men had sent to entreat the favour of the Lord, and to speak to the priests who 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?

7. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak, 12th-13th century France), Commentary to Zechariah 7:3

They still did not believe in the construction of the Temple because of the foes who had halted the construction for years. Now, despite hearing that they were building, these people were of little faith and did not wish to ascend from Babylon because they did not believe that construction of the Temple would be completed and it would stand before their foes.

8. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th-16th century Portugal/Spain/Italy), Commentary to Zechariah 7:7

The verse mentioned this was in the fourth year of Darius, when most of the structure had already been constructed. It added that this was the ninth month, termed Kislev, to say that their question was foolish [*k'silu*].

9. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th-16th century Portugal/Spain/Italy), Introduction to Zechariah 7

The redemption of Babylon was naught in their eyes. From Gd's response we can learn that the Babylonians had seven reasons for viewing the redemption of Babylon as insignificant:

(1) They knew the Shechinah would not descend to that Temple...

(2) They thought the settlement in Judea would not endure, but they would be evicted by the Persians today or tomorrow...

(3) There was no ingathering of the exiles from the ten exiled tribes or the scattered exile of Judea... And this was a strong basis for claiming that the redemption was as naught.

(4) They saw that the land was cursed, not bearing fruit as it had in earlier times... indicating that Gd's supervision was not there as it had once been.

(5) They saw that the people of Judea and Israel were an example [for derision] among the nations, who cursed and terrorized them...

(6) They saw that the Samaritans had taken hold of much of Israel... and what redemption could happen if the Jews were the minority and their enemies were the majority in the land?

(7) They saw that there was no descendant of David reigning in Jerusalem. Perhaps they knew that Zerubavel was going to return to Babylon... They saw that Daniel, the holy one of Gd, had not ascended, and Mordechai and Zerubavel, the remnant called by Gd who had ascended in the first redemption had returned [to the Diaspora] – Mordechai going to Shushan as Daniel had, and Zerubavel returning to Babylon after the completion of the construction of the Temple...

7:4-14, 8:1-17 The Answer

10. Zechariah 7:4-14 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying: Speak to all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying: When you fasted and mourned in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for Me that you really fasted? And when you did eat, and when you did drink, did you not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Should you not hear the words which the Lord has proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and its cities round about her, when the Negev and the coastal plain were inhabited?

And the word of the Lord came to Zechariah, saying: Thus spoke the Lord of hosts, saying: Execute true judgment, and show loyal love and mercy every man to his brother: and do not oppress the widow, or the fatherless, the stranger, or the poor; and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear: and they made their hearts an adamant stone, lest they should hear the Torah, and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent in His spirit by the former prophets: therefore a great anger came from the Lord of hosts. And so, when he cried, and they would not hear, the Lord of hosts said: So shall they cry, and I will not hear; but I will scatter them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they know not; and the land shall be desolate after them, so that no man shall pass by or return. Thus they made the pleasant land a desolation.

11. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (11th century Spain), commentary to Zechariah 7:5

“Speak to the entire nation of the land” – The Babylonians as well as the Jerusalemites, for the prophecy included all of them. Also to the Kohanim, who had not known how to respond.

12. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15th-16th century Portugal/Spain/Italy), Commentary to Zechariah 7:7

Since they do not wish to ascend to Jerusalem, and they minimize the honour of the Redemption, why should they inquire at all regarding the Temple? Let them do what is good in their eyes, in the lands and among their nations! But as for the nation and priests in Jerusalem who have heard their words, tell them this so that they will not doubt as a result of the mistakes of these questioners...

13. Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak, 12th-13th century France), Commentary to Zechariah 7:5

Because of your sins the House was destroyed and you were exiled; because of this you fasted. If you will perform justice and righteousness then you will not need to fast, for the house is [already] built. Ascend from the Diaspora and you will dwell in the land for all time.

14. Zechariah 8:1-5, 8:16-17

And there was the word of Gd, Master of Multitudes, saying: So declares Gd, Master of Multitudes. I have been outraged for Zion, with a great outrage; I have been outraged for her with a great anger. So declares Gd: I have returned to Zion, and I dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is called “City of Truth”, and the mountain of Gd, Master of Multitudes [is called] “The Mountain of the Sanctum”.

So declares Gd, Master of Multitudes: Elderly men and women will again sit along the streets of Jerusalem, and a man with cane in hand due to great age. And the streets of the city will be filled with young boys and girls, playing in her streets...

These are the deeds you shall perform: Speak truth, one to another. Judge truth, justice and peace in your gates. And do not plot harm against each other, and do not love false oaths, for I hate these things. This is the word of Gd.

15. Zechariah 8:18-23 (adapted from Koren tr. c/o sefaria.org)

And the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying: Thus says 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 become times of joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts to the house of Yehuda; therefore love truth and peace.

Thus says the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying: Let us go speedily to entreat the favour of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. And many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus says the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men out of all the languages of the nations shall take hold, and shall seize the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying: We will go with you: for we have heard that Gd is with you.