

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Lesson 12, Chapters 6 and 7

When we ran out of time in the previous lesson, we were still in Zechariah chapter 6 on the subject of the *Tzemach*... variously translated as branch, shoot, or sprout... and in both Judaism and Christianity this *tzemach* is identified as the Messiah. And, in both Judaism and Christianity, this *tzemach* is a real figure that is to appear in Zechariah's future, even still in our future.

It is clearly stated that the very first thing this Branch will do is to build the Temple. Notice how this remains within the pattern we have read of in both Haggai and Zechariah: that is, God insisted that the first thing the returning exiles from Babylon do is to rebuilt the Temple. They disobeyed, and it cost them dearly.

Judaism sees this future temple as a literal physical temple, while Christianity is split on the issue with some agreeing that this will be a real, physical Temple and the other faction insisting that it is a so-called spiritual Temple. The spiritual Temple is what this group of Christians would call The Church, and therefore it is more or less in existence right now. There are some Pastors who have adopted a sort of middle ground by saying that indeed there will be a physical Temple constructed just after Yeshua returns but that it happens because the remaining Jews are still confused in their thinking. A Temple structure will be built, but what this verse is really talking about is the Temple being Believers themselves. Neither of these last 2 groups is able to seriously address the issue of the elaborate blueprints for the Millennial Temple that is contained in the final 8 chapters of Ezekiel. So, I have no issue with dismissing such notions as but manmade doctrines that have no biblical basis.

Let's re-read the final 5 verses of Zechariah chapter 6.

RE-READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 6:11 – end

By way of review, we see that a delegation of Jews has brought gold and silver to Jerusalem for the purpose of making crowns. We noticed that there is some disagreement in Bible versions over whether this word for crowns is singular or

plural. The Hebrew is **atarot**, and by the suffix it is clearly plural. Those scholars that think it should be singular say it was a copyist error or there was some heavy redaction that took place that actually re-worked this passage to make it plural. There is no evidence for this claim; it is merely the speculations of some translators. Because there is no evidence to support those speculations, I have little choice but to take it that more than 1 crown was to be manufactured from that silver and gold, and as we'll see, the context demands that it was 2 crowns.

Yet, the idea of silver and gold crowns is also dicey because the crowns of royalty were always gold, and not silver. My best stab at what is happening is that 2 crowns will be constructed using different materials; a silver one for Joshua the High Priest, and a gold one... but who is supposed to receive it since there is no reference to another person? Another mystery is, what prompted this delegation to bring the silver and gold to make crowns? Perhaps it is that this delegation brought silver and gold as a general offering to help support the Temple without knowing that both would be used for crown making; however, I think this is the less likely solution. Again, the context seems to lean heavily towards them bring those precious metals for the specific purpose of crown making.

Why would God (or any human) want Joshua the High Priest to have a crown? A crown is totally misplaced in the realm of Priests. The Law of Moses doesn't call for it, and so far as history tells us, no Levite High Priest had ever worn a crown. Kings and Queens... royalty... wore crowns, not Priests.

Since God speaks through Zechariah using the most complex symbolism in all of prophetic Scripture, then we must be cautious about necessarily believing that Joshua would actually receive and wear a crown. These crowns are symbols of a couple of things. In Zechariah's era, the crowns speak of the 2 leaders of Yehud, Zerubbabel and Joshua, and God's approval of them. Zerubbabel is the secular civil government leader, while Joshua is the religious leader. In the context of the times, there was uncertainty among the people and between Zerubbabel and Joshua if they were the legitimate choices to rule over the people of Yehud. The presentation of crowns symbolically validates Joshua as God's choice as well as God giving Joshua additional duties including

judging the people, something that a High Priest never before held such authority.

But, because this prophesy of the crowns applies to Zechariah's time, as well as to a fulfillment at a far later time, we see that this has something to do not only with Zechariah's era concerning Joshua and Zerubbabel, but also later on it will involve this ***tzemach*** character. And, while there are to be elements of what Joshua stands for as High Priest in the mission and position of the coming ***tzemach***, at the same time the ***tzemach*** is going to sit on a throne and rule in splendor. Clearly, this is describing a man who combines both things: a priest and a king. Not just any priest, the High Priest. And not just any king, but a descendant of King David.

Zechariah could not have imagined who this ***tzemach*** could be, nor when he would appear. But, as Believers we know who He is; He is Yeshua of Nazareth, Son of Yehoveh. And, history shows us that this ***tzemach*** will make actually make 2 appearances. This prophecy of Zechariah is speaking only of His second appearance (or, as we understand it, His return).

The precedent for a single figure that is both a High Priest and a King had been set even before Abraham's day in the person of Melchizedek, that mysterious Priest-King that lived near the Dead Sea, which Abraham had an encounter with.

CJB Genesis 14:18-20 ***18 Malki-Tzedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine. He was cohen of El 'Elyon [God Most High], 19 so he blessed him with these words: "Blessed be Avram by El 'Elyon, maker of heaven of earth. 20 and blessed be El 'Elyon, who handed your enemies over to you." Avram gave him a tenth of everything.***

The Book of Hebrews helps to make this connection between the ***tzemach***, and the Messiah Yeshua, and Melchizedek.

CJB Hebrews 5:1-6 ***For every cohen gadol taken from among men is appointed to act on people's behalf with regard to things concerning God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He can deal gently with the***

ignorant and with those who go astray, since he too is subject to weakness. ³ Also, because of this weakness, he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as those of the people. ⁴ And no one takes this honor upon himself, rather, he is called by God, just as Aharon was. ⁵ So neither did the Messiah glorify himself to become cohen gadol; rather, it was the One who said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." ⁶ Also, as he says in another place, "You are a cohen forever, to be compared with Malki-Tzedek."

So, where does the anonymous writer of Hebrews get this idea from of attaching Yeshua and His role as High Priest (which He did not hold before He was crucified and later ascended into Heaven) with the very ancient Melchizedek? It came from a prophetic Psalm written by David 1000 years before the Book of Hebrews was penned.

CJB Psalm 110:1-7 *A psalm of David: Yehoveh says to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." ² Yehoveh will send your powerful scepter out from Tziyon, so that you will rule over your enemies around you. ³ On the day your forces mobilize, your people willingly offer themselves in holy splendors from the womb of the dawn; the dew of your youth is yours. ⁴ Yehoveh has sworn it, and he will never retract- "You are a cohen forever, to be compared with Malki-Tzedek." ⁵ The Lord is at your right hand will shatter kings on the day of his anger. ⁶ He will pass judgment among the nations, filling it with dead bodies; he will shatter heads throughout an extensive territory. ⁷ He will drink from a stream as he goes on his way; therefore, he will hold his head high.*

Be aware that what I just quoted is from the CJB version. However, as I have done in other cases, whenever the word **Adonai** appears in a passage, I have added back in Yehoveh's name to replace it, provided it appears that way in the original Hebrew. So, notice how the Father, Yehoveh, is the one who anoints His Son as a High Priest. Also, notice how in the 5th verse that suddenly instead of Yehoveh's name appearing, it shifts and indeed DOES say Adonai (Lord). By doing this, the Psalmist adds a second character to the prophecy. And, it is also here that the Psalmist, David, explains that this

second character called The Lord will sit at the Father's right hand, and that it is The Lord that will pass judgment among the nations, shatter heads, and drink from a stream as He goes His way doing those things. When we put these pieces of Zechariah chapter 6, Hebrews chapter 5, and Psalm 110 together, they fit like a custom-made glove. We get such a much more complete picture of Messiah Yeshua in the role He will take on as He prepares to return (in the End Times) from sitting at the Father's right hand in Heaven, and then as He arrives back on earth and wreaks deadly havoc on this planet. We could just as easily substitute the word ***tzemach*** for The Lord in Psalm 110, and be absolutely correct in doing so.

So, as history has unfolded, and as God's plan has slowly revealed itself more and more, we learn that ***tzemach***, the Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth, the Son of God, and the One who sits on the throne of the Millennial Temple who is in the mold of Melchizedek, are all describing the same person. Back in Zechariah 6, this is cryptically hinted at with the High Priest Joshua being given a crown, and yet there is another crown made that is going to be worn by an unnamed person. Together, Zechariah 6:13 says the figures bearing crowns will occupy the throne in the Temple that the ***tzemach*** will build for Yehoveh, and together they will rule in harmony. While I imagine Zechariah and those hearing his prophecy assumed (as anyone would have) that this was to be 2 separate people... a king and a High Priest... it turns out that it was but their roles that would work in harmony, with both roles held by the same person. We have the benefit of centuries of history and revelation before us to help us get a far clearer picture if only we'll turn to God's Word and study it. But, of course, there is still much mystery about all that is to come that is yet to be revealed... but it will be revealed in its time.

Back now to Zechariah verse 13. There has been much debate among Bible scholars just what it means that these 2 figures... the one on the throne and the High Priest that stands before him... will have a council of peace between them, or as the CJB says, accept each other's advice in complete harmony. The key Hebrew word we find here is ***shalom***. When we understand that peace is just one aspect of the meaning of shalom, and more it means a divinely-provided well-being, a wholesome completeness, then I think we can better understand it. It means that the civil authority and right to rule that a

king holds, will be in perfect accord with the terms of the Covenant of the Law that the High Priest represents and enforces. That is actually the way all the Kings of Israel were supposed to have operated... but they didn't. They were supposed to use the Torah as their guide to rule and to provide justice, but they didn't. Yeshua, however, will.

Verse 14, as in the CJB and most other English translations, says this:

CJB Zechariah 6:14 *The other crowns will be for Helem, Toviya, Y'da'yah and Hen the son of Tz'fanyah; then [they are to be kept] as a memorial in the temple of Yehoveh.*

I again took out Adonai at the end of the verse and reinserted Yehoveh, which is the original Hebrew. But, at the beginning of this verse there is an error repeated by many Bible versions when it says "the other crowns (plural)". This is not correct; rather it is crown (singular). In fact, it is THE crown. So, we have one crown give to Joshua, and now the other crown's disposition is being dealt with. So, this second one is the crown of royalty versus the crown of the priesthood.

A group of 4 men are introduced (or maybe re-introduced). It's confusing to who they might be, because we see the repeat of some of the names who brought the gold and silver for the crowns, but some of the other names are changed. We really don't know if it's the same people for sure, but my best guess is that it *is* the same people and over time something happened in editing or copying that the names got mixed up. We'll just leave it a mystery because there is no way to prove whatever point of view one might have about it. In the end, it doesn't really matter. The point being made is that this second crown is turned over to them, and they are charged with seeing to it that the crown is used as a memorial in Yehoveh's Temple. This is speaking of Zerubbabel's Temple, and not the Millennial Temple of the future. The Hebrew word sometimes translated as memorial, at other times as remembering, is **zikkaron**, and it includes the nuance of something being used as a sign to remember something important by. What's the sign of the crown being placed in the Temple supposed to mean? It is that the covenant from God that King David will be Israel's king forever has not been forgotten by Yehoveh, and it

will come about. This thought brings great hope to the Judeans and all Israelites, who will never feel quite right about whoever rules over them until that person is an actual royal descendant of David AND that person is a king. That outcome is promised in many prophecies. And, as concerning their current circumstances, Zerubbabel is himself of David's royal line, but he is NOT a king. He is a governor appointed by the Persians to rule over their province, Yehud, the former Judah.

The final verse of this chapter reads this way:

CJB Zechariah 6:15 *Those who are now far away will come and help rebuild the temple of Yehoveh." Then you will know that it is Yehoveh-Tzva'ot who sent me to you. And it will all come about, provided you heed carefully what Yehoveh your God says."*

Who are the far away? Not clear. It might be the exiled Judeans, or it could refer to groups of people who don't worship the God of Israel... gentiles. However, I think it is more likely that this is speaking of the Jewish Diaspora as well as the scattered of the 10 Lost Tribes, because they will recognize the name of Yehoveh... that is, who but those who know who Yehoveh is would know that they are being summoned to come home, and to take up their ancient worship practices that revolved around the Temple? But, here's the thing. This can NOT be speaking of Zerubbabel's Temple; this is only speaking of the Millennial Temple. So, verse 15 is totally about the future, and it is speaking of the scattered of Israel coming back home to join in the joy of rebuilding the Temple.

In the final words of this verse, one can hear the echo of the calling of God to His people that we first find in the Torah.

CJB Deuteronomy 28:1 *"If you listen closely to what Yehoveh your God says, observing and obeying all his mitzvot which I am giving you today, Yehoveh your God will raise you high above all the nations on earth;*

When God comes to us, His worshippers, with wonderful promises, they are conditional AND always based on covenant. The one possible exception I can think of is the covenant God made with Noah that seems to have no obligation upon Noah, except that which Noah already did: build the Ark in obedience to God's command. But, no Ark, no covenant. Conditional. I am sad to say that the Constantinian Church has for centuries attempted to separate the idea of a promise from a covenant... essentially creating an official and formal instrument of divine biblical proclamation called a promise that doesn't actually exist... that is, it said to be a wholly different instrument from a covenant. It is then said that a promise is a one-way street in which God obligates Himself, but the other party has no obligations, while in a covenant, both sides have obligations. This is simply not so. Just as in Deuteronomy 28, the final verse of Zechariah 6 is indeed a promise that the far away (the dispersed of Israel) will come and help to build the Millennial Temple that *tzemach* will initiate...PROVIDED they heed what God tells them. The word "provided" is word meaning something has conditions. But that promise is also part of a covenant...the Covenant of Moses... the covenant Israel violated that caused God to react against them and to exile them from their land. Let's move on to chapter 7.

READ ZECHARIAH CHAPTER 7 all

This entire chapter revolves around God's answer to a question brought before Him. It occurs in the 4th year of the reign of the Persian King Darius. But, by the reckoning of the Hebrew calendar, it occurred during the 4th day of the ninth month (which is Kislev). Still in the 6th century B.C. there was no such thing as a universal calendar that called out years. Years were always based upon whoever your king was at the time, and how long he had been serving. This is called a Regnal Calendar. So, every society with their own king had a different perspective of what year they were in. On the other hand, even though we see this date to open chapter 7 is based on how long Darius had been king, it then reverts to the standard Hebrew way of counting days and months that had been in existence for Israel for a very long time.

Because we are able mathematically to go backwards in time and equate such dates with the common Roman calendar that is in use today, then we can with accuracy know that using modern terms, this is speaking of the equivalent of

December 7, 518 B.C. This is helpful to know, because it means that it has been 2 years since Zechariah pronounced his first prophecy in the wintertime of 520 B.C., which also coincides with when Haggai gave his final prophecy. And, this also means that chapters 7 and probably 8 speak of a time BEFORE the Temple was fully rebuilt and the dedication ceremony occurred. Let me say that again: as we read chapter 7 and discuss it, realize that this is reverting to a time BEFORE Zerubbabel had completed the Temple... it was still a work in progress... and put it back into operation.

Verse 2 tells us that Bethel sent Sar-ezer and Regem-melech and his men (an entourage) to Jerusalem. The purpose was, it says, "to entreat the favor of Yehoveh". To do that, it was necessary to speak with Yehoveh's priests and His prophets. In that era, and for millennia before and after, even though various people groups had various gods and god systems, still there was a common understanding of how they worked. Gods lived in Temples, and gods had human servants to see to their needs. These servants were usually divided into various groups ranging from the those who did the most menial tasks (like chopping and gathering wood for the altar fires), all the way up to serving that god directly and being his or her spokesmen. This upper echelon group was called priests, and every society's god system had priests. And, each god system also had prophets who usually were seers and diviners. Israel's prophets were quite different in their purpose and roles from all the typical god systems of the world, because the Bible Prophets were all about revealing a direct communication from Yehoveh to a king or to His set-apart people, but also sometimes it rather obliquely was a message to the gentile world in general or even a gentile nation in particular. And, in truth, we find that at times the prophetic roles, and the duty of bringing God's oracles to the Israelite people, overlapped between Priest and Prophet.

This new oracle of chapter 7 is addressed to Zechariah, 2 full years before the Temple rebuilding project was completed. The main focus is on a delegation called Bethel. Bethel had, by now, a lengthy history in Israel's past, and much of it was divisive and idolatrous. A very important city in the northern portion of Israel... that portion being a wholly separate kingdom since about the late 900's B.C. and called Ephraim... Bethel was the center of the religious cult that the first king of that northern kingdom, Jeroboam, had instituted. Let's take

just a moment to recall how all that came about, and why. It is recorded for us in 1Kings.

CJB 1 Kings 12:25-29 ***25 Then Yarov'am built up Sh'khem in the hills of Efrayim and lived there. After that, he left and built up P'nu'el. 26 Nevertheless Yarov'am said to himself, "Now the rulership will return to the house of David. 27 For if these people continue going up to offer sacrifices in the house of ADONAI in Yerushalayim, their hearts will turn back to their lord, Rechav'am king of Y'hudah. Then they will kill me and return to Rechav'am king of Y'hudah." 28 After seeking advice, the king made two calves of gold and said to the people, "You have been going up to Yerushalayim long enough! Here are your gods, Isra'el, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!" 29 He placed one in Beit-El and the other in Dan,***

Located about 12 miles north of Jerusalem, Bethel (**Beit-El** in Hebrew meaning the House of the god El) was located in what had traditionally been the territory of Benjamin. Although that northern kingdom called Ephraim had been conquered and emptied of Israelites some 200 years before Zechariah's day, nonetheless not every last Israelite was exiled; a few remained. Now, in Zechariah's era, Bethel was part of the Yehud province, although it was close to its northernmost border. So, it fell under the governance of Zerubbabel. That said, many who lived there probably felt as much or more loyalty to Samaria (which had been the capital of Ephraim/Israel), so Bethel was a city of mixed allegiances.

This fellow who came with the delegation from Bethel, Sar-ezer, was no doubt a person of special standing in the community. The other person mentioned by name, Regem-melech, also held a high standing in the Jewish community of Bethel. There have been many theories set forth about the identities of these 2 men, but nothing conclusive enough has emerged to even venture a guess worthy of discussion. Nor can we know whether these were former exiles that had returned, or were of families that had never been deported. What is plain enough is that their allegiance was to Jerusalem.

That they came with truly a matter of historic and religious importance to them is self-evident in the fact that such a delegation was sent in the first place. The Hebrew words of why they came are *lehallot et-panim*, meaning literally to "mollify the face". Obviously, this was a known expression because it does occur 16 times in the Old Testament. So, to translate this as does the CJB as "ask Adonai's favor", or is in a number of other versions as "entreat The Lord's favor", we have to see it as an expression and not get hung up on its individual words. To seek favor here is a term of extra-high respect, a humbling of oneself, that amounts to asking to be given an audience. And while they seem to be asking this of God, in reality they are asking to speak to God's priests since these men have no means to ask God directly.

One of the important things that kind of flies right by us is that they accept the authority of the Jerusalem priesthood and of Yehoveh. Sometimes it is hard for us to recognize since we are so far away in both time and place from when and where this happened, but what this tells us is that the authority of the Temple apparatus was accepted well beyond the bounds of the Jerusalem precinct, even as far as the outermost point of Yehud's border. This also means by default that other cities in Yehud...probably nearly all... accepted the authority of the Temple and the Jerusalem Priesthood. Thus, the Bethel delegation has indeed been received with favor such that they will be met by the highest authority in Jerusalem in order to address their concern.

We see in verse 3 that this delegation submitted to the authority of both priests and prophets, acknowledging that both had the ability to discern God's will. This is yet another example of how much both the civil and religious government structure of Judah had changed since the exile. Prior to the exile, the only authority this delegation would have sought was that of the priests, because prophets had very little to do with the Temple. What else is instructional to know is this: while prophets produced answers to complex questions that were often nuanced and involved a fair amount of dialogue, the sorts of questions brought before priests were almost always of the yes or no variety. This is because of the main tool that priests used to discern God's will: the Urim and Thummim. These objects were not magical. They were kept in a special pouch worn by the High Priest. And, in whatever ritual way they were

used, they were only able to give binary responses, and not complex explanations.

So, at the end of verse 3 their urgent inquiry is set forth: "Should I weep in the 5th month, restricting myself as I have done all these years?" On the one hand a priest could only answer this yes or no. But, a prophet could elaborate. First, however, what exactly is being asked here? From the 30,000- foot view, this is a matter of significant political importance. Should the Jewish people of Bethel continue in a mourning practice now that the Judeans have returned home, and the Temple rebuilding process is progressing nicely, and the Priesthood is back in operation, even though Judah is not politically independent but rather is under the control of gentiles... Persia? Because of the relationship between the large walled cities like Bethel and the smaller cities and towns nearby, Bethel was speaking for more than just itself.

The question of "should I weep" is not meant to be confined only to the person asking the question (I). Rather, it is as a representative member of a community so it applies to everyone in that community. And, clearly, this is not meant as spontaneous crying, but rather weeping as a ceremonial action taken by the entire public. That is, public mourning. This is further confirmed with the addition of the public also entering a period of abstaining from pleasurable things. This is a biblical way of saying fasting. Weeping and fasting are standard Middle Eastern mourning traditions. But, what was this mourning about that had gone on for so long in the 5th month of the Hebrew calendar year?

CJB 2 Kings 25:8-11 ***⁸ In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which was also the nineteenth year of King N'vukhadnetzar, king of Bavel, N'vuzar'adan, the commander of the guard and an officer of the king of Bavel, entered Yerushalayim. ⁹ He burned down the house of ADONAI, the royal palace and all the houses in Yerushalayim- every notable person's house he burned to the ground. ¹⁰ The whole army of the Kasdim, who were with the commander of the guard, broke down the walls of Yerushalayim on every side. ¹¹ N'vuzar'adan the commander of the guard then deported the***

remaining population of the city, the deserters who had defected to the king of Bavel and the rest of the common people.

Since we know that this question was asked in 518 B.C., then this indicates that this public mourning ceremony had gone on for nearly 70 years. In fact, this also meant that they were less than a year away from the next annual mourning ceremony. And, since God made it clear that the Jews were to be exiled and punished for 70 years, does this mean that it is now time to stop mourning and acknowledge instead that that period of exile and punishment had run its course? That is what is meant by the statement of "all these years". So, from their mindset, it's not as much a matter of can they finally stop this mourning, but rather *should* they? That is, it isn't that they are saying they are tired of it and can we finally stop this now. This is an issue of obedience, and to their minds, pleasing God. Yehoveh answers this inquiry in verse 5. It begins with:

CJB Zechariah 7:5 ***"Speak to all the people of the land and to the cohanim.***

While the delegation is from Bethel and it represents that city plus a number of others surrounding it, God says His response is to ALL the people of the land and also to the priesthood in general. This is a way of saying "everybody" because it is common to speak of the citizens of Israel as being divided into, and therefore consisting of, 2 groups: the priests and the common people. The inclusive nature of what He has to say has so struck Bible translators that many say we ought to translate the word ***eretz*** in this verse not as "land" but as "earth". That is, God is saying that His response is for the entire world. My view is that since this oracle, as do most, has a more than one-time fulfillment meaning, and it is typical that the second or even third times that it is fulfilled the scope of it expands, I think the ambiguous nature of ***eretz*** here initially means the local land... the Judean people... but in its final fulfillment in the End Times, it is referring to all the people of the earth.

God's answer is of course profound and goes far deeper than what was expected. In fact, we're going to look at it as though it was speaking to us, in our time, about our behavior, and about our circumstances... because it is.

So, we'll close here and jump into that next time.