

The Use of the Chiasmic Form in Zechariah

Zechariah chapters 7 and 8 are constructed as a large “Chiasmus” with a promise mentioned at the center (8:8). It refers to themes introduced in 1:1–6, giving an **exhortation to obey**, a **promise for Jerusalem and Judah**, and a **wider promise** (based on the visit of people from Bethel to ‘entreat the favor of the LORD’) to many peoples. This coherent whole is marked out for the reader or hearer by the use of key words and phrases which connect corresponding sections together. Despite the fact that there are passages where it is impossible to be sure what the intended meaning is in detail, the result is a very pleasing and powerful unity.

These two chapters begin a new section of the book of Zechariah. The message reinforces and fills out what has been said previously: the Lord punished his people for their disobedience and withdrew his protection and the sign of his presence, the temple. But now he will again ‘dwell in their midst’ in a restored Jerusalem. He exhorts them to keep the commands they previously ignored.

The structure of these chapters is as follows:

7:1*

A (v 2) Men of Bethel come to ask favor of Yahweh.

B (v 3) Questions about fasting.

C (vs 9–10) Former prophets said, ‘don’t devise evil in your heart’.

D (vs 12b–14) Great wrath came as the land became desolate.

8:1*

E (vs 3–8a) Promise of blessing *for the remnant of this people*.

F (v 8b) *They will be my people, and I ... their God.*

E (vs 9–13) Promise of blessing *for the remnant of this people*.

D (vs 14–15) But now God determines good for Jerusalem.

C (vs 16–17) Don’t devise evil in your heart.

8:18*

B (v 19) Fasts will become feasts.

A (vs 20–23) Many will ask favor of Yahweh.

This 'Chiasmic' Form is described in the Introduction on structure. The most important point is found at the centre (F).

An asterisk (*) indicates an introductory verse, which emphasizes the importance of what follows it. Notice how the passages with the same letter correspond to each other. All parallel sections have significant words or phrases which draw attention to the correspondence. Setting out the plan like this enables us to see the most important features of the whole section.

It leads from a comparatively unimportant question by an insignificant group of men, from a town in Israel, to a tremendous confirmation of God's election of his people and his constant purposes

Butterworth, G. Michael. 1994. "[Zechariah](#)." In *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, edited by D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, 4th ed., 873–74. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.