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MINISTRIES

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Repentance: The First Step Back to Covenant

Repentance—called *teshuvah* (תשובה) in Hebrew—is one of the most foundational concepts found throughout Scripture. Without it, we cannot walk in covenant faithfulness. But what is biblical repentance?

The Hebrew word *teshuvah* literally means “to return” or “to turn back.” It does not refer simply to an emotional feeling of guilt or regret. Repentance is not about saying “I’m sorry” and continuing in the same disobedience. Instead, *teshuvah* is a deliberate decision to abandon sin and turn back to the ways of our Creator as revealed in his Torah.

Biblical repentance is about recognizing where we have gone off course and realigning ourselves to the path of righteousness. It’s not just turning away from sin—it is returning to God’s covenant and walking in his instructions.

The prophet Ezekiel gives us a clear picture:

Ezekiel 18:30–32

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD [YHWH]. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD [YHWH]; so turn, and live.

This is not about surface-level emotion or an apology. YHWH is calling for a total transformation. He is asking his people to turn and live. The difference between life and death, according to Scripture, is not a mere belief statement—it’s whether we return, whether we repent.

Restoration Comes Through Returning

The Torah repeatedly affirms that repentance leads to restoration. In Deuteronomy, Moses tells Israel that even if they are scattered among the nations due to their disobedience, there is still hope—if they

return to YHWH and obey his commandments:

Deuteronomy 30:1–3

And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD [YHWH] your God has driven you, and return to the LORD [YHWH] your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the LORD [YHWH] your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD [YHWH] your God has scattered you.

This is about covenant restoration. When we obey his voice with all our heart and all our soul, he restores. This is a recurring pattern throughout the Scriptures: sin leads to exile, and repentance leads to restoration.

Repentance in the Message of the Messiah

The message of *teshuvah* didn't stop with the prophets—it is central to the message of the Messiah himself. In the book of Acts, after proclaiming the good news of Yeshua, Peter calls on his hearers to repent

Acts 3:19

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

This echoes what was already promised in the Torah. Repentance brings forgiveness. Repentance brings refreshing. Repentance brings life.

But it is not a one-time event. It is a daily posture. We are to continually examine ourselves, test everything (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and return to the path of obedience. True repentance is demonstrated in our actions—our fruit—not just our words.

Matthew 3:8

Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

As we continue this teaching, we will examine how repentance is prophetically tied to the first and second coming of the Messiah, the Shema, and the fullness of the Gospel message. But for now, here are some questions we should ask ourselves:

- *Are there areas in our lives where we are ignoring or violating God's instructions?*
- *Are we genuinely turning back to him—or are we just saying “sorry” while continuing in sin?*
- *Are we walking in covenant obedience? Or do we need to repent and live?*

Ezekiel 18:32

For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD [YWH]; so turn, and live.

Let us not settle for a version of repentance that is void of obedience. Let us return—*teshuvah*—to the path that leads to life.

Repentance and the Torah

Repentance is often reduced to an emotional experience—feelings of guilt, shame, or remorse. While those are likely real feelings we might experience, biblically speaking, *teshuvah*—repentance—is not defined by emotion alone. It is defined by action. It is a return. *A return to what?* To obedience. To the instructions of YHWH found in the Torah.

Real Repentance Is a Return to Torah

To repent means to stop walking in our own ways and to begin walking in his ways. Without the Torah, we would have no standard to measure what righteousness truly is. That’s why true repentance requires a return to the commandments. Saying “I’m sorry” is not repentance if it does not include a desire and effort to obey what YHWH has commanded.

Psalm 119 puts it this way:

Psalm 119:9–11

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

What keeps us from sinning? Storing up his Word—his Torah—in our hearts. Purity comes through obedience, not through emotions or intentions.

The apostle John echoes this truth in the New Testament:

1 John 3:4

Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.

In the Greek, that word “lawlessness” is *anomia*, which literally means “*against the law*.” Sin is breaking the law—specifically, the law of God. Therefore, *repentance* is a return to the law of God. Any doctrine that teaches repentance apart from obedience is missing the biblical definition. In fact, such teaching directly contradicts both the Torah and the New Testament.

Examples of Repentance in the Torah

Scripture gives us clear examples of how repentance works—and what it looks like.

1. Leviticus 26:40–42 — Repentance and the Covenant

Leviticus 26:40–42

But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers in their treachery that they committed against me, and also in walking contrary to me, so that I walked contrary to them and brought them into the land of their enemies—if then their uncircumcised heart is humbled and they make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and I will remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land.

This passage shows us a pattern: confession, humility, amends, and restoration. Notice that the

restoration of the covenant is directly tied to Israel's return to obedience. YHWH "*remembers*" his covenant when his people return to walking in it.

2. Jonah 3 — Nineveh's National Repentance

The story of Nineveh is often overlooked when discussing Torah, but it contains a profound lesson on repentance. When Jonah proclaimed judgment to Nineveh, the people responded—not just with words or emotions—but with real change:

Jonah 3:5, 8–9

And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them...Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish.

Nineveh's repentance was visible. It affected their behavior, not just their emotions. Because they humbled themselves and turned from their evil, YHWH relented. This is consistent with the biblical pattern: true repentance produces visible fruit.

Repentance Means Turning Back to the Path

Repentance is not complete until we begin walking differently than we were before. Emotion without obedience is hollow. The entire purpose of repentance is to bring us back into alignment with YHWH's instructions.

We must ask ourselves:

- *Are we defining repentance by what we feel, or by how we live?*
- *Are we measuring sin according to the commandments of God, or according to our own standards?*

Yeshua echoed this same truth in his own teaching:

Matthew 5:17–19

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

He came not to abolish the Torah, but to call us back to it. That is what true repentance looks like. That is what *teshuvah* has always been—turning from our own way, and returning to the way of our Creator.

Repentance and Messiah's First Coming

Repentance was not a side topic in Yeshua's first coming—it was central. His message was not new, but a continuation of what the prophets had always declared: turn back. *Teshuvah*. Return to the covenant. Return to the instructions of our Creator. Yeshua came preaching repentance because the Kingdom of

God—the rule and reign of YHWH—was growing nearer.

Yeshua's Message: Turn and Obey

Right from the start of his public ministry, Yeshua's message echoed the prophets:

Matthew 4:17

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

This wasn't just a call to feel bad about sin. It was a call to change direction—to stop violating the Torah and return to it. “*The kingdom of heaven*” refers to the rulership of YHWH, and his rule is rooted in righteousness. According to Scripture, practicing righteousness is defined by his commandments (Deuteronomy 6:25, Psalm 119:172). So to prepare for his kingdom, we must repent—turn from lawlessness, and walk in obedience.

After his resurrection, Yeshua reaffirmed this calling to repentance:

Luke 24:47

And that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Repentance and forgiveness are deeply connected. Yeshua provides the atonement for sin, but that does not mean obedience is no longer necessary. His sacrifice makes it possible for us to be cleansed and brought back into covenant. Repentance is our response—it is how we return.

John the Baptist: Preparing the Way

Before Yeshua stepped onto the scene, YHWH sent John the Baptist to prepare the way. And how did he prepare people for the coming of the Messiah? Through a call to repentance.

Luke 3:3, 8

And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ... Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

John's message called for real change—fruit. Evidence. A life that reflects repentance. And when people came to him to be immersed, it was not a new idea. Immersion (*mikvah*) was already a part of Torah practice, representing cleansing and purification. John was calling people to return to holiness through outward obedience and inner transformation.

His call to *teshuvah* prepared the hearts of the people to receive the Messiah, who would not only call them to walk in the commandments—but also provide the means to be forgiven when they failed.

Yeshua is the Model for Living the Torah

He didn't come to abolish the commandments. He said so plainly:

Matthew 5:17

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

To fulfill the Torah means to rightly teach it and to live it out completely. Yeshua's life was a demonstration of what obedience looks like. He healed, he forgave, he taught the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness (Matthew 23:23). Everything he did was rooted in Torah.

Repentance, therefore, is returning to the very instructions Yeshua lived out. He is the example we are to follow.

1 John 2:6

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

Preparing for the Kingdom

Are we truly bearing fruit that proves our repentance?

Do we see Yeshua as our example for living the Torah, calling us to repentance?

Have we returned not just with our lips, but with our lives?

John prepared the way for the first coming through a message of *teshuvah*. We, too, must prepare ourselves—and others—for the Messiah's second coming by returning to YHWH's commandments and teaching others to do the same.

Revelation 14:12

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus [Yeshua].

Repentance and Salvation

Repentance is not just a call to return to God's ways—it is a foundational part of what it means to be saved. Today, many have reduced salvation to a one-time verbal confession, often disconnected from a life of obedience. But Scripture defines salvation much differently. A life transformed by faith will also be a life marked by obedience. Repentance is the bridge between the two—it connects belief with action. It is how we return to covenant with our Creator.

Faith and Obedience: Not Opposing Forces

There is a common misunderstanding that, after we are saved, obedience to God's commandments is optional. This view often relies on verses such as:

Ephesians 2:8–9

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

We agree—salvation is not earned. It is by grace, through faith. But we must continue reading:

Ephesians 2:10

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

These “good works” were not invented by man—they are the commandments of God, prepared in advance for us to walk in. They are instructions that define righteousness (Deuteronomy 6:25, Psalm 119:172).

Yeshua said plainly:

John 14:15

If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And James, often misunderstood, reinforces this truth:

James 2:17, 24

So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. ... You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.

James is not contradicting Paul. He’s clarifying that faith without obedience is incomplete. Belief that does not result in a changed life is not biblical faith. In fact, it’s no faith at all.

Repentance Comes Before Forgiveness

Another common misconception is that forgiveness can be granted apart from repentance. But that’s not what the Scriptures teach.

1 John 1:9

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Forgiveness is conditional. It follows confession—and confession implies repentance. We must first acknowledge that we have sinned, then turn from that sin. YHWH is merciful, but he does not offer forgiveness without change.

On Shavuot (Pentecost), Peter made this order very clear:

Acts 2:38

Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ [Messiah Yeshua] for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Notice the sequence: Repent. Be immersed. Receive forgiveness. Receive the Spirit. Repentance is the first step.

Baptism—*mikvah*—was already a known practice among the Jewish people. It symbolized spiritual cleansing and renewal. Being immersed in Yeshua’s name was not a new ritual—it was a declaration of repentance and entry into renewed covenant with YHWH through Messiah.

A Life of Repentance Is a Life of Salvation

Let’s summarize the biblical pattern:

- Salvation is by grace through faith—but real faith leads to obedience.

- Repentance is necessary for forgiveness and the receiving of the Holy Spirit.
- Salvation is not just a moment—it's a life committed to walking in the Torah.

Yeshua's own words reinforce this:

Luke 5:32

I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

He didn't come to offer a get-out-of-judgment-free card. He came to call us back to the path of righteousness—to the Torah.

1 John 2:3-4

And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says 'I know him' but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Let's not deceive ourselves into thinking salvation is about words alone. Repentance is the evidence of saving faith. It's how we return to covenant. It's how we remain in it.

Let us walk in genuine repentance—not just in word, but in action—demonstrating that our faith is real by walking in the instructions of our King. May we be found faithful, not only in believing in the Messiah, but in following him.

Revelation 14:12

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus [Yeshua].

Repentance and the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4–9)

The *Shema*—is one of the most central declarations in all of Scripture. Found in Deuteronomy 6, it does more than proclaim the oneness of YHWH. It calls us to live in full-hearted devotion to him through obedience to his commandments. Repentance—*teshuvah*—is what restores us when we drift away. It brings us back into alignment with the heart of the *Shema*: loving YHWH with all that we are, and walking in his ways.

Returning to Love YHWH with All Our Heart

Deuteronomy 6:4–5

Hear, O Israel: The LORD [YHWH] our God, the LORD [YHWH] is one. You shall love the LORD [YHWH] your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

The *Shema* begins with a command to listen—but the biblical concept of listening is more than auditory. To listen is to respond. To obey.

To love YHWH with all our heart means that everything we think, desire, and pursue must be rooted in him. When we sin—when we break his commandments—we move away from that love. Repentance is the process of turning back. *Teshuvah* restores our relationship with the Creator by bringing us back to obedience. It realigns our heart with what it was made for: loving YHWH through his Word.

The prophets understood this. Over and over, they called Israel to return—not just to avoid consequences, but to come back to a place of covenant love and faithfulness:

Joel 2:12–13

Yet even now,” declares the LORD [YHWH], “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments.

Yeshua himself identified the Shema as the greatest commandment:

Mark 12:29–30

The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’

This was not a new teaching. It was a call to return to the Torah. Repentance is how we do that. Without repentance, love grows cold. With repentance, our love is renewed, and obedience follows.

Teaching the Next Generation

Deuteronomy 6:7

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Repentance doesn’t stop with us—it’s meant to affect the generations after us. If we claim to walk in covenant but live in lawlessness, we model rebellion. But when we return, we recommit to discipling our children in the ways of YHWH.

Teaching Torah to our children is not a religious formality—it is a covenant responsibility. When Israel repented under the leadership of men like Ezra and Nehemiah, they didn’t just confess sin. They renewed their commitment to train the next generation (see Nehemiah 8–10).

Repentance is generational. If we are serious about returning to God, we will be serious about passing his ways on to our children.

Binding the Word to Our Lives

Deuteronomy 6:8–9

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

This is about more than physical symbols. It’s about marking our lives with the Word of YHWH—what we do (our hands), how we think (our minds), and what governs our homes (our gates).

The Torah is the true mark of YHWH. It stands in direct contrast to the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16–17). The mark of the beast is lawlessness (Torahlessness) (2 Thessalonians 2:3–7). The mark of God is obedience to his commandments (Revelation 14:12).

Repentance is the act of removing one mark and returning to the other. It is how we return from compromise, disobedience, and idolatry—and recommit to being people who:

- Think according to his truth (forehead),
- Act according to his commandments (hand),
- And structure our homes in alignment with his instructions (doorposts).

Romans 12:2

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...

James 1:22

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Repentance reorients our mind. It redirects our hands. And it reestablishes our homes as places where YHWH dwells.

Living the Shema Through Repentance

Repentance is not just about turning from sin—it is about turning to covenant faithfulness. It is about walking out the *Shema*—loving YHWH with all our heart, soul, and strength.

It is about raising up generations who know his name and his ways.

It is about binding his Word to every area of life—our thoughts, our actions, and our homes.

When we walk in *teshuvah*, we don't just return to obedience. We return to loving YHWH the way he has always asked to be loved—through his Torah.

Conclusion: The Daily Call to Repentance

Repentance—*teshuvah*—is not a one-time decision. It is a continual way of life. Each day we are to examine our hearts, test our actions, and return to the path YHWH has set before us. Repentance is not just a doorway into covenant—it is the walk of covenant.

King David understood this well when he cried out for renewal:

Psalms 51:10–12

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

David wasn't merely seeking forgiveness—he was seeking restoration. He wanted to be brought back into alignment with YHWH's will. That is what repentance does. It restores the joy of salvation. It renews our spirit. It strengthens our walk in righteousness.

Heaven Rejoices When We Return

Yeshua taught that repentance is not only essential—it brings joy in the heavens:

Luke 15:7

Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

When we return to obedience, heaven celebrates. That's how much our return matters to the Creator.

Repentance is not shameful—it is a beautiful response to his mercy. It is the first step back to covenant faithfulness.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you.

Remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom.

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