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Return to Me Faithless People and I Will Cure You of Backsliding 3:19 to 4:4

Return to Me faithless people and I will cure you of backsliding DIG: In what sense has Isra'el become like a disenfranchised firstborn son? Like an unfaithful woman? Under what conditions would God find Isra'el acceptable again (3:22-25)? Were the ten northern tribes ever "lost?" What should Judah during Josiah's day do now (see **Hosea 10:12; Matthew 4:7** and **22**)**? What is circumcision of the heart?**

REFLECT: Is there an area of your life that ADONAI is calling you back to Him today? Asking you to return (shuwb) to obedience to His Word? How does God feel when we sin? When we repent? What actions will demonstrate genuine repentance (shuwb) on your part? How can you help others back to the Lord?

During the reign of Josiah

These verses switch back and forth between the spiritual awakening under Josiah (3:21-3:22a and **4:3-31) to the far eschatological pleading of the believing remnant at the end of the Great Tribulation before the Second Coming (3:22b-4:2), and back to Josiah's day to avoid the wrath of God.**

ADONAI's desire was to bless **His people**. The need is spelled out: **return (shuwb)** to **God the Father**! Unless this happens **YHVH** cannot regather the united kingdom of **Isra'el** and give **them the inheritance** of **the Land (3:14-18)**.

The necessity of repentance both in Josiah's day and at the end of the Great Tribulation: YHVH thought to Himself, "Oh what a joy it would be for Me to treat you like a son (3:19a NET)! God would single Isra'el (this signifies the whole nation, including Judah) out from among His other sons (the other nations). The word you (Judah) addressed here is feminine;

however, the object treat is masculine. According to Hebrew law, daughters were usually unable to inherit. Judah, addressed as a daughter, could claim no right to receive divine mercy. Yet, figuratively she will be regarded as worthy of a son's inheritance. ADONAI is gracious.

What a joy it would be for Me to give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful piece of property there is in all the world because **the** divine **Presence** is especially seen in it **(3:19c NET). I thought you would call Me "Father" and not turn (shuwb) away from following Me. But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you, Yisra'el, have been unfaithful to Me,** declares **the LORD (3:19b-20). The prophet** paints the picture of a parent who has labored and dreamed for the wonderful day when his son is old enough, responsible enough, and responsive enough to receive all that has been saved for him since his birth. The father wants to give the son his inheritance even more than the son wants to receive it. But the moment of giving never comes because the son neither understands nor cares. The wounded father is left with the shambles of his hard work and broken dreams, and knows the bitter combination of deep hurt and heavy resentment.[51] Because of **Israel's** past spiritual adultery, **she** must repent.

Josiah's day: A cry is heard on the barren heights, more pleasing to **God** than **their** worshiping wood and stone, **the weeping** (sorrow for sin) **and pleading of the people of Isra'el** (seeking forgiveness for past sins)**, because they have perverted their ways and have forgotten ADONAI their God (3:21). Isra'el** is found in the process of repenting. **Idolatry on the barren heights had been wiped out (3:2). Return (shuwb) faithless (**from **shuwb) people. He** is still their gracious **Father**, whose house is still open to **them**, whose arms are extended to **them (Luke 15:20-24)**.

Come to Me! I will cure you of backsliding (from **shuwb) (3:22a).** In Scripture, sickness is one of the many metaphors for **sin (Psalm 41:4; Isaiah 1:5-6; Jeremiah 8:22, 30:12; Mark 2:17)**. Here, **YHVH** says that **He will cure Isra'el** of **her sin**. Like an infection entering the bloodstream, sin secretly gets into our inner being and goes to work weakening and destroying. It gradually infects the whole system, producing spiritual laziness and loss of spiritual appetite; and if not cared for, the "sin sickness" can lead to dire consequences. When we hear about believers suddenly falling into open sin, in most cases a gradual spiritual slide preceded the sudden fall.[52]

We know that once **Josiah** was killed on the battlefield (**to see link click Ai –**

Josiah Ruled for 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC) **Josiah's** fourth son **Jehoahaz** was an evil king who opposed the reforms of **his** righteous father and reigned a mere 3 months. Next, **Jehoiakim, Josiah's** second **son** became king and reigned 11 years. **Josiah's** purge of false gods came to a sudden stop when **Jehoiakim** became **king**. **Judah** would then be in a spiritual death spiral that would last the entirety of **Jeremiah's** forty-five-year ministry.

Far eschatological: These are the words of the confession before **the Lord** returns (also see the commentary on **Revelation Ev – The Basis for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**): **Yes, we will come to You, for You are the LORD our God (3:22b). Surely the idolatrous** worship **on the hills and mountains is a deception (First Kings 14:23-24, 15:11-13; Second Kings 23:4-15; Psalm 106:35-40; Isaiah 28:7-8; Hosea 4:9-14; Amos 2:7b-8). They** confess the failure of idolatry to bring **them salvation**. Help did not come from **the hills and mountains** where idolatry took place. Nowhere but in **YHVH is salvation** to be found. Now **they** see that **ADONAI our God is the salvation of Isra'el (3:23).**

They confess the results **of idolatry** (also see **Hosea 9:10**). **From our youth shameful gods have consumed the fruits of our ancestors' labor – their flocks and herds, their sons and daughters because they had been sacrificed to Ba'al. From Isra'el's youth,** that is, through the entire history of the covenant there never was a time of faithfulness. From the very beginning **she** had sought other lovers. The term **shameful gods** is a slang term for the Canaanite god **Ba'al (3:24** and **7:31).** It was the worship of **Ba'al** that was a **shameful** thing (also see **Judges 6:32; Second Samuel 11:21** and **28; First Chronicles 8:33** and **Hosea 9:10**). In **Jeremiah 11:13 the prophet** mentions **that shameful god Ba'al**. **Isra'el** had therefore been scandalized and left without a place of belonging. **Her** own actions had caused **her** to be utterly displaced,

abandoned with none to protect her . . . especially from the antichrist.

At the end of the Great Tribulation, the believing remnant will say: **Let us lie down in our shame, and let our disgrace cover us. So intense will the feeling of shame be that it will appear to enshroud us. We have sinned against the LORD our God, both we and our ancestors; from our youth till this day we have not obeyed ADONAI our God (3:25).** The crux of the confession touches on the vital point of **obedience**. Both the present generation and their forefathers, all the way back to the **Exodus**, had failed to **obey**.

ADONAI says that two actions will demonstrate genuine repentance before the Second Coming: It is surprising that in the face of such gross spiritual adultery there was still a chance to return to **YHVH**. That in itself is an amazing possibility. Here **Ha'Shem** issues yet another invitation, but it comes neither easily or cheaply.

First, remove detestable idols: If you, Isra'el (this signifies the whole nation, including Judah), will return (shuwb), then return (shuwb) to Me, declares **the LORD.** This is a third class – unfulfilled condition. It has the possibility (or even the probability) of becoming a reality. **If you put your detestable idols out of My sight and no longer go astray (4:1),** then **you** will not have to be **removed.**

Second, swear by the true Ba'al instead of the counterfeit Ba'al: In **3:13a** when **YHVH** said: **Return (shuwb) faithless (**from **shuwb) people, declares ADONAI, "for I am married** to you **(3:14a).** There is a play on words. The phrase **for I am married** is translated from the Hebrew word *ba'al.* This is the same word for the Canaanite counterfeit god Ba'al**. ADONAI** is the true **Ba'al of Isra'el** – not the one the Canaanites call Ba'al. **And if in a truthful, just and righteous way you swear, "As surely as ADONAI lives,"** then the consequence of genuine repentance is the implementation of **God's** promise to **Abraham (Genesis 12:3, 18:18, 22:18, 26:4** and **28:14) the** Gentile **nations will invoke blessings by Him and in Him they will boast (4:2). All the** Gentile **nations of the earth will be blessed through Him** by virtue of what happens with **Isra'el** (also see **Romans 11**)**. Jeremiah** will have more to say about the restoration of **Isra'el in Chapters 30-33.**

Near historical during Josiah's day: This is what ADONAI says to the people of Judah and Jerusalem: Break up your unplowed ground and do not sow among thorns (4:3). The problem with **the Israelites** was **their** dishonesty; **they**

would use the right words but they really didn't mean it from **their** hearts. **They** would verbalize obedience to **the One True God**, but wouldn't give up **their** false gods. It was easy to say, "As the Lord lives," but **their hearts** were hard and crowded with **thorns** like a neglected, **unplowed field**.

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts, you people of Y'hudah and Yerushalayim. The radical change necessary in **Y'hudah** is made much clearer by the call to a **circumcision** of **the heart**. Jewish **boys** were **circumcised** when **they** were eight days old, given a name, and made **a son** of the covenant **(Genesis 17:9-14; Leviticus 12:3; Luke 1:59)**. Although no amount of surgery on the body could change the heart, **the Jews** thought that this ritual was **their** guarantee of salvation **(Matthew 3:7-9; Acts 15:1-5)**. **YHVH**, however, wanted them to "operate" on **their hearts** and put away **their** callousness and disobedience. **Therefore, circumcise your hearts and do not be stiff-necked any longer (Deuteronomy 10:16,** also see **Deuteronomy 30:6; Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11).**[53]

If **they** do not **repent, they** will suffer **God's wrath** which **will flare up and burn like fire because of the evil you have done – burn with no one to quench it (4:4b;** also see **Hosea 10:12; Matthew 4:7** and **22). The prophet's** words are angry. The wrath of **God** is a lamentation. All prophecy is one great exclamation . . . **ADONAI** is not indifferent to evil! **He** is always concerned. **He** is personally affected by what we do to each other. This is one of the meanings of the righteous anger of **Ha'Shem**: the end of indifference![54]

The future of the relationship is left open, but it reveals the wounded hope of **YHVH**. What counts now is not foxhole repentance in order to survive. What counts now is the reality of this husband, who with bitter yearning and affronted loyalty, still open to a relationship, even against the wisdom of the Torah. If perhaps the relationship can be resumed, it will be outlined the righteousness of the Torah. It will be the odd righteousness of the first husband, **God**, who violates Torah for the sake of the relationship **(Psalm 143:1-2). The LORD's** powerful yearning risks defilement for the sake of covenant **(Luke 7:34-35).**[55]