

Shuvah



The Nations Return to God

GARY HARGRAVE



Return to the Lord

The Sabbath is a special time we celebrate every week. But there are special Sabbaths throughout the year that give us a unique perspective into the plan of God. One of these Sabbaths is Shabbat Shuvah, which occurs during the Ten Days of Repentance between Rosh Hashanah (the New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). The Hebrew text of Hosea 14:1 reads, “*Shuvah Yisrael ad Adonai Elohekha*,” meaning, “Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God.” *Shuvah* means “return,” and therefore Shabbat Shuvah is the Sabbath of Return. This conveys what our repentance is all about. We are returning to the Lord. And our intercession for the nations is that they also return to the Lord.

**Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity
And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession?
He does not retain His anger forever,
Because He delights in unchanging love.**

MICAH 7:18

We know that God is angry with the nations. We know that He will bring judgment on the nations. Just read the prophecies of Scripture about the end-time. It makes your head spin to read all the terrible things prophesied to happen on the earth. However, we also know there is another aspect of God as Micah declared, “He does not retain His anger forever.” Remember that God was speaking through the prophet to His people Israel.



The Jewish People Understand God's Unchanging Love

The Jewish people understand what it is to be under the anger of God. They know what it is to be under persecution, to be the focal point of hatred and rejection. So this verse of Scripture is very important to them: “He does not retain His anger forever.” Why? Because God delights in unchanging love. He demands righteousness and justice. But He also delights in unchanging love. The Hebrew word here for “unchanging love” is *hesed*. That is a good word to know because *hesed* is what saves your life every day. This unchanging love of God means that He will not destroy us. When the Jewish people come to Shabbat Shuvah, the Sabbath of Return, they are celebrating the fact that God’s anger will come to an end. It is going to abate. God will reverse His anger, and instead of bringing judgment He will bring blessing. They know that God is a God of unchanging love.

He will again have compassion on us;
He will tread our iniquities under foot.
Yes, You will cast all their sins
Into the depths of the sea.
You will give truth to Jacob
And unchanging love to Abraham,
Which You swore to our forefathers
From the days of old.

Micah 7:19-20

I think our approach to repentance often misses the point. You might say, “I think I’ve repented of everything I can repent of. I’ve worn out my repenter.” Well, I am sure God could show you more things that you need to repent of. But is the purpose of repentance so that we keep repenting of the same sins? No, it is for us to finally know the reality of His unchanging love.



God's Anger at Sin Is Because of His Unchanging Love

I wish we could honestly feel how mad God is at what we have done. We need to feel God's emotion about our sin. It is one reason why we keep going back into sin—because we never get it. Moses said to the children of Israel, “Listen, God came down in order to test you and to make you fear Him. He wants you to fear His anger and wrath.” Why? Not because He is an angry, wrathful God, but because He does not want us to sin again (Exodus 20:20). He wants to shower us with His love, but if we are repeat offenders, we hold God in a place of anger. We hold Him in a place of judgment. So something must happen in repentance that goes deeper than saying, “I’m sorry for my sin.” We need to feel God's feelings. We need to see His passion about our violation to appreciate His unchanging love.

We do not get His unchanging love until we get the fact that God should send us to hell for what we have done. Until you realize that you are not going to get what you actually deserve, you will not fully understand God's unchanging love. Shabbat Shuvah precedes Yom Kippur. Our returning to the Lord should be with the awareness of what Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, is all about. It is the experience of God pulling us away from the judgment we deserve (Leviticus 16:20-22).



We Are Literally Saved from Death by God's Unchanging Love

Do you really understand that your salvation experience is literally God saving your life? If someone grabbed you and pulled you off the street away from an oncoming bus, you would say, “You just saved my life! You literally saved me from destruction.” That is what God does for us. But that must be real to us and not something ethereal or theoretical.

Our repentance should be to the point that our salvation becomes real, His unchanging love becomes real, and His compassion becomes real. God wants you to watch Him tread your iniquities under foot. He wants you to watch Him peel your sin nature off of you, throw it to the ground, and grind it to powder under His foot to do away with it so that it will never rise again. Not only throughout this life but throughout all eternity, we are going to remember our salvation. Throughout eternity God is going to display His love through us. Humanity will be the constant reminder to all creation of the love of God and what He has done in forgiving us, in treading our iniquity underfoot, and in taking all our sins and casting them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).



Include the World in Your Salvation Experience

Our salvation then is more than an individual experience. The Lord taught us to pray, “Forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me.” We relate that to individuals who have negatively impacted our lives. But the entire world negatively impacts your life. Everything about this world with its lack of morality and lack of truth and lack of righteousness trespasses against you. You are deeply impacted by the world’s separation from God, by the fact that it has not returned to the Lord. Yet as a Christian, you were in the same state the world is in. You were “separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). If you know how deeply God has forgiven you, then you realize, “I’m no better than anyone else. I’m no different than the rest of humanity out there. We have all been affected by the same original sin. Why should I receive mercy and not those in the world?”

Then you start thinking like Moses, who prayed, “If You do not forgive these people, then take my life out of Your book as well” (see Exodus 32:32). That level of personal involvement in forgiveness is not in our human nature, but we need to recognize that that it is where God is taking us. Do you wonder what God is doing with Israel? I believe He is working in them a heart to be the intercession for the whole world. When you look at all that God has put Israel through, you begin to understand that He was not trying to destroy them; He was creating His heart in them. If you find that hard to accept, read the story of Abraham.

Then the men rose up from there, and looked down toward Sodom; and Abraham was walking with them to send them off. The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, since Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?”

GENESIS 18:16-18



Intercession to Save Others

This Scripture in Genesis 18:16-18 makes it clear that God confided in Abraham because in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed. That explains the rest of the story in Genesis 18:19-33. The Lord told Abraham that He was going to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and everyone in them. What was Abraham's response? Abraham interceded for the people. He said, “Wait a minute. What if there are fifty righteous people in those cities? Will you destroy them if there are fifty righteous people?” The Lord agreed that He would not destroy the cities if they had only fifty righteous people. But Abraham did not stop there. He kept negotiating until the Lord agreed not to bring destruction even if only ten righteous people remained.

What if Abraham had not stopped at ten? What if the Lord agreed He would not destroy the cities for only one righteous person? Then the Bible story may have been different. There may have been no fire coming down from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham's heart for the people demonstrates the blessing that was to come through his seed for all the nations of the earth. What greater blessing to all the nations can there be than to receive salvation and forgiveness of their sins? Yeshua (Jesus) came as the expression of the heart that was in Abraham. He came as the manifestation of the heart God has worked in the Jewish people, the heart that we as Christians have been grafted into. God is creating the heart that is burdened to see the whole world experience the *hesed* or compassion of God, His unchangeable lovingkindness.



Our Prayer with Israel for God's Mercy on the Nations

I believe that in the end-time judgments, Israel will rise up and plead God's mercy on the nations. And God's anger over the nations will abate. We read in the Scriptures that God's anger and judgment over the nations is based on the way they have treated Israel (Ezekiel 35:5-6, 11-14, 38:18-23). According to Joel, God brings all the nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat and says, "All right, I am going to enter into judgment, and I am going to destroy the nations because of the way they have treated My people Israel" (see Joel 3:1-17). But I believe the people of Israel will cry out to God, "Lord, let mercy triumph over judgment. Let Your grace, Your *hesed*, turn Your burning anger away from the nations and forgive them. Turn Your compassion toward them like You did toward us and bring a change for those nations as You did for us."

**For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy;
mercy triumphs over judgment.**

JAMES 2:13

If God's salvation is real to us, then out of us will come the same cry: "God, save this world. If You're not going to save them, blot our names out too. I don't want to have Your grace for myself and then watch the whole world go into judgment. I want this salvation available to the nations." No one has ever deserved His grace. No one has ever deserved His compassion. No one has ever deserved His lovingkindness. No one has ever deserved the forgiveness of sin. I want that same cry in me that was in Abraham, that same cry in me that was in Moses, that same cry in me that was in Christ coming into the world. Each of them was driven to see salvation ministered to all those who were without it.

God does not revel in judgment. He does not enjoy the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). God is looking for something else. If He were not, He would never have sent Yeshua because Christ is the bridge that brings salvation to all the Gentile nations, to everyone outside the covenants. This is the Shabbat Shuvah that we celebrate. Let us see *shuvah goyim*, the return of the nations to God. Let us see a spirit of repentance released into this age that begins to touch people until they cry out and return to the Lord.

ABOUT GARY HARGRAVE



GARY HARGRAVE has a passion for leading people into spiritual maturity. Gary effectively ministers the life-changing truth of God's Word through Bible teaching and prophetic revelation that emphasizes the Lordship of Christ.

Gary embraces the teachings and insights of the Hebrew Scriptures as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom and the roots of Christian faith.

By cultivating spiritual maturity in Christians, Gary is deeply committed to teaching and inspiring unity in the Body of Christ and between Christians and the Jewish people.

Throughout decades of ministry, Gary has worked closely with leaders in the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities to build relationships based on commonality and understanding. He frequently leads study tours to Israel and the lands of the Bible.

Gary is the host of a weekly podcast entitled *Growing In God*, and is the founder of Shiloh University, an accredited online Bible college and seminary.

Gary and his family reside in Hawaii.

For other insightful resources by Gary Hargrave, including podcasts, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org.

ABOUT HARGRAVE MINISTRIES

The calling of the Lord upon this ministry is to lead people into spiritual maturity by revealing biblical truth. **Our passion is to see the Kingdom of God manifest on earth** as the Body of Christ grows in unity, power and love.

Everything we do flows from the revelation of the Jewish roots of our Christian faith. It is our desire and privilege to bless the land and people of Israel. Our Israel outreach includes:

- **Feed the poor and break the cycle of poverty in Israel**
- **Support the orphans and widows of fallen Israeli soldiers**
- Provide physical and emotional care to **child victims of terrorism**
- **Build bridges between Christians and Jews with biblical study and research**
- Support archaeology and preservation of the **biblical City of David**
- Provide 24/7 **care for Holocaust survivors**
- **Help persecuted Jews around the world return to Israel and start new lives**
- Plant trees to **reforest Israel** and help create **"The Gospel Trail"** between Nazareth and Capernaum

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