

**Congregation Beit Mashiach  
Pastor Andrew Ketel  
Shabbat Message  
September 23, 2017**

**Title:** Returning to the Way.

**Text:** Hosea 10:12

This Shabbat, according to rabbinic tradition, is called "*Shabbat Shuvah*" or translated it into English the Shabbat of Return or Repentance. On this Shabbat, it is customary for the Rabbi to read from the assigned Haftorah reading Hosea 14:2-19. This reading begins with the words: "*Shuvah Yisrael*". The focus of the sermon for this Shabbat is usually how we can come to repentance.

We are presently in the midst of the ten days of Teshuvah, or also referred to as the *Ten Days of Awe*. It is during this period, that each person is encouraged to focus upon the condition of their heart. This soul searching is to lead not only to repentance, but a greater sense of zeal when we pray, a greater level of generously as we give to charity, and greater demonstration of kindness towards our family and neighbours.

In the past, I have found it rather difficult to separate justification from the concept of (continuous) sanctification. Upon reading Acts 3:19 I was struck by the discovery that those who came to that place of return or repentance were not converting to a '*new*' god, but rather realigning themselves with the true God whom they already worshipped. The King James translators brought confusion into the text when they allowed the English translation of the Greek to reflect their own theological biases in that they believed the Jew needed to convert to Christianity. When the Greek actually does not imply that at all, but rather uses the language of this season which is clearly and correctly reflected in the NASV in that at they were to *repent and return*. How can a person actually return if they have not been there before? The text clearly implies in the Greek that these three thousand Jewish men returned to the ways of Torah, when they were commanded to *Shuvah!*

Our text begins with the words '*sow*' with a view to *righteousness* or in other words our actions and deeds should be reflective of what Torah commands of those *on the way*. Everything that we do today has consequences that we will have to walk through in the future. Daily life is really a sowing into your future and it is determined upon what is presently in your sights. During this season, this is one of the most important aspects that we must consider. The Gospel of Matthew reminds us that if we, "*seek first the His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things (our needs) will be added to you (Matt. 6:33).*" What is the focus of our heart – His Kingdom or something different?

If we have sown to righteousness the Prophet Hosea promises us that we will, "*Reap in accordance with kindness (loyalty).*" Yes! There is a '*harvest*' and this harvest is determined upon what you have sown. It is so important for us to remember and acknowledge that we are completely responsible for the harvest that we are gathering today. The word '*reap*' in the Hebrew is in the form of a command, this is no passive concept, but rather something each of us will be involved with. If we have sown with a

view to righteousness then we will reap with kindness or in the Hebrew '*chesed*' which implies not only kindness, but covenantal loyalty. This word '*chesed*' implies that the '*promises of covenant*' will be extended to the lowly, needy and miserable; there is no implication of perfection, only need to be repentant.

Then the Prophet goes on to encourage us, "*to break up our fallow ground*" which is the key to the call of repentance in this season. Salvation is more than acquiring a ticket into heaven for eternity. We have been called to be fruitful; to bear an abundance of fruit (John 15:2), without this our very salvation is in question. Within many lives we have gifting's, resources, and time that we have keep to ourselves; these are areas that have remained **fallow, uncultivated** in light of the Kingdom. Just as in the Parable of the Sower we are challenged to bring forth a harvest of "*a hundred times as great*" (Luke 8:8) as what was sown. On this Shabbat Shuvah we must ask ourselves, do we have fallow ground (Jer. 4:3; Matt. 13:7) is there an area in our lives that has not been submitted to Adonai.

Hosea calls to Israel to realize that, "*it is time to seek the Lord.*" As a Torah Observant believer, I am convinced that there are times – *special times/seasons* - in which Adonai has ordained to meet with His people. These times are His '*Appointed times*' which are prescribed in Scripture (Lev. 23). We must be sensitive to those seasons which Adonai has given for us to draw near to Him, if we hold to the notion of progressive revelation than these Feast Days that we honour have more than an historical teaching element, but have significance to our spiritual journey today. As we reflect on Acts 3:19 what '*time*' was it that the three thousand did Shuvah – was it not the Feast of Shavuot.

It is interesting that all of what we have discussed is based upon our willingness to **seek** (Hebrew – darash) for Adonai.

*Spurgeon writes, "If you are not seeking the Lord, the Devil is seeking you. If you are not seeking the Lord, judgement is at your heels."*

*In the believer's life, it's not enough simply to wake up. We are called to run, to become more like Messiah, to press ahead in godliness.*

This is a daily pursuit in the life of a believer; it can only come about through a discipline of prayer, individual and corporate worship and study of the Word. If we are not diligently immersed in these spiritual disciplines it does not take long for the mindset and worldview of the **world** to become ours. And in no time the way is lost and our harvest is not reflective of His righteousness.

The Prophet Hosea admonishes us to seek Adonai, "*until He comes to rain righteousness on you.*" The goal of a Spirit-filled life is to become part of the unblemished bride (Rev. 21:9) who in the fullness of time will behold her groom and receive all that was promised to her. Our seeking of Adonai is to continue daily, to progress from level to level of revelation and sanctification, with the ultimate goal of being poured upon. Yes! The Hebrew actually says that He will **pour** (*shoot arrows / teach*) upon us righteousness, like a Texas rain. It is only within the seeking that we can sow, reap and break up the fallow ground – this is the focus of our season of Shuvah. As we seek it is then that we can experience a measure of that future glory as the over flow as His abundance touches our lives in the here and now.

Today the question that we must ask ourselves, have we, ***“left our first love”*** (Rev. 2:4). If the answer is in the affirmative then we like the three thousand in Acts 3:19 need to “Repent (teshuvah) and Return (Shuvah)” to that level of love (obedience) – ***our first love*** - that we once walked in. It is only then that we will be able to partake in the overflow of His righteousness.