



# Corporate Repentance

Teshuva for All Israel

by Tim Kelley

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Today is the 18<sup>th</sup> day of Elul. We've passed the final full moon until the Feast of Tabernacles, and are almost halfway through the traditional 40-day period of time of repentance that precedes Yom Kippur. This period is traditionally called "Teshuva", a word that literally means "return". In the Hebraic context, to "repent" simply means to "return to YHVH".

From past studies, we've seen that repentance is more than simply feeling sorry. Though being sorry for past actions is certainly part of the repentance process, it is not the only thing. The ancient sages say that there are 5 steps to repentance.

- 1) Remorse – being sorry that you did whatever you did
- 2) Confession – going to your brother and to God confessing your infraction

King David wrote about these two steps as he considered what he had done in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite. In his Psalm he said -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Psalm 38:18** For I will declare my iniquity; I will be in anguish over my sin.

- 3) Restitution – restoring what was taken. In YHVH's Hebrew culture, if you took something from someone, you restored it and often added something to it.
- 4) Forgiveness – asking the offended person for forgiveness is what you do AFTER you've done the previous steps. YHVH says that if a person has done the previous steps, we "shall" forgive him.<sup>1</sup>
- 5) Forsaking the Sin – simply changing your walk so that you're not inclined to commit the same trespass again.

We've heard numerous teachings about these various steps and how they apply to each of us individually. In many cases, we've taught these steps to our children and have applied them when we've asked God for forgiveness. In some cases, we've even applied them to our relationships with our brother, though probably not as often as we should.

Repentance is something each of us should be doing year round, not just during this season; and even though individual repentance is important, I want to talk today about another type of repentance . . . the repentance of the people of God as a body. I'll call it "corporate" repentance.

There are numerous times in the scripture where God calls upon his people as a "body" to repent. In fact, even though there are numerous cases of individual repentance highlighted throughout the scripture, the majority of "repentance" cases is in regards to Israel as a people. So in today's study, I want show the importance of corporate repentance in both a local and national scale. We'll discuss these things:

- Israel – a corporate people
- Is there a need for corporate repentance
- What we can do

Keep in mind that we're not going to be discussing the "mechanics" of repentance, but the need of and the effect of repentance on a corporate level.

Let's begin by defining the word "corporate". When many of us see this word, the first thing that comes to mind is the word "corporation", and this is quite understandable since most ministries and churches in America are organized as corporations for tax and liability purposes. But the word "corporate" does not automatically imply a corporation. Instead, it's an adjective that modifies the noun.

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<sup>1</sup> Lev. 6:1-7

Webster's Dictionary<sup>2</sup> (1913 edition) defines "corporate" as:

- 1) Formed into a body by legal enactment; united in an association, and endowed by law with the rights and liabilities of an individual; incorporated; as, a corporate town.
- 2) Belonging to a corporation or incorporated body
- 3) United; general; collectively one.

The WordNet Dictionary<sup>3</sup> defines it this way:

- 1) of or belonging to a corporation; "corporate rates"; "corporate structure
- 2) possessing or existing in bodily form; "what seemed corporal melted as breath into the wind"- Shakespeare; "an incarnate spirit"; "'corporate' is an archaic term"
- 3) done by or characteristic of individuals acting together; "a joint identity"; "the collective mind"; "the corporate good"

Though the adjective can be applied to a legally organized group, it can also be applied to a collective body of individuals who work together for a common goal or purpose. Though the New Testament never uses the word "corporate", it does use words with the same meaning such as "body".

<sup>NKJ</sup> **1 Corinthians 12:12-14** <sup>12</sup> For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> For in fact the body is not one member but many.

In his 1 Corinthians letter, Paul was not introducing a New Testament concept, but rather a truth that had been a part of the Hebrew people from the beginning. In one of his last messages to the Israelites, Moses said this to all Israel<sup>4</sup> -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Deuteronomy 28:9** "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways . . ."

Notice that Moses didn't say that God would establish them as holy "persons", or holy "individuals"; he said that they'd be a "people". The Hebrew phrase is "שְׂדֵה קְדוֹשׁ" (*I'am kadosh* – holy people) and it means exactly that – a people. What's more, Israel – as a people – was to be God's. We can understand that concept because we know that Israel, as a people, is His bride. He doesn't have hundreds or thousands of brides, he has just one – Israel.

The Jewish people understand this quite clearly. In the Amidah (Standing Prayers), the idea of Adonai being the god of a collective body is emphasized throughout. The very first prayer begins with:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, the God of Abraham . . ."

In its prayer for forgiveness it says:

"Forgive us, O our Father, for we have sinned; pardon us, O our King, for we have transgressed; for you pardon and forgive."

And its prayer of thanksgiving shows the corporate concept of giving thanks to God:

We will give you thanks and declare your praise for our lives that are committed into your hands, for our souls that are entrusted to you,

So when God looks at Israel, He's not looking at a bunch of individuals, He's looking at His people, His body. And when Israel as a people sin, they all share the guilt. Let's go back again to Moses message to

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.webster-dictionary.org/>

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> Deut. 1:1

those Israelites who survived the 40 years in the wilderness. While rehearsing the events that led up to Israel having to wander all those years, Moses said to all Israel – even those who were not even born when this event happened:

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Deuteronomy 1:22-26** "And everyone of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land . . . <sup>25</sup> " . . . and they brought back word to us, saying, '*It is a good land which the LORD our God is giving us.*' <sup>26</sup> " Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God . . . "

Obviously, not all who were present to hear Moses' message took part in the rebellion, but never-the-less, God considers them a people, and thus they all shared the punishment . . . even Moses. This is not the only time the people as a whole shared the guilt, it happened many times in scripture. For instance, the sin of Achin. Even though only one person committed a trespass, God attributed it to all Israel –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Joshua 7:10-11** <sup>10</sup> So the LORD said to Joshua: "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? <sup>11</sup> "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put *it* among their own stuff.

Oftentimes the sins of the leaders are endured by the people. King David was an example. Because David did not familiarize himself with the requirements for transporting the Ark of the Covenant, Uzzah paid with his life; and when David, contrary to God's commandment, decided to number Israel, seventy thousand men died.

Today, God's people are scattered throughout the nations. We've been exiled to foreign lands because of the sins of our fathers, and thus we are not enjoying the blessings YHVH had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Nor do we enjoy the peace we could have had if our fathers had continued in God's way. The prophet Jeremiah spent a lifetime warning Israel, specifically Judah, what would happen if they continued to walk contrary to God, but his warnings fell on deaf ears. As he laments the destruction of Jerusalem, Jeremiah writes –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Lamentations 5:7-8** <sup>7</sup> Our fathers sinned *and are* no more, But we bear their iniquities. <sup>8</sup> Servants rule over us; *There is none to deliver us* from their hand.

Psalms 106, a Psalm about God's exiled concurs with Jeremiah's prayer -

<sup>KJV</sup> **Psalm 106:6** We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. <sup>7</sup> Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea.

As the Psalm continues to rehearse the sins of Israel, it reveals the result of the sins of our fathers.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Psalm 106:40** Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance. <sup>41</sup> And he gave them into the hand of the heathen . . .

So we bear the guilt, and the punishment, of our father's sins. We are exiled as individuals and small groups scattered throughout Texas, throughout America, and throughout the world. We get excited when we see new people walking this walk, and pray for the time when our communities and towns will be filled with Torah fellowships – the way it was before the sins of our fathers caused it to be taken away.

So what do we do? What steps must we take to restore what was lost? As you might guess, we only have to go to the scriptures to find the answer.

King Solomon was a very wise man. He understood the scripture and was very much aware of Moses' prophecies of Israel's demise, yet he probably never realized that it would be his own actions over the next 30 or so years would begin the process by which Israel eventually fell into captivity. Just after Solomon had concluded the dedication of the Israel's first Temple, YHVH spoke to him in a dream,

showing him what Israel would have to do if she ever hoped to be delivered from that prophesied captivity. He said –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **2 Chronicles 7:14** "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

This is the “formula” you might say. This is what we as a people must do. This is how YHVH hears our cry. We must:

- Humble ourselves,
- Seek His face (His attention) through prayer, and
- Repent

We, as a corporate people - scattered throughout the nations, must turn back to the God of THE fathers – the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and turn from the god's of the nations in which we've been scattered. The scriptures provide a great example of what we must do in the person of Daniel.

Daniel too was a captive, a captive in Babylon, a captivity that came about as a result of the sins of his generation's fathers. Just like us, Daniel could tell that the end of the captivity was near, so he began to fast and pray about it. Dressed in sackcloth and covered with ashes, Daniel prayed a prayer that got results. I want to take a few moments and focus on various aspects of his prayer -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Daniel 9:4-19** "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, <sup>5</sup> "we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. <sup>6</sup> "Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land.

You'll notice that up to this point, Daniel had not used the pronoun “they” anywhere; it's all “we”. Even though he was not a part of the rebellion, even though he didn't take part in the sins, he still shared the guilt of what happened and bore the consequences of those sins.

<sup>7</sup> "O Lord, righteousness *belongs* to You, but to us shame of face, as *it is* this day -- to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You.

Daniel only refers to the scattered northern tribes as “they” because, “they” – according to the prophet Hosea, had become “lo ammi”, *not my people*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>8</sup> "O Lord, to us *belongs* shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. <sup>9</sup> "To the Lord our God *belong* mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. <sup>10</sup> "We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> "Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him.

More than likely, Daniel had not taken part in the sins of Judah that had led to the captivity. Never-the-less, he accepts the corporate guilt of those transactions. He, along with many others of Judah, are paying the consequences of the sins that other people committed.

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<sup>5</sup> Hosea 1:9

<sup>12</sup> "And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> "As *it is* written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth. <sup>14</sup> "Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. <sup>15</sup> "And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as *it is* this day -- we have sinned, we have done wickedly! <sup>16</sup> " O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *are* a reproach to all *those* around us. <sup>17</sup> "Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. <sup>18</sup> "O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. <sup>19</sup> "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name."

We know that as a result of Daniel's prayer, he was given insight into the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel as the Messianic Kingdom, and it was partly because of Daniel's prophecy that the Jewish people of the first century were expecting the Messiah to come in their day<sup>6</sup>. But before the Messiah would arrive, John the Baptist began to deliver a message of repentance motivated by the imminent arrival of the Kingdom of God.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Matthew 3:1** In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, <sup>2</sup> and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

According to the text, "Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan . . ." came to John's baptism. It appears that many of the Jews in that day understood that, just as Moses, Solomon, and the prophets had taught, there would need to be a time of national repentance before the coming of the Messiah and the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel.

Shortly after His bout with HaSatan, and after John was put in prison, Yeshua started his own ministry, and like John, preached repentance motivated by the fact that the Kingdom was at hand.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Matthew 4:17** <sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Yeshua reached hundreds, maybe even thousands<sup>7</sup> of people with His teaching of repentance in regards to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. It appears that corporate repentance is a prerequisite for those who truly want to be a part of His kingdom. Just one more example helps to nail down that point. Let's take a look at Peter's message on Shavuot, just days after asking the risen Messiah when the kingdom would be restored.

Peter gave a powerful message to the crowd that had gathered. Believers from all over Asia Minor had come to Jerusalem for the festival, and were able to hear his message. Peter quoted heavily from Joel 2:28 and beyond, passages that prophecy of the Messianic Kingdom. He explained that Yeshua had died, but that the grave was not able to hold Him, and that He was now at the right hand of YHVH awaiting the day He would return to restore the Kingdom.

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<sup>6</sup> Luke 3:15-16

<sup>7</sup> Mark 11:18

Before ending his message, Peter gave this instruction to the audience –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Acts 2:36** "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Peter stated emphatically that “all the house of Israel”, including those in attendance, had crucified the Messiah. We know that in reality, only a few of the Jewish leaders were directly responsible for Yeshua’s death, but never-the-less, Peter indicated that the guilt of His crucifixion fell on all of them. So how did the people respond? By asking “what shall we do”; and as we’ve seen in the examples before, the answer was to “repent and be baptized”.

The repentance of God’s people on a corporate level appears to be a prerequisite to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. But how can that happen when we are so scattered and theologically diverse? I believe it will have to start with the leaders.

We’re all familiar with the story of Jonah and the big fish, and we’re intrigued by the thought of a man surviving in the stomach of a fish for three days and three nights. But the “big story” of the book of Jonah is the corporate repentance of the people of Nineveh. There are many theories as to why the people headed Jonah’s prophecy, but the text simply says “. . . the people of Nineveh believed God.” That’s it . . . they believed. Even the king believed, and because he did, He set an example of repentance and instructed his subjects to do the same. As a result, God did not bring disaster on the city.

The case of Nineveh lies in stark contrast to the Jewish leaders in Yeshua’s day. Instead of true repentance, their “repentance” was pretty much for show, and instead of recognizing the signs of the times, as well as the obvious signs that Messiah had come, they rebelled against the obvious and failed to lead the people to repentance. Yeshua later scolded them saying that the men of Nineveh would fare better in the judgment day than the Jews of his day.

There are a number of other examples of corporate repentance in scripture<sup>8</sup>, and in most of those cases, it was the leader – the king or the judge – that began the process of leading the people back to god.

There are also times when the leadership will simply mis-understand one or more of God’s commandments and consequently the people will find themselves in a sin that they never intended to commit. YHVH, in His mercy, knew that this might happen from time to time, so He provided a means of repentance and atonement by which the congregation as a whole could be forgiven of that sin.

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Leviticus 4:13-** ' Now if the whole congregation of Israel sins unintentionally, and the thing is hidden from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done *something against* any of the commandments of the LORD . . . and are guilty; <sup>14</sup> 'when the sin which they have committed becomes known, then the assembly shall offer a young bull for the sin . . . <sup>15</sup> 'And the elders of the congregation shall lay their hands on the head of the bull before the LORD. Then the bull shall be killed before the LORD.

The bottom line is this. God has called out a people for His name, and if that people walk in His ways and truly represent His name, they will be blessed; but if they don’t, he will bring destruction upon them for the purpose of bringing them to repentance. We are that people. Our fathers have sinned, and we have sinned. And our people are suffering because of it.

But it doesn’t have to remain that way. God shows us what He will do, if we as a people repent -

<sup>NKJ</sup> **Jeremiah 18:6-8** "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay *is* in the potter's hand, so *are* you in My hand, O house of Israel! <sup>7</sup> "The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy

<sup>8</sup> Ezra 10:1, Judges 10:15, 1 Sam. 7:3, 2 Chron. 15:8-15

*it,* <sup>8</sup> "if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.

What YHVH wants from us is our heart. He wants us to walk in His ways because they're good for us, and because it pleases him. And when we ere, He wants from us is acknowledge our trespass, do what we can do to make it right, and return back to Him.

Our fathers didn't have a heart for YHVH, and we are bearing the consequences and the guilt to this day.

When we get on our knees during this period of teshuva, let's ask forgiveness not only for our sins, but also for the un-repentd of sins of our fathers.

I want to close with another portion of the Amidah prayer, the 5<sup>th</sup> benediction which is called "Teshuva" or "Bring Repentance" -

Bring us back, O our father, to your Instruction; draw us near, O our King, to your service; and cause us to return to you in perfect repentance. Blessed are you, O Lord, who delights in repentance.

Shalom

Shalom Alechein