Zephaniah — T'shuvah

I say “repent,” and you say?

What do you think of? Where have you heard this in the Text before? Where have you heard it used in our churches or in our culture?

I say “repent,” and you say, what?

Acknowledge your faults, your mistakes? Admit your wrongdoing and wallow in it? Admit your wrongdoing and work as hard as humanly possible to make up for it? I’m typically drawn to the latter.

Subconsciously, many of us sit in this space of repentance where we can’t get over the truth or repercussions of something we’ve done and remain stuck there, wallowing, *or* we jump to overdoing acts of goodness, works, just to make sure that our repentance was seen by God or taken seriously. *Did I repent enough?* Or, perhaps, that’s just me.

Did I repent enough?

However, when we’re faced with the meaning of repent in its Hebrew context, there’s something more—something different—that we may miss or don’t see quite as clearly.

T’shuvah. God says “repent,” and He is saying *t’shuvah*.

Repent. Turn. Turn around. Redirect. Make a U-turn. Within a prophetical lens like the one I was raised in (fire, brimstone), my first instinct when faced with the idea of repent as a U-turn is to turn and RUN AWAY! Flee, or get far away from the impending doom or consequences, fearful of being left behind. There is something there, metaphorically, to run as quickly as you can back to God.

Yet, there also may be danger in this as the sole interpretation of turn as an escape *backwards.* But, the Text of Zephaniah calls the people of Judah to more within this understanding of repentance. That *t’shuvah* is in fact a U-turn, but with more purpose than escaping punishment or being forgiven. To not just turn back and remain there, but to make that intentional turn back the way you came and identify the original wrong turn, correct it, and continue moving forward. If faith is a journey, we can make that U-turn, find and remember where we came from, and carry on to do the next right thing.

More than just escaping punishment or being forgiven.

This is where the hope in Zephaniah resides—in the U-turn and continuing the journey afterward. That place in the final chapter where He tells Judah there are exiles—those who held onto hope. Those who despise the festivals and noisy hymns.

Those who seek to plant and harvest the land themselves, placing themselves at the crossroads of the earth to share it. Those who seek to bless the world, not to build and benefit off the backs of others.

Written to the Kingdom of Judah, yet carried by generations of exiles (the children of those who'd left their harps behind in the trees), this final chapter leaves so much hope in chaos and uncertainty. A future hope where they will not just one day make music again, but where God will join in with rejoicing and singing over them—over us. Over you.

… God will join in with rejoicing and singing over them—over us. Over you.

Some of us need to turn back in order to find the right path again. Others of us need to turn back and restore and reconcile before *diyn* comes. And I'd wager that, for all of us, these turns occur time and time again.

T'shuvah. T'shuvah. T'shuvah. God said. God is saying.

How do you respond? Which way do you turn? Where do you go next?

PRAYER

May we see the world as You've created it.
Whole. Good—with potential.
May we till our own fields and harvest them, the corners left uncut.
Build our own homes and live in them, the doors left open.

Shelter us, God, as we turn towards You,
seeking righteousness and truth.
May we choose what is right as the humble of the land,
worshiping You shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand,
and heart to heart.
So gather the exiles. Restore the land.
Put Your world back together.
Restore a remnant of us to hope.

Amen

EPISODE 54 (SESSION 2)

THE FOUR PILLARS



BEMA Discipleship is built on four pillars; a **Four-Pillared Perspective** to help us remember **to elevate the words of God** (not ours) and help us identify the principles that we see recurring in the story of God's people.

Here are some applications for this episode echoing the ideas of the four pillars:

I

TEXT

What stands out to you from the Text that you want to carry with you as you read the prophets? Try meditating and memorizing the end of Chapter 3. How might it bring you hope?

II

COMMUNITY

How does your community see the warnings of Zephaniah? How have you experienced repentance? Where might your community need to make a U-turn, or how have you?

III

DISCIPLESHIP

Who are you bringing alongside you in modeling t'shuvah? What challenges stand in your way—pride, fear, confusion? How might you more effectively invite such conversation in your life?

IV

WRESTLING

What are your thoughts on t'shuvah? How do forms of justice fit into this prophetic narrative? What are you most curious about or struggling with?

Spotify

Are you a music listener?

Listen along to our BEMA Music Playlists on Spotify.

Song suggestions? Send them to bemabesorah@gmail.com.

BEMA SESSION 2

MEDITATION & PRAYER

REFLECTION, APPLICATION & IMPACT

There are three emphases that we are always thinking about in terms of application at BEMA. These may be stated explicitly at times, but often we will want you to do the work of finding ways to connect the dots to the things we are learning. Much of this is what makes the work of BEMA distinct as a ministry of Impact Campus Ministries.

CREATING A SPACE
SPIRITUAL FORMATION

True success is developing intimacy with God. In Session 1, we encountered the idea of "Creating Space for God" in our lives. We believe that ***if we do our part of creating that space, God will fill it*** *as He desires. You're already doing this as you dive into the Text and jump into a place to discuss. God will meet you in these places! Look for places the Holy Spirit can do work in and through you as you go about your everyday life.*

CONSIDERING CAMPUS
YOUNG PEOPLE FOCUS

We believe that young adults are shaping the future of this world. *Jesus modeled a ministry of discipling young adults, and that approach has and will work. If you are a college student who is listening, we want this material to be directly helpful to your pursuits. If you are not a college student, we want to challenge you to come alongside one and work together.*

SACRED STATION
THEOLOGY OF WORK

This isn't only for church or Bible study; this is about what we do every day. How we do our job and how it may take advantage of or bring life to others is something God says is central to our presence in the world. Justice is very much something God cares about. Does our physical work (our 9–5 job) bring shalom or chaos? Does it exploit creation? The way we manage our employees, interact with customers or coworkers, care for our children, or create products can provide relief to others. ***The work we do every day is sacred and matters!***

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