

# Jeremiah 31:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

## Analysis

**Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.** This verse uses vivid imagery of marking a return path to call Israel to repentance and restoration. **Set thee up waymarks** (natzav tsiyunim, נַצְבֵּתְנִים צִוְּנִים) uses tsiyun, meaning road marker or monument—stones piled to mark trails. **Make thee high heaps** (tamrurim, תַּמְרוּרִים) refers to tall pillars or signposts visible from distance. These markers enable travelers to retrace steps on return journeys.

**Set thine heart toward the highway** shifts from external markers to internal orientation. The heart (lev, לב) represents will and affections. **The highway** (mesilah, מֵסֶלֶת) means a raised, prepared road—the main route. **The way which thou wentest** acknowledges Israel's journey into exile; the same path leads back. This implies that return is possible, not a different, unknown route.

**Turn again, O virgin of Israel** uses shuv (שׁוב) twice for emphasis—the central verb meaning return, repent, restore. **Virgin of Israel** (בתולת יִשְׂרָאֵל, betulat yisrael) is both tender (unmarried daughter) and ironic (given Israel's spiritual adultery). God still claims His bride, calling her back to covenant relationship. **Turn again to these thy cities** promises not just personal but communal, geographical restoration—rebuilt cities, renewed community.

## Historical Context

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Exiles faced the psychological challenge of imagining return after decades in Babylon. Many had never seen Judah; Babylon was home. God's call to 'set up waymarks' encouraged them to mentally and spiritually prepare for return, keeping alive the hope and intention to go back. Historically, when Cyrus issued his decree (538 BC), many Jews had assimilated and chose to remain in Babylon. This command separated those committed to covenant restoration from those comfortable in exile. The faithful remnant did return, rebuild, and await further fulfillment in Messiah.

## Related Passages

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**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. What spiritual 'waymarks' help believers remember the path back to God when we've wandered into sin or spiritual exile?
2. How does God's persistent call to 'turn again' demonstrate His patience and desire for His people's restoration?
3. In what sense must we 'set our hearts toward the highway'—the known path of obedience—rather than seeking novel spiritual experiences?

## Interlinear Text

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לְבָנָךְ	שְׁתִּי	תִּמְרֹרִים	לְבָנָךְ	שְׁתִּי	תִּמְרֹרִים
Set thee up	H0	waymarks	make	H0	thee high heaps
H5324		H6725	H7760		H8564
לְמַסְלֵה	הַ	דְּרוֹם	בָּלְכָתִי	שְׁבִי	בְּתוּלָת
toward the highway		even the way	which thou wentest	turn again	O virgin
H4546		H1870	H1980	H7725	H1330
וְשַׁבָּא לְ	אֶל	עַבְיוֹן	אֱלֹהִים		
of Israel	turn again	H413	to these thy cities	H428	
H3478	H7725		H5892		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Jeremiah 50:5** (Parallel theme): They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

**Isaiah 48:20** (Parallel theme): Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The LORD hath redeemed his servant Jacob.