

Zechariah 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts;
Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto
you, saith the LORD of hosts.

Analysis

This verse contains one of Scripture's most gracious invitations, rooted in covenant faithfulness. "Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts" establishes prophetic authority—this is God's direct word, not human opinion. "Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts" uses the imperative shuvu elay ("return to me"), the prophetic call to repentance. The verb shuv means to turn back, return, or repent—changing direction from sin toward God. This isn't merely feeling sorry but active turning from rebellion to obedience.

"And I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts" promises reciprocal response. God doesn't merely accept repentance passively; He actively turns toward His returning people with favor, blessing, and restored relationship. The conditional structure establishes human responsibility ("you turn") while assuring divine grace ("I will turn"). This doesn't suggest synergism where human will initiates salvation independently; rather, God's gracious call enables response (John 6:44; Philippians 2:12-13). God's turning toward us makes possible our turning toward Him.

The repetition "saith the LORD of hosts" (ne'um Yahweh tseba'ot) appears twice, emphasizing divine authority and power. Yahweh tseba'ot ("LORD of hosts/armies") portrays God as commander of heavenly armies—angels, stars, and all creation. This military imagery assures that the same God who has power to judge also has power to save, restore, and protect. His invitation to return isn't empty—He possesses all authority and power to fulfill His promises.

Historical Context

Zechariah prophesied to post-exilic Jews who returned from Babylonian captivity (538 BC onward). Though God allowed return, the community faced massive challenges: ruined Jerusalem, destroyed temple, opposition from surrounding peoples, economic hardship, and spiritual discouragement. Work on rebuilding the temple had stalled (Ezra 4:24). Zechariah and Haggai arose to encourage temple completion and spiritual renewal.

The call to "turn unto me" addresses spiritual complacency. Though physically returned from exile, the people hadn't truly repented of the sins that caused exile. Zechariah 1:4-6 warns against repeating their fathers' errors: "Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried...but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD." The previous generation's refusal to heed prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel resulted in Babylon's devastation. Zechariah urges the current generation to learn from history and respond to God's call.

The promise "I will turn unto you" offers hope. Though restoration seemed incomplete—no Davidic king ruled, foreign powers dominated, and the rebuilt temple paled compared to Solomon's (Ezra 3:12)—God promised His presence and future blessing. This anticipates the Messianic age when God would fully turn toward His people through Christ's incarnation, establishing new covenant relationship surpassing all previous covenants (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6-13).

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's call to "turn unto me" demonstrate that repentance is both human responsibility and divine gift?
2. What does the promise "I will turn unto you" reveal about God's eagerness to restore relationship with repentant sinners?
3. How should knowledge of past generations' failures inform present faithfulness and response to God's Word?

Interlinear Text

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:7 (References Lord): Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Jeremiah 3:22 (References Lord): Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God.

Jeremiah 4:1 (References Lord): If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

Isaiah 31:6 (Parallel theme): Turn ye unto him from whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted.

Jeremiah 12:15 (Parallel theme): And it shall come to pass, after that I have plucked them out I will return, and have compassion on them, and will bring them again, every man to his heritage, and every man to his land.

Joel 2:12 (References Lord): Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

Jeremiah 25:5 (References Lord): They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever:

Jeremiah 35:15 (Parallel theme): I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

Ezekiel 33:11 (References Lord): Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Hosea 14:4 (Parallel theme): I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.