



## The Call Of Return

By Rev. Gary Cristofaro

Everyday of the year my focus and the focus of Ezra International is on the return of the Jewish people to their ancestral homeland. It is without a doubt the most prophesied on-going event within all of Scripture. Likewise during the Fall Feasts of the Lord I'm compelled to reflect on a different type of return. "Teshuva", which literally means return, repentance and higher ascent.

The seventh month of the Hebrew calendar begins with Yom Teruah (Feasts of Trumpets) it is a time of introspection leading to repentance. It is the beginning of the "Days of Awe" in anticipation of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). These feasts culminate with the most joyous of all the feasts, Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) and finally a day of rejoicing over the Torah (Simchat Torah).



In Nehemiah (8:2-5) we read: *So Ezra the priest brought the Torah before the assembly of men and women and all who could hear with understanding on the first day of the seventh month. .... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. When the people heard what Ezra was reading and realized how far they had strayed from God's commands they began to weep. Then Ezra and the Levites told the people not to weep. "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep." Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.* (Vs9-10)

God was pleased that His word had convicted His children. This marked another new beginning in the history of the Jewish people. It was also an important reminder of the grace and mercy of God that is always accessible when His people return to Him. *Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Return to Me," says the Lord of hosts, "and I will return to you," says the Lord of hosts. (Zechariah 1:3)*

Oh how God's heart longs for all of His children to return to Him. His heart must grieve, as many have strayed so far away. Many even in the church today are no longer convicted by His commandments. Yeshua (Jesus) said, *"If you love me, keep my commandments"* (John 14:15). Which is often interpreted as simply "love one another". Left to its self, "love one another" is a pretty nebulous command. After all, *"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes..."* (Proverbs 21:2) God had taken all the guesswork away when He gave the Torah at Sinai but today what it means to love one another is being completely redefined.

Yeshua personified the Torah; therefore His disciples knew exactly what loving one another meant in context. The Torah was given as a universal code of conduct. That same Torah was read before the people in Ezra and Nehemiah's day. That same Torah is the standard that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob holds up before us today.

I believe we are not only in the midst of the fall feast season; we are also in the midst of a season of a twofold miracle. The return of the Jewish people from the four corners of the earth to the land of Israel is a greater miracle than the first exodus out of Egypt and a greater miracle than the first return from Babylon. Not only is the magnitude of the re-gathering more impressive but also coinciding with this final return is the return of a gentile remnant from nations. Not a physical return to the land of Israel, but a spiritual return to the Holy One of Israel. There are still a people today who are convicted by His word and as a love response, adhere to His commands.

If we examine the words of Ezekiel in chapter 36 we discover his prophecies bare witness to this phenomenon. Speaking of the return, God says through Ezekiel; *"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went. And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; **and the nations shall know that I am the Lord," says the Lord God, when I am hallowed in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land"*** (Ezekiel 36:22-24).

Do you see it? Revelation of the significance of the physical return will bring about a spiritual return of a remnant people from the nations. The word promises there will be those who have the eyes to see this evidence of God's faithfulness and respond with rejoicing. The creator of the universe is waiting with open arms to all who do.

"Return to Me and I will return to you". Pause and to take time in this holy season to reflect on what God is up to. In so doing you just may discover your own eternal destiny and divine purpose. May you ascend even higher!