

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Return Before You Rebuild”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): *Zech. 1:1-6; Mk. 3:20-21; 6:3; Jn. 7:1-5; Acts 12:1-2, 17; 21:17-20; Gal. 1:18-19; 1 Cor. 15:7-8; Jude 1*

Most of us know what it is like to begin something with great enthusiasm, only to leave it sitting unfinished. Maybe it was a project, a calling, a commitment, or an area of spiritual growth. At first, we were excited. We could see what it might become. But then opposition came, the work became harder than expected, and what once filled us with anticipation slowly became a source of discouragement. Before long, the unfinished foundation simply became part of the landscape—something we passed every day without really seeing anymore.

That is where the people were when the word of ADONAI came through Zechariah. They were on the other side of exile. Cyrus had allowed them to return to the land nearly twenty years earlier, and they had laid the foundation of the Temple with great enthusiasm. But opposition came, discouragement settled over them, and the work stopped. Haggai was sent to stir them to resume the outward work of rebuilding, while Zechariah came alongside him to address the deeper spiritual work that had to take place within them. God was not merely interested in rebuilding a physical house. He wanted to awaken His people, restore their hearts, and keep them from rebuilding the same outward structure with the same inward condition that had led their fathers into exile.

1. REMEMBER THAT ADONAI REMEMBERS

Zechariah begins by telling us that the word of ADONAI came to a prophet whose very name carried the message the people needed to hear. Z'khar-Yah means “ADONAI remembers.” In Scripture, remembering is not merely recalling information. It is bringing something to the forefront of the mind in such a way that it moves into action. ADONAI had not forgotten His people in Babylon, His covenant promises, or the purpose for which He had brought them back. The ruined Temple, the stalled construction, and the weakness of the returning remnant did not mean that His purposes had been abandoned. The word of ADONAI came because the God who remembers was actively moving to fulfill what He had spoken.

The people may have felt small, outnumbered, and overwhelmed by the rubble before them, but the success of the work did not depend upon their ability to reproduce the former glory of Solomon's Temple. Through Haggai, ADONAI told them, “*Chazak! ... and work! For I am with you!*” (Hag. 2:4). Their confidence was not to rest in silver, gold, size, appearance, or their memories of what had once been. Their confidence was to rest in the presence and faithfulness of ADONAI. When we become discouraged, we tend to focus on what has been lost, what remains unfinished, or how small the present work

appears. Zechariah reminds us to look instead toward the One who remembers. What He has spoken has not been forgotten, and what He has begun, He can finish.

2. RETURN TO HIM BEFORE TRYING TO REBUILD FOR HIM

The first direct message Zechariah delivered was not, “Pick up your tools.” It was, “*Return to Me ... and I will return to you*” (Zech. 1:3). Haggai had called the people to resume the physical work, but Zechariah made clear that the physical work had to be accompanied by spiritual change. ADONAI did not simply want another Temple standing in Jerusalem. The former Temple had been outwardly magnificent, but its beauty had concealed deep corruption, injustice, idolatry, and disobedience. The people had repeatedly declared, “The Temple of ADONAI,” as though the presence of a religious structure could compensate for hearts that refused to hear His voice.

The invitation to return reveals the heart of ADONAI even in His correction. He was not calling them back so He could humiliate or reject them. He was calling them back because He desired fellowship with them: “*Return to Me ... and I will return to you.*” Repentance is more than feeling badly about something or acknowledging that we have made mistakes. The Hebrew word *shuv* speaks of turning around, changing direction, and returning to the One from whom we have wandered. Before we ask ADONAI to bless what we are building, we must allow Him to examine who we are becoming. A new work cannot be sustained by an unchanged heart. The most important rebuilding may not be around us at all; it may be the spiritual rebuilding ADONAI desires to accomplish **within** us.

3. HEAR HIS WORD AND DO NOT REPEAT THE PAST

ADONAI then gave the returning generation a serious warning: “*Do not be like your fathers*” (Zech. 1:4). The former prophets had repeatedly called their fathers to turn from their evil paths and evil actions, but “*they did not listen or pay attention*” (Zech. 1:4). They did not shema. They heard the sound of the prophetic message, but they did not receive it with the attentiveness that leads to obedience. The problem was not that ADONAI had failed to speak clearly or frequently. He had sent His servants “early and often,” but the people continued to resist what He was saying until they could no longer avoid the consequences of their choices.

Zechariah asked, “*Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But My words and My decrees ... did they not overtake your fathers?*” (Zech. 1:5–6). The fathers were gone, and the prophets who had warned them were gone, but the word of ADONAI remained. His word had caught up with them. They could dismiss it, delay their response to it, and attempt to outrun it, but they could not make it untrue. This was not merely a history lesson for the returning exiles. It was a call to become a different generation—a generation with tender hearts, attentive ears, and a willingness to obey. We must not become so focused on restoring what used to be that we repeat the very attitudes and actions that caused it to fall. The safest place for us is not in familiarity, tradition, or former glory, but in present obedience to the living voice of ADONAI.

CONCLUSION

The message of Zechariah begins on the other side of exile, but it does not begin with visions, predictions, or plans for the future. It begins with repentance. Before ADONAI revealed what He was going to do, He called His people to remember what He had already said. Before they could properly rebuild the Temple, they needed to understand why the former Temple had fallen. ADONAI was not calling them to duplicate the past. He was doing something new—something that might appear smaller outwardly but would carry a greater glory because it would be filled with His presence and aligned with His purpose.

Perhaps you are standing before an unfinished foundation. Maybe discouragement has become apathy, and something ADONAI once called you to has been left unattended. Or perhaps you have been trying to rebuild an old structure when ADONAI is seeking to accomplish a new spiritual work within you. His invitation remains: *“Return to Me ... and I will return to you.”* Bring Him the disappointment, the disobedience, the comparison, and the weariness. Ask Him to show you where you have heard His word without truly listening. Do not wait until His word has to overtake you in correction. Turn toward Him now. Let repentance become the doorway to renewal, and let Him rebuild within you before you attempt to build anything for Him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the historical setting of Zech. 1:1–6 help explain why ADONAI began Zechariah’s ministry with a call to repentance?
2. What does the name Z’khar-Yah—“ADONAI remembers”—reveal about God’s faithfulness toward His discouraged people?
3. Is there an area of your life where you began with enthusiasm but allowed opposition, weariness, or disappointment to bring the work to a standstill?
4. Where might you be comparing what ADONAI is doing now with a former season, former success, or former expression of His work?
5. Is there something ADONAI has been saying that you have heard but have not yet obeyed? What would it look like to shema—to hear and respond with action?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, You are the God who remembers. You have not forgotten Your promises, Your people, or the work You have begun within us. Forgive us for the times we have allowed discouragement to become apathy, when we have focused more on what has been lost than on what You are doing now. Deliver us from the temptation to reproduce an outward appearance while neglecting the inward work of repentance and renewal. We hear Your invitation today: *“Return to Me ... and I will return to you.”* Search our hearts and reveal every path, attitude, and action from which we need to turn. Give us tender hearts that hear Your voice and respond in obedience. Keep us from repeating the errors of those who refused to listen. Awaken us, restore us, and teach us to build according to Your purpose—not by our might or power, but through Your presence and Your *Ruach*.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen