

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (R. Wilkin)

1. In Ezekiel 18:21-22 the Lord God of Israel spoke the following words: "If a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live." Is that the Gospel? Did the OT teach that one had to turn from his sins to obtain salvation?

The Hebrew **words**, *which deal with salvation*, are general and not specific. That is, one must look to the **context** to determine what type of salvation is in view. This is also true of the English terms for salvation. For example, the exclamation "I've been saved!" could mean a number of things depending on the context in which it was spoken or written. A person rescued from an icy river would mean, "I have been delivered from a watery grave." Lee Iacocca, the Chief Executive Officer of the Chrysler Corporation, upon receiving a \$1.5 billion loan guarantee from the U.S. government would mean, "Chrysler has been saved from bankruptcy." A death row inmate granted a Presidential pardon would mean, "My life has been spared." Only in a context where one's eternal destiny was in view would the meaning be "I have been saved from eternal condemnation." This may seem to be an obvious point, which has little to do with the subject at hand. Actually, it has everything to do with our subject and it is far from obvious to many who write and preach about the OT doctrine of salvation.

There are fifteen different Hebrew words for salvation used in the OT. The vast majority of OT references to salvation refer to various types of **temporal** deliverances: from one's enemies, from physical death, and from various troubles. (1)

For example, five of the most common and most important OT words for salvation are *yasha*, *padâ*, *ga al*, *malat*, and *natzal*. Of the 812 uses of these terms in the OT, only 58 (7.1%) refer to eternal salvation. (2) Those refer to the future salvation of the nation of Israel by the Lord—a NT theme as well (Rom 11:26). In some cases the Messiah is indicated as the Savior (Mic 5:2, 6; Zech 9:9-10). It is interesting to note that these verses deal with the fact of the coming kingdom, not the condition for entrance into it.

In addition, there are a number of other OT passages which refer to eternal salvation, yet without using the terms of salvation: Gen 3:15; 15:6; Ps 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; 52:1–53:12; Jer 24:7; 31:31-34; and Hab 2:4.

Consideration will now be given to the OT terms, which deal with repentance. The reader should remember that our aim is not merely to discover the OT teaching on the role of repentance in **eternal** salvation. Rather, our goal is to discover the OT teaching on the role of repentance in all types of salvation.

2. Scholars are in agreement that there is no OT word, which in all or even in most of its uses refers to repentance. (3) However, two words are commonly cited as sometimes having that meaning. Those words are *shûb* and *naham*. Take a moment to look these up in a lexicon.

Shûb

This term is the twelfth most common word in the OT. (4) It has a basic sense of "to turn," "to turn back," "to go back," or "to return." (5) In the vast majority of its uses it refers to literal changes of direction.

For example, Moses, after being in the tabernacle, "*would return* to the camp" (Exod 33:11). Of its 1,056 OT uses only 203 occur in religious contexts. (6) In all but one passage those religious uses refer to Israel or God turning toward or away from one another. (7)

A. The Turning of the Lord

There are four categories of God's turning or returning in the OT. All four grow out of the blessings/curses provisions of the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28) whereby the Lord promised that He would bless obedience and curse disobedience.

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 2)

The non-technical nature of *shûb* is shown in the fact that it was often used to refer to the turning of the Lord. Obviously, if it were a technical term, which always referred to turning from one's sinful ways, it could never have been used of God.

1. The Four Categories of the Lord's Turning.

First, the Lord returned Israel's evil upon its head. He withdrew His blessings and sent temporal judgments whenever the nation turned away from Him in disobedience. (8)

Second, the Lord turned back (or, negatively, did not turn back) His anger from Israel. He withdrew temporal judgments and sent blessings whenever the nation turned away from her sinful deeds and turned back to Him in obedience. (9)

Third, the Lord returned Israel to its former place of blessing. Whenever Israel turned back to the Lord from her sinful ways, He restored the nation's blessings. (10) In some texts the specific blessing that the Lord promised and provided was to return the nation to the Promised Land.

Fourth, the Lord returned to the nation. (11) In the three types of the Lord's turning just discussed, there was always a specific object of the turning indicated in the context (i.e., He returned evil; He turned back His anger; He returned blessings). However, in passages containing this fourth type of turning, no specific objects were mentioned. This bare expression referred generally to the Lord removing temporal judgments and sending temporal blessings.

2. Temporal, Not Eternal, Blessings and Curses. With the lone exception of Jer 32:40 (which refers to millennial and ultimately eternal blessings which the Lord has promised to bestow on Israel as part of the New Covenant), the Lord's turning toward or away from the nation with blessings or curses always referred to *temporal* experiences. The turning of the Lord in the OT did not concern eternal salvation or eternal judgment.

3. Israel Reaped What She Sowed. When the nation was obedient, the Lord sent blessings. When she was disobedient, He sent curses. The Lord's love for the nation moved Him to discipline and reward His chosen people so that they might learn to obey Him.

B. The Turning of Israel

1. The Biblical Concept. As alluded to in the preceding section, the OT record shows that the nation of Israel repeatedly turned away from the Lord. In each instance the nation would experience temporal judgments (reaping the curses of the Mosaic Covenant), which prompted her to turn back to the Lord. There are three categories of Israel's turning, in a theological sense, found in the OT.

First, Israel turned away from the Lord in disobedience. Israel turned away from the Lord by turning to idolatry (12) and to other forms of willful, cold-hearted disobedience. (13) The following passages are illustrative.

"The Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you *have turned* away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you" (Num 14:43, italics mine).

And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that *they reverted* and behaved more corruptly than their fathers, by following other gods, to serve them and bow down to them. They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way. Then the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel... When the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for the children of Israel, who delivered them: Othniel the son of Kenax... So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 3)

Kenaz died. And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD... And when the children of Israel cried out to the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer for them: Ehud the son of Gera... When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan...(Judg 2:19-20; 3:9, 11-12, 15; 4:1-2, italics mine).

The non-technical nature of *shûb* is thus further seen in that when it referred to Israel it often dealt with turning away from the Lord and to sinful ways.

Second, the nation turned to the Lord in obedience. Israel turned back to the Lord by turning away from idolatry (14) and from other forms of willful, cold-hearted disobedience. (15) Obedience was a condition for temporal deliverance from the curses of the Mosaic Covenant.

(cf. Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). Turning away from one's sinful practices was never presented in the OT as a condition for escaping eternal wrath. (16)

One chapter in the OT seems to contradict the point just made. Ezekiel 18 links life with turning from one's sinful practices and death with failing to live righteously. The following verses are representative:

"If [a man] has walked in My statutes and kept My judgments faithfully—he is just; he shall surely live!" says the Lord GOD (Ezek 18:9).

"The soul who sins shall die" (Ezek 18:20).

"But if a wicked man *turns* from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die" (Ezek 18:21).

"When a righteous man *turns away* from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies" (Ezek 18:26).

"I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!" (Ezek 18:32).

Some interpret those verses to mean that eternal salvation was conditioned upon turning from one's sins. (17) Such an interpretation is, however, unwarranted.

There is no reference in Ezekiel 18 to the Lake of Fire, eternal death, eternal life, entrance into God's kingdom, exclusion from the kingdom, justification, or anything remotely associated with eternal judgment. Nor is that chapter ever cited in the NT as dealing with any of those subjects. What are at issue in Ezekiel 18 are life and death—physical life and physical death. The Hebrew terms for life and death are commonly used in this way throughout the OT. (18)

Dyer comments: "God was not saying that a saved Israelite would lose his [eternal] salvation if he fell into sin. Both the blessing and the judgment in view here are temporal, not eternal. The judgment was physical death (cf. vs. 4, 20, 26), not eternal damnation." (19)

Similarly, in introducing his discussion of Ezekiel 18, Charles Feinberg notes, "The subject of justification by faith should not be pressed into this chapter; it is not under discussion." (20) Later, commenting on verse nine (which refers to life being conditioned upon obedience to the Law of

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 4)

Moses) he writes, "This statement, we must caution again, does not have eternal life in view, but life on earth. Eternal life is not obtained on the grounds mentioned in this portion of Scripture." (21)

The blessings/curses motif is a prominent OT theme. The conditions of the Mosaic Covenant are spelled out in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28. Obedience would be attended by temporal blessings. Disobedience would be met with temporal curses, which would intensify until the nation turned back to the Lord. While salvation is indeed the subject of Ezekiel 18, that in no way suggests that *eternal* salvation is in view. As Ross notes, "Throughout the OT the salvation or deliverance Israel sought or enjoyed seems most concerned with the promises of the covenant *as they relate to life in this world* as the people of God" (italics mine). (22)

There are many OT examples of blessings and curses, both involving the nation and individuals in it. One might consider, for instance, Abraham (Gen 24:1; Heb 11:8-19), Moses (Exod 14:30-31; Num 20:12; Heb 11:23-29), the golden calf incident (Exod 32:34-35), Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:30-45), the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16), Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-3), Achan (Josh 7:1-26), Gideon (Judg 6:11-28), David (2 Sam 1-10, under blessing; 12-22, under cursing), Solomon (1 Kgs 3:5-15; 4:20-34; 11:1-13), and the fall of the Northern (2 Kgs 17:5-18) and Southern (2 Kgs 24:1-25:21) Kingdoms. This does not mean that all OT blessings and calamities were a direct result of obedience or disobedience (cf. Job; Luke 16:19-31; John 9:2-3). Sometimes God allowed the righteous to suffer and the wicked to prosper. However, what it does mean is that as a rule obedience brought temporal blessings and disobedience brought temporal curses.

Ezekiel 18 is simply an example of the OT blessings/curses motif.

Third, one day the nation will turn to the Lord in faith. A small number of OT texts use the term *shûb* to refer to a future turning of Israel (and Egypt and all the ends of the world) to the Lord. In these contexts (cf. Ps 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; Jer 24:7) turning to the Lord is used as a circumlocution for faith.

Isaiah 6:10 illustrates how this conclusion is drawn. It speaks of returning to the Lord and being healed. Christ interpreted this passage for His disciples. After presenting the Parable of the Sower, and as a lead-in to His explanation of its meaning, Jesus quoted this passage. He equated Isaiah's reference to returning to the Lord with receiving the Word and believing the Gospel (cf. Matt 13:3-23; Luke 8:5-15, esp. vv 12-13). He also identified the healing spoken of as eternal salvation (Luke 8:12).

2. The Extra-Biblical Concept. How did the Jewish rabbis understand the OT teaching on repentance?

The rabbinic concept of teshûbah. During the two centuries prior to the birth of Christ, rabbis and other Jewish authors wrote extensively. Their writings reflect a different understanding from the one I have suggested of the use of *shûb* in the OT. (*Teshûbah* is the noun form of *shûb*.)

Rabbis were teachers of the Law of Moses. They taught in synagogues and some of their teachings were recorded in the Mishnah and Talmud.

Regarding eternal salvation the rabbis taught that the condition for having a portion in the world to come was obedience to the Law (cf. Aboth 2:7). However, they also believed in grace. They taught that God would forgive disobedience if one truly turned from his sins and made restitution where necessary.

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 5)

Commenting on the rabbinic teaching of the condition of eternal salvation Herford writes, "It is not enough merely to *know* the will of God or to *believe* in it, or in God whose will it is. Before all else he must *do* it." (23)

Likewise Moore notes: "For sin...there was but one remedy, the forgiving grace of God, and the *conditio sine qua non* of forgiveness was repentance, that is, contrition, confession, reparation of injuries to others, and a reformation of conduct undertaken and persisted in with sincere purpose and out of religious motives." (24)

Rabbis believed that the righteous surely had a place in the world to come and that the wicked did not. Concerning their view of the fate of those who were neither totally righteous nor totally wicked Moore comments: "The School of Shammai held that those in whom good and evil were, so to speak, in equilibrium, will go down to hell, and dive and come up, and arise thence and be healed... For them the fires of Gehenna are purgatorial; they are refined like silver and assayed like gold. The School of Hillel maintained that God in his abounding mercy...would incline the balance to the side of mercy, and not send them down to Gehenna at all." (25)

These two major rabbinic schools of thought agreed that all but the very wicked will ultimately have a place in the world to come. "A marked tendency of the Rabbis is to limit, in every possible way, the number of those Israelites who will have no share in the world to come. For those who repent no sin is a bar to the everlasting felicities." (26)

In addition to the rabbinic writings in the Mishnah and Talmud, there were also many books written by Jewish authors in the second half of the intertestamental period. These writings are known as OT Apocrypha (or Pseudepigrapha). They are non-canonical, non-inspired writings.

The OT Apocrypha speaks of God weighing on balancing pans the good and bad deeds of people to determine their eternal destinies (Testament of Abraham 13:1-2, 9-14; 1 Enoch 41:1-2; 61:8). The condition of eternal salvation is specified as obedience to the Law of God (2 Baruch 51:3,7; 4 Ezra 7:19-22, 33-39; 9:30-37).

The Pharisees in Jesus' day are a good illustration of this type of legalistic, self-righteous thinking (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is at least partly derived from the OT Apocrypha (2 Maccabees 12:39-45).

Evaluating the rabbinic concept of teshûbah. The OT does not support the rabbinic understanding. The OT teaches that eternal salvation is by God's grace and that it is received by man's response of faith, not by any acts of righteousness or by turning from any sins (cf. Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4). There is no evidence in the OT of purgatory or that the majority of people will ultimately enter God's kingdom. While there are a number of OT passages which refer to eternal salvation in some way (e.g., Gen 3:15; 22:1-19; Isa 12:23; 45:22; 49:6ff; 52:1-53:12; Jer 31:7; 46:27; Zech 8:7; 9:9, 16), there are only a few which deal with the human condition of eternal salvation, that is, faith (Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4). (27)

The passage which stands out most prominently as the paradigm for the OT's teaching on eternal salvation is Gen 15:6: "And he [Abraham] believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." Genesis 15:6 is the John 3:16 of the OT. One condition only is given: belief in the Lord.

What did Abraham believe about the Lord? He believed that the Lord would take away his sins and grant him a place in His coming kingdom. Of course, it may well be that at the moment of faith Abraham's understanding of the Messiah and His substitutionary work was not fully developed. (28) His understanding probably grew as a result of God's asking him to offer up his one and only son and then at the last moment providing a ram as a substitute (Genesis 22). (29) However, it is clear from the Pauline use of this text that it

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 6)

is salvific, referring to Abraham's justification by faith alone (Gal 3:6-14; Rom 4:1-25). While Abraham did many good works, none of them contributed to his justification before God in any way.

A second OT passage, Hab 2:4, also teaches that the sole OT condition for eternal salvation was faith in the Lord. The context concerns the Babylonian invasion. A proud people would be used by the Lord to judge Israel. Since proud people are not pleasing in the sight of the Lord, they will ultimately fall (pride goes before the fall). "Shall live" here is not so much a promise as it is a statement of potential or a command. A man who has found acceptance with God by faith alone has the potential to live, to escape the temporal judgment of God. He realizes that potential by living in accordance with the righteous standing he has with God.

Paul's use of this verse confirms this understanding. He used it to show that one obtains the righteousness of God by faith alone (Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11). Nygren forcefully demonstrates that when Paul quoted Hab 2:4 in Rom 1:17 he was joining "the righteous" and "by faith" in such a way that they are viewed as a unit: "he who through faith is righteous." (30) In Romans 1–4 Paul elaborates on the expression, "he who through faith is righteous." Then in chaps 5–8 he deals with the attending words of Rom 1:17, "shall live." The one who is righteous by faith alone is free from God's wrath (Romans 5), from sin (Romans 6), from the Law (Romans 7), and from death (Romans 8). All of these are true of believers in our position and are the basis of our striving against the flesh to live out our new natures (cf. Rom 6:11-13; 8:12-17; 12:1-15:13).

One obtains righteous standing before God by faith (Rom 1:17-4:25; Gal 3:6-14). Yet only by living out his new life does the one who is righteous by faith maintain his temporal life (Rom 8:13; Heb 10:37-38). Romans 8:13 contains an explicit allusion back to Rom 1:17 and Hab 2:4. There Paul tells believers, those who are righteous by faith and who are eternally secure (Rom 8:38-39), "if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, *you will live.*"

As mentioned above, a number of OT passages (Ps 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; Jer 24:7) refer to a future turning of Israel and other nations to the Lord in faith. They confirm our understanding of Gen 15:6 and Hab 2:4 — that the one and only OT condition for obtaining eternal salvation was believing wholly and solely upon the Lord and His ultimate provision for one's sins.

This understanding of the OT teaching on the human condition of eternal salvation is confirmed by several NT passages.

In commenting on the OT's teaching on eternal salvation, Paul wrote in Rom 4:3-8: "For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:

'Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
And whose sins are covered;
Blessed is the man to whom the LORD shall not impute sin.'"

Likewise, in Gal 3:6-14 Paul wrote: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.' But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'The just shall live by faith.' Yet the law is not of faith, but 'The man who does them shall live by them.' Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 7)

law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

So also, the author of the Book of Hebrews noted in Heb 10:1-4: "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purged, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins."

Luke 18:9-14 and John 1:29, both pre-Cross passages, also confirm that eternal salvation according to the OT was by grace through faith and not as a result of works.

The OT conditioned eternal salvation upon faith alone. The sacrificial system was designed to lead worshipers to see their sinfulness and to place their faith in the Lord as *their* only hope of kingdom entrance (cf. Luke 18:13-14; Heb 10:1ff).

Why were so many so wrong? One may wonder why it is that when Jesus came the vast majority of Jews rejected Him and His message (John 1:11). If the OT taught that the sole condition of eternal salvation was faith in the Lord, why did most think that the condition was faithful observance of the Law?

From what we can tell from the NT, much of Judaism was very much in the grip of legalism, as evidenced by the attitude of the Pharisees (Matt 23; Luke 18:9-14). Most of the nation rejected Jesus Christ (John 1:11). They were not willing to own up to the fact that they were sick and needed deliverance (Luke 5:31). Most tried to approach God on their own terms—trying to establish their own righteousness rather than accepting the righteousness which God freely offered (Rom 10:2-3; 1 Cor 1:23).

The way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it (Matt 7:13-14; John 14:6). That was true in the intertestamental period and in Jesus' day, and it remains true today.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that all of the Jewish people rejected Jesus' free offer of salvation. Some did accept His offer and believe in Him (John 1:12). Indeed, John and Luke report that many (indicating a great number, not a majority) of the priests and Jewish leaders came to faith in Jesus Christ (John 12:42; Acts 6:7). Even Saul of Tarsus, an archenemy of the Gospel of Grace and the Cross of Christ, came to trust in Jesus Christ as his only hope of heaven and, indeed, to become the Apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 1:11-3:14).

C. Conclusion

The term *shûb* was used in the OT to refer to Israel's turning toward or away from the Lord and also to His turning toward the nation with blessings or away from her with curses. In most contexts temporal blessings or curses were in view. In a few passages, however, the expression "turning to the Lord" was used in reference to the future eternal salvation of the nation. In such contexts "turning to the Lord" was used as a circumlocution for faith.

Extra-biblical Jewish sources (OT Apocrypha, Talmud, Mishnah) show that the rabbis of the intertestamental period and Jesus' day held a legalistic view of the condition of eternal salvation. They believed in salvation by grace through faithfulness instead of the OT teaching of salvation by grace through faith.

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 8)

Naham

The term *naham* in the OT means "to be sorry" or "to comfort oneself." (31) It occurs 108 times in the Old Testament, but only three of those uses (Jer 8:6; 31:19; Job 42:6) deal with the repentance of men.

The non-technical nature of this term is shown in that most of its theological uses refer to the so-called "repentance of God." (32)

Two of the passages, which use *naham* to refer to the repentance of men, concern temporal, not eternal, salvation. Jeremiah 8:6 indicates that because the nation *was not sorry* for her wickedness (i.e., her idolatry) temporal judgment resulted. Job 42:6 concerns Job's *remorse* over foolish words he had spoken during his ordeal.

Jeremiah 31:19 says that after Israel turns back to the Lord, *she will be grieved* as she recalls her former actions. This passage refers to the future restoration of Israel by the Lord. After the nation returns to the Lord in faith, she will be grieved over her long history of disobedience and disbelief.

Conclusion

The concept of human repentance in the OT is twofold. First and foremost it means turning toward or away from something (*shûb*). A second but rare meaning is to be grieved over previous actions or attitudes (*naham*).

The OT conditions temporal salvation upon turning from one's sinful behavior. God promised Israel blessings if she obeyed and curses if she disobeyed. There are numerous examples in the OT of the nation and of individual Israelites experiencing curses when they turned away from the Lord and blessings when they turned back to Him.

The OT nowhere, however, conditions eternal salvation upon turning from one's sinful behavior. Eternal salvation in the OT was conditioned solely upon turning to the Lord in faith.

Eternal salvation has always been and always will be by grace through faith. That is why the Messiah had to die on the cross for the sins of Adam's race.

All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way.
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isa 53.6)

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 9)

References:

1. For further discussion of OT salvation and its temporal emphasis, see James K. Zink, "Salvation in the Old Testament: A Central Theme," *Encounter* 25 (1964): 405-414; Allen P. Ross, "The Biblical Method of Salvation: A Case for Discontinuity," 161-78, 352-56 in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship Between the Old and New Testaments* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), edited by John S. Feinberg; Cohn Brown, s.v. "Redemption," NIDNTT, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978) 3: 201-209.
2. These figures are derived from the author's personal study. The 58 references to eternal salvation include 2 Sam 23:5, Ps 14:7; 49:5; 53:6; 130:7, 8; Isa 1:27; 12:2 (twice), 3; 19:20; 25:9 (twice); 33:22; 35:4, 9, 10; 45:17, 22; 49:6, 8, 24, 25 (twice); 51:6, 8, 11; 52:7, 9, 10; 56:1; 62:1, 11, 12; Jer 23:6; 30:7, 10, 11; 31:7; 33:16; 46:27; Ezek 34:12, 22, 27; 36:29; 37:23; Dan 12:1; Hos 13:14; Mic 5:6; Zeph 3:17, 19; Zech 8:7, 13; 10:6, 8; 9:9, 16; 12:7.
3. See Aloys Dirltsen, *The New Testament Concept of Metanoia*, 148; William Holladay, *The Root SUBH in the Old Testament*, 156-57; C. G. Montefiore, "Rabbinic Conceptions of Repentance," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 16 (1904): 212-13; George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols., 1: 507; *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. "mentanoew, metanoia," by E. Würthwein, 4 (1967): 980.
4. Holladay, *SUBH*, 2.
5. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v. "shûb," 996-97; Holladay, *SUBH*, 51-115.
6. Würthwein suggests ("metanoia," 984), but does not demonstrate, that there are only "about 118 theological uses." Holladay *SUBH*, 116) suggests that there are 144 "covenantal uses" of the verb and 19 of derived nouns and adjectives. However, through my own study I have found 203 religious uses. See Robert N. Wilkin, "Repentance as a Condition for Salvation in the New Testament" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1985), 210-12 for a complete listing.
7. Jonah 3:5-10 refers to non-Israelites (i.e., Ninevites). They turned to the Lord and, as a result, He then turned His burning anger away from them.
8. See Deut 23:14; Josh 24:20; Judg 9:56, 57; 1 Sam 25:39; 26:23; 2 Sam 16:8; 1 Kgs 2:32; Neh 4:4; PS 7:12; 54:5.
9. See 2 Chr 12:12; 29:10; 30:8, 9; Ps 78:38; 106:23; Isa 5:25; 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4; 12:1; Jer 4:8, 28; 18:20; 23:20; 30:24; Lam 2:8; Dan 9:16; Hos 14:4; Joel 2:14; Amos 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1, 4, 6; Jonah 3:9 (non-Israelites).
10. See Deut 30:3; 2 Sam 15:25; 1 Kgs 8:34; 2 Chr 6:25; Ps 14:7; 80:3, 7, 14, 19; Jer 32:37; 33:7, 11; 42:12; Hos 6:11; Nah 2:2; Zeph 2:7.
11. See 2 Sam 16:12; 2 Chr 30:6, 9; Jer 15:19; 18:8; 32:40; Zech 1:3; Mal 3:7.
12. See Judg 2:19; 8:33; 1 Kgs 9:6; Isa 57:17; Jer 11:10; Hos 11:7.
13. See Num 14:43; Josh 22:16, 18, 23, 29; 1 Sam 15:11; Jer 34:16; Ezek 3:20; 18:24, 26.
14. Great emphasis in the OT is placed on the nation turning away from (or failing to turn away from) idolatry and to the Lord. The prophetic summons to repentance often was a call to the nation to turn from her idolatry. See, for example, Deut 4:30; 1 Sam 7:3; 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Kgs 17:13; 23:25; 2 Chr 7:14, 19; 15:4; 30:6, 9; 36:13; Isa 31:6; Jer 3:1, 7, 10, 12, 14, 19, 22; 4:1; 8:4, 5; 18:8, 11; 25:5; 26:3; 35:15; 36:3, 7; 44:5; Ezek 14:6; and Hos 3:5; 5:4; 6:1; 11:5; 14:1, 2, 4. These citations refer to temporal judgments being sent or removed depending on whether the nation continued in her idolatry or turned away from it to the Lord.
Two passages, Isa 31:6-7 and Hos 3:5, indicate that in the latter days—a reference to the Millennial Kingdom—the nation will put away its idols and will turn to the Lord and fear Him. Thus while the OT reports that the people often turned away from the Lord to idolatry (even to the point that one of Israel's greatest kings, Solomon, died as an idolater [1 Kgs 11:1-13ff.]), it also prophesies a day when those things would no longer characterize the nation.
15. See, for example, Deut 30:2, 10; 1 Kgs 8:33, 35, 47, 48; 2 Chr 6:24, 26, 37, 38; Neh 1:9; 9:26, 29, 35; Job 22:23; 36:10; Ps 7:12; 51:13; Jer 5:3; 15:7; 23:14; 34:16; Dan 9:13; Amos 4:6, 8, 9, 10, 11; Jonah 3:8, 10.
16. One might think that the OT taught that an idolater would have to turn from his idolatry to obtain eternal salvation. However, no verses support this view. See footnote 14 above. If idolaters could not get into God's kingdom then Solomon would be excluded (1 Kings 11)—a very unlikely possibility in light of the way he is spoken of in the Old and New Testaments (cf. 1 Chr 22:10; 28:5-7; Matt 6:29; 12:42; Acts 7:47). Of course, anyone who trusted in idols to grant him a blessed afterlife would have to give up such confidence in order to trust only in the God of Israel (cf. Acts 17:30). However, it seems that Israel did not turn to idols for that reason. Rather, Israelites worshipped idols to fit in with the surrounding nations and to obtain temporal blessings if possible.

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (page 10)

17. See, for example, G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936), 201-202; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 242-49, esp. 244 (N. B.: Eichrodt suggests that both temporal and eternal salvation are in view); H. L. Ellison, *Ezekiel: the Man and His Message* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1968), 74-75; John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale OT Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1969), 150-52. In addition, see John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Twenty Chapters of the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1850), 247-49, and Patrick Fairbairn, *An Exposition of Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), 198-202. While Calvin and Fairbairn suggest that Ezekiel 18 is dealing with eternal salvation, they suggest that the ability to turn from one's sins and do good is a gift from God which apart from His enablement is humanly impossible. They believe that Ezekiel 18 is thus showing men their absolute need of salvation and grace.
18. See Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 311, 559-60.
19. Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary Old Testament Edition* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1985), 1261, edited by John Walvoord and Roy Zuck.
20. Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 99.
21. *Ibid.*, 101.
22. Ross, "The Biblical Method of Salvation," in *Continuity and Discontinuity* 163. Also see Zink, "Salvation in the OT," 405-406.
23. R. Travers Herford, *A Comparative Study of the Jewish Ethical Teaching in the Rabbinical Sources in the Early Centuries* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1971), 52. See also 141-42.
24. George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927-30), 2:319.
25. *Ibid.*, 2:318.
26. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 327.
27. In addition, as discussed above, the following passages refer to a future turning of Israel and other nations to the Lord in faith: Psa 22:27; Isa 6:10; 10:21; 19:22; Jer 24:7.
28. See Ross, "Salvation," 169-74. Jesus' own disciples, who knew that He was the Messiah and had placed their faith in Him (Matt 16:16-19), were shocked when He first told them that He was going to be put to death (Matt 16:21-23). Peter even rebuked Jesus for suggesting such a thing. Some OT believers may have trusted in the Messiah to take away their sins without contemplating how He would do it. However, Jesus' response to Peter and the other disciples' reluctance to accept His teaching about His death (Matt 16:23-27) shows that OT believers could and should have known this. Simeon, for one, surely did. When Mary and Joseph brought the Infant Jesus to the Temple, Simeon gave a veiled prophecy concerning His death (Luke 2:25-35). Genesis 22, Isaiah 53, and the sacrificial system are clear on this point.
29. It is certainly conceivable, however, that Abraham had a fully developed messianic concept at the point of his initial faith. Not all that the Lord said to OT people is recorded in the OT. The Lord may have told Adam and Eve, for instance, about the need for a blood sacrifice (Gen. 3:31). If so, Adam and Eve would have surely passed this on to their offspring (Gen 4:5; Heb 11:4), and they in turn would have told others. It is quite possible that Abraham would have been aware of this—either from writings which are no longer extant, from oral tradition, or from direct revelation from the Lord Himself.
30. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1949), 81-92.
31. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, s.v "naham," 636-37.
32. Most of its uses are non-theological in nature. Of its theological uses most refer to the so-called "repentance of God." For further information on the meaning of naham when used in reference to God, see H. Van Parunak, "The Repentance of God in the Old Testament" (Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975).

The Doctrine of Repentance in the Old Testament

A series on Repentance: part 2 (R. Wilkin)

1. In Ezekiel 18:21-22 the Lord God of Israel spoke the following words: "If a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live." Is that the Gospel? Did the OT teach that one had to turn from his sins to obtain salvation?

2. Scholars are in agreement that there is no OT word, which in all or even in most of its uses refers to repentance. However, two words are commonly cited as sometimes having that meaning. Those words are *shûb* and *naham*. Take a moment to look these up in a lexicon.