

Repair is Better than Never Building so Repentance is Necessary

There are some questions that we will never be able answer. Some are so far beyond our comprehension, we only suspect there is question there, waiting to be asked and yet we cannot articulate it. Repentance is one of those subjects that appears straightforward, and yet it raises questions that beget questions unspoken and incomprehensible – the answer being even further beyond our grasp.

Both traditional Christianity and Chassidic Judaism have attempted to ask, and even suppose some answers to the questions of sin and repentance. Christianity has posited opposing theories of Predestination and Free Will. Chassidic Judaism has given us the concept of Tikkun Olam (repair the world) and provided not only the questions regarding the origin and purpose of sin, but some supposed answers as well. But all of these are only man's feeble attempts to explain away nagging questions about our questions – that there is something inexplicably beyond our questions. No doubt the answers are even more remote.

However, we only really know what we have been told. Try as we might to plumb the depths of philosophy, in the end, what we are really left with is what Scripture clearly tells us. And it tells us quite plainly that sin is rebellion against the commandments of Adonai. It tells us that He hates sin. It tells us that the correct response to Him is always simple obedience.

Call it *tikkun olam* or *t'shuvah* or call it *repentance* or *surrender* – in the end, it is the only action that we are truly free to take in response to our undeniable rebellion against the instructions of the Almighty. When we begin to ask such things as: *What instructions? Which commandments?* we are, of course, denying the necessity of repentance. And when we begin to make excuses such as, *God does not really expect me to do/say/not do [fill in the blank], does He?* we are only delaying the absolutely necessity of simple obedience. When we argue that something does or does not apply to us because we are *Jewish* or *Gentile*, we are still denying the single acceptable response to the Almighty: we must *repent*. Repentance was the message in Genesis 3 and 6. It was the message at Sinai. It was the message of the Prophets. It was the message of the Apostles. It is the message of Messiah. It was and is the Good News message. It is again: we must *repent*.

Adonai has spoken. He has defined His holy standard, and it is the Torah. Disobedience is sin. Man's only response then should be *repent!* Anything else remains pure and simple rebellion. Let others argue about whether some commandments *apply to this dispensation* or whether *we are under the jurisdiction of the 'New Covenant'*; or whether a commandment *applies to Gentiles*; or whether *God cannot require repentance for salvation for that denies grace*. In the end, all of those machinations and lies are the same tactic Enemy has used since the Garden, designed to get us to question the things we really do know. If Adonai commands us, as His children, He expects us to obey Him. And to disobey Him is sin. Period: *“⁸If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8-10)*

You see, the questions that are unspoken may be deep. But the issue really is simple: When we disobey the words of the Living God, that is called *sin*. When we obey, that is called *righteousness*. When we recognize our disobedience, and obey, that is called *repentance*. What are we waiting for...?

²²*“Remember the Torah of Moses My servant, whom I commanded at Horeb—statutes and ordinances for all Israel.*
²³*“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of Adonai. ²⁴He will turn the hearts of fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to their fathers—else I will come and strike the land with utter destruction” (Mal. 3:22-24, i.e., Mal. 4:4-6 in Christian Texts)*

This week's Torah Portion is 2 halves together: *Matot-Masei* meaning tribes and journeys. *Matot* means *tribes*, literally *branches* – and quite fittingly and appropriately applies to the Sons of Israel. *Massei* means *journeys*: a

portion that reviews the journeys in the wilderness. These half-portions are read during the three weeks between Tammuz 17 and the 9th of Av. Those are the dates that mark the infamous days of our ancestors' sin of the Golden Calf and incitement of the ten spies. These are days of mourning and repentance. These are days that can be misunderstood by a casual bystander. Throughout history, whenever *Adonai's* people have felt the sting of rebuke, our enemies have thought that our God had departed from our midst. The error has been repeated throughout the ages, but sadly it is still present. The fact is that a significant portion of Christianity still thinks that God has departed from the midst of Israel (some qualify by saying *unbelieving* Israel). This is a grave error. It is not only a theological error but if left unchecked it results in spiritual arrogance and cursing. This line of thinking has real consequences. We see an example in this week's reading. The Canaanite king of Arad must have thought, *The Glory has departed. These Israelites no longer have their God among them. He has been punishing them – so He is no longer there to protect them.* Of course, he was **totally wrong**.

The Mourner's Kaddish is a prayer for the tribes (*Matot*) in the journeys (*Masei*). It is in Aramaic rather than Hebrew. It is a prayer of incredible beauty and faith. It shows that in the midst of sorrow, what comes from our lips is praise for the Blessed One Who is to be blessed. It is important to remember, that the Mourner's Kaddish does not mention death, but simply praises the One Who creates life. The Kaddish and the smaller Half-Kaddish are central parts of the synagogue service. The Half-Kaddish closely resembles Messiah's prayer in Matthew 6. The Kaddish is a prayer that the first disciples of Messiah prayed often, as it is integral to the synagogue prayer service.

Magnified and hallowed be His Great Name in the world which He created according to His will.

*May He establish His kingdom during your lifetime and during the lifetime of all the house of Israel, speedily, soon!
And let us all say: Amen!*

May His great Name be blessed for ever and ever!

Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, extolled and honored, magnified and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He.

Though He is high above all the blessings and hymns, praises and songs which are uttered in the world; and say, Amen!

May there be great peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen!

May He who makes peace in His high places make peace within us and for all Israel, and say, Amen!