

REGRET AND THE DAYS OF AWE

MARK RANTZ

There was once a man, so driven with career and personal ambition, that he spent what seemed to be every waking moment building his small business into a robust and highly lucrative Wall Street brokerage firm, serving hundreds. Day in and day out he worked even into evenings and weekends. After 25 years and at the age of 55 he looked back and only found that in the name of greater wealth and allusive power, that he had for years, entirely neglected his wife and children.

Despite the fact that he now longed to repair those years which were “lost,” he sadly discovered that his family were now only strangers and resented him for his willful neglect. This produced in him overwhelming regret. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), “regret” is best defined as an emotional response to the remembrance of one’s past state, condition or previous experience which they had wished had a different outcome.





Regret in itself has the power to destroy us, for when full grown, it holds the power to produce in us absolute hopelessness in an individual. In looking at this terrible pathology of the soul, we must ask, “can there ever be a place where regret can be constructive?” Or are we doomed to the the consequences of our failures?

As we examine the month of Tishrei and our High Holy Days, we find a profound answer to this probing question ...

As a centerpiece to our Fall Feasts, the Yamim Nora'im (or Days of Awe) shine as a beaming light, beckoning us to make teshuvah (return) afresh and anew to personal introspection, repentance and reconciliation to the heart of God and His will for our lives. Not only do these Days of Awe remind us of our need for a restored relationship with our Heavenly Father, but also, for our calling to covenant relationships in Messiah Yeshua.

Many years ago, while living in Baltimore, MD I experienced something so profound that I've never forgotten it! The time of the year was as it is now, during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. At the time, my wife Kat and I lived in an Orthodox community, and our next-door neighbors were a young, newly married modern-Orthodox Sephardic family. To my amazement, one day, I was home studying when there was a knock on the door. As I answered, I was greeted by my dear next door neighbors who asked to come in and speak to me for a moment. As we stood and talked, their voices softened, and with tears in their eyes, they said, “Rabbi, it is yontif, If there is anything that we have ever done or said to you that may have hurt or offended you in the last year, please forgive us?”



In hearing this I was speechless! I had only known them less than a year, and they had been nothing but loving to my wife and me. Even knowing we were Messianic; we had been for Shabbat dinner and was even invited to pray with them. And yet, here they were “asking me for forgiveness!”

As I inquired of them on this and told them that they had never done anything to offend me, they told me that with Yom Kippur coming, they did not want anything to get in the way of our friendship or their relationship with God.

Amazing!

That day was a powerful reminder for me of not only the forgiving power of God’s love, but most directly how especially at this time of the year, our hearts must be in tune with the Father and toward one another.

It is through this returning to the Lord and to each other that I believe we are annually reminded that at every season, God will always make a way for us to come back home to Him.

So, in circling back to this word “regret,” is it possible that this in fact can be a useful emotion of us as followers of Yeshua, and if so, how might it benefit us, especially during this time of the year?

In his book, “The Other Half of Church,” Jim Wilder along with Michel Hendricks reminds us of what they refer to as toxic shame and healthy shame. In our modern culture, we are falsely conditioned to think that ALL shame is destructive, but the authors of this book aptly remind that this is not the case.

With toxic shame, the emotions and feelings which are communicated resound, not with affirmation, but instead feelings of unworthiness, brokenness and hurt. Through this, toxic shame says, “you are worthless, you are not worth redeeming!” Counter to toxic shame, “healthy shame” does not tear down the other, but instead, is couched in covenant relationships. According to Wilder and Hendricks, healthy shame is good in that it is tied to how our brains work and the formation of human character and our desires to change.

Character transformation then is the answer!

As we feel remorse and shame for our sin, we run back to our God who never berates nor belittles us. Instead, He only desires to transform us through His Son! It is for this reason that introspection and reflection is so vital in our lives, especially at this time of the year – for through it, we are granted a fresh and new start, for a new and joyous coming year. The power of the message of the Cross is that our loving, Heavenly Father does not and will not leave us where He found us, and as we make teshuvah and return to Him with perfect repentance, He will make all things in us.

The good news for us does not end there however, in that our *Yamim Nora'im* (Days of Awe) holds the power to rid us of toxic shame, wounding and debilitating regret and draws us deeper into our relationship with Yeshua!

It is in this that I urge you today to seek your Adonai this day with your whole heart, and do not shrink away in fear. He heals every hurt, He binds up every wound and will forgive every sin. He is your loving and forever faithful Father. This year, may you be found free, full of joy and may your name be inscribed into the Book of Life unto eternity in Yeshua's holy Name!



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