

TIKKUN AMERICA

restore

Issue 26 | Tishrei | September 2023



THE FALL FEASTS

In Anticipation of Yeshua's Second Coming

I CALL YOU FRIEND

Agape Friendship Love

FORGIVENESS AND INTIMACY

Reflections on the High Holy Days

SPIRITUAL FORMATION THROUGH SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

Part Two

CONTRIBUTORS

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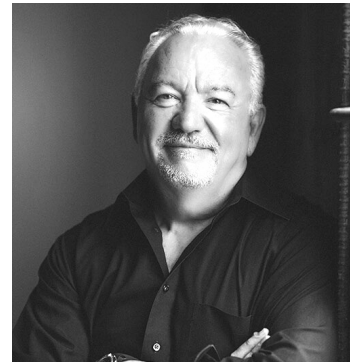
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Course Corrections

BENJAMIN JUSTER

In my 20s, I earned my private pilot license for small, single engine airplanes. There is not much that I've experienced in life that compares to the freedom of lifting off from a long stretch of runway, climbing above the tree lined horizon, and into the expansive sky. The landscape shifts and perspective changes. Mountains, rivers, houses and highways look familiar, yet so much different from above.

All pilots learn early on that a plane in flight becomes an inseparable component of the earth's atmosphere. Without an anchor or tether to the ground, the plane is subject to the varied winds and air currents. This knowledge is especially important to consider when plotting a course from one point to another. For example, I may plan to fly to an airport that is in a town that is situated due east from me. If I set my direction and point the nose of the airplane directly east (90 degrees on a compass), I might think that I'll arrive at my destination eventually. But what if the winds are blowing out of the South?

The problem is that when you set your course without regard to the prevailing winds, you might think your heading will stay with the compass, but you will be surprised to find that your path over the ground is actually going Northeast! And this can literally blow you miles and miles off course. In order to compensate for the wind, a pilot needs to factor in a correction angle based on the strength and direction of the wind at a certain altitude.

As we depart from the month of Elul and enter the High Holiday season, I encourage you to engage in the work of introspective evaluation. Has the Holy Spirit been convicting you in an area that needs to change? Have other people who love you, such as friends and family members, pointed out areas for you to work on? Or are there specific individuals that come to mind that you need to forgive, or ask them for forgiveness?

Here are a few steps you can take though the coming month to make meaningful course corrections.

Recognize that You Are Off Course

Adonai lovingly notifies us in many ways and at various times that we are not moving along with Him, or even living in opposition to His ways. Do you quickly pay attention to the warning signs and get to the root problem, or do you ignore these warnings, hoping things will just get better?



Unfortunately, ignoring the signs that our relationship with God is strained eventually leads to a callous heart. This may even sever the lines of communication with God completely—that is, until we make the effort to restore them. But how?

We live in a culture with a strong aversion to apology. Whether it is a traffic violation or an affair that destroys a marriage, admitting guilt is so difficult for most people to do. Judge Judy or other *judge shows* painfully reveal the lengths that guilty parties will go to avoid taking the blame for their actions and confessing their behavior.

The world teaches us to suppress our guilt, but we need to be set free from our guilt through the process of humble confession.

We need to train ourselves to be quick in admitting our wrong behaviors and attitudes and confess them to God and others. We tend to judge ourselves by our intentions rather than our behavior. We don't intend to be bad people, so we feel shame when we come to the reality that we have wronged someone. This is why there is a tendency to blame others or external circumstances when we are confronted.



"There was no clear speed limit sign, and that caused me to break the speed limit."

"It's my wife's fault that I lost my temper because she was nagging me so much."

"My boss treats me so poorly, and so it is his fault that I don't work hard. That is why I stole from the petty cash jar. He owes me."

"My spouse didn't respect me at home, and that caused me to have an affair."

You get the idea.

It is easy to rationalize our sins away but we must own up to our actions. Other people don't cause you to sin. Even when others may frustrate you or even wrong you, you are responsible for your responses.

THE GREAT NEWS: 1 John 1:9 says that *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Some translations say, "If we confess, he will purify. . ." This purification process is dependent upon our confession.

Don't Put Off Course Adjustments

The longer you go without a course correction, the more of a correction will be needed to get back on track. After you have recognized and confessed that you are off course, you will need to make a tangible response. Just as an airplane won't get itself on course



Do I take pleasure at all in having the wicked person die?” asks ADONAI ELOHIM. “Wouldn’t I prefer that he turn from his ways and live?”

And moreover, the New Covenant Scriptures have strong words to say regarding those who profess to be followers of Yeshua without an associated change of behavior.

“If we say we have fellowship with Him and keep walking in the darkness, we are lying and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of His Son Yeshua purifies us from all sin.” - 1 John 1:6-7 TLV

without moving the yoke and banking the plane, admitting guilt and apologizing won't be enough to change your character.

Confession without a heart and behavior change is suspect. We also need to turn back to the path of righteousness.

This passage from Ezekiel 18:21-23 links the act of repentance with an associated commitment to abide by the Adonai's commands and to do the right thing. *“However, if the wicked person repents of all his sins he committed, keeps My laws and does what is lawful and right; then he will certainly live, he will not die. None of the transgressions he has committed will be remembered against him; for the righteousness that he has done, he will live.*

Change Your Altitude

Hot air balloons don't have engines and propellers to utilize correction angles to counter the direction of the winds. Instead, balloon pilots will constantly adjust their altitudes so that they can find the wind current that most parallels the track they wish to take. The wind at one altitude often blows in a different direction than the winds several hundred or thousand feet higher. You see where I'm going here. The time you spend with the Father is like increasing your altitude.

When you are in the right air stream, you can actually get to your destination faster. Focus on finding out where

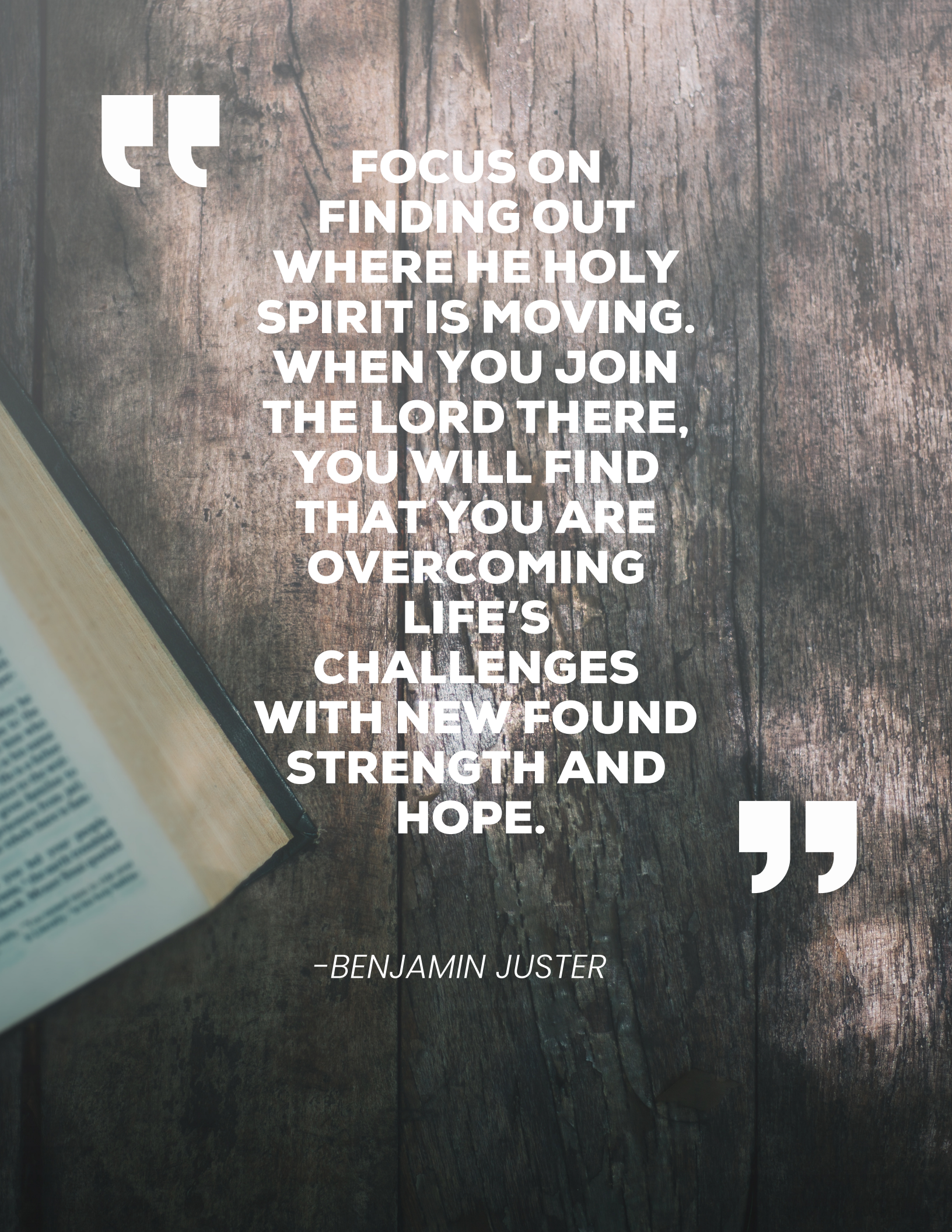
the Holy Spirit is moving. When you join the Lord there, you will find that you are overcoming life's challenges with new found strength and hope. It is not that you now can control the wind so that it propels you in the way that you wanted to go. Rather, you have joined the stream of what God is doing, and His plans never fail!

It is likely that there was time dedicated to repentance as the disciples spent time together in the upper room. This preceded the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Repentance is often the key that releases the favor of God for revival. When the Holy Spirit moves, everything changes.

So, If we want to experience the fullness of life in God's Kingdom, we need to lay the foundation of repentance and abide continually in His Presence. May you be filled with grace as you make your course corrections, and may you encounter our loving and matchless King!


Benjamin Juster
Editor in Chief





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-BENJAMIN JUSTER



RICHARD CLEARY

part 2

Spiritual Formation Through Spiritual DISCIPLINES

In the last article I spoke about the relational nature, the relational process, and the relational goals of Spiritual Disciplines so this may feel like a dead end to transition to the Discipline of Liturgical Prayer.

If you worship at a Messianic Congregation, you are likely about to participate in a lot of liturgy during the High Holy Days. If that is the case, no matter your level of experience,

I want to invite you to pursue a higher level of relational and attentive engagement with God in the liturgy this year as we stand before His Joyful Face. I believe for all of us, that if we put into practice a right understanding of liturgical prayer, it will become for us a transformational practice by the grace of God infused by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Before I dive into this thrilling subject of Spirit-infused liturgy, let me preface with fulfilling my word, that I would give you a catalog of Spiritual Disciplines in Part 2 of this topic. We could look at Dallas Willard's list of disciplines of engagement and abstinence in his excellent book, the *Spirit of the Disciplines*, or Dallas Willard and Jan Johnson's practical book *Experiments in Spiritual Formation*.

Other excellent resources on this topic is Alexander Venter's 400-page treatise on *Doing Spirituality* and Jack Hayford's warm invitational approach in *Living the Spirit Formed Life*. Yet because it is a time-tested classic, very accessible, and a profound piece of spiritual writing, we will start off with the list from the classic *Celebration of Discipline*, by Richard Foster.



Spiritual Disciplines Are:

- Relational and intentional ways from which we can learn to live in the back and forth — interactive, joyful, and loyal covenant relationship with the LORD our God who is, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- Ways we can learn to practice healthy, life-giving, joyful, and loyal relationships with people where we live and congregate, but also as lights in our workplaces, with strangers, and even our enemies.

Spirit-led ways we can cooperate with the initiating, renewing, restoring, forming, and transforming the grace of God. This relational process is on the path towards relational goals of growing to know God better,

Inward Disciplines	Outward Disciplines	Corporate Disciplines
Meditation	Simplicity	Confession
Prayer	Solitude	Worship
Fasting	Submission	Guidance
Study	Service	Celebration

Here, it is my hope to circle back to many of these later on in future articles. In the previous article, I provided many descriptions of what Spiritual Disciplines are. These were from a relational lens, which if not approached that way tends to twist, disfigure, and deaden the Disciplines. Here is a basic overview if you missed the last article or need a refresher.



His love for us, and mature in reciprocating love back to Him and loving people with His love. That is the meat and potatoes of describing why we should practice Spiritual Disciplines.

So Why Do We Need Liturgical Prayer as a Spiritual Discipline?

As creatures of habit, we need a healthy routine and repetition for health. To use an analogy from everyday life, people usually have cleaner and healthier mouths and fresher breath when they brush their teeth 2 times per day for 2 minutes each time. This simple and daily routine helps to improve and maintain good dental hygiene. If someone doesn't do it because they think it is not necessary to have such an ordinary routine, they may experience what Dallas Willard liked to say, while giving you a gentle and kind

smile, the "Reality is what you run into when you're wrong." Thus, we need liturgy on a daily basis, like we need to brush our teeth on a daily basis. It will help us develop and maintain spiritual health and growth for our souls.

Doesn't Liturgy Lead To Dead Externalism?

While there is good reason to perceive the danger of mere externalism with liturgical prayer that misses the heart and relational nature of prayer, avoiding liturgical prayer is nevertheless an over-reaction which can lead to an undisciplined prayer-life. This can have the fruit of spiritual disease and disorder creeping into our souls.

Therefore, when practicing *Spirit-infused liturgical prayer*, we need to learn to engage in it with an awareness of being before the joyful and loving face of God, and cultivate an attentiveness to the words on our lips and their implications for our lives in His Kingdom.

Yet while many may want this experience with God, they may not know where to start, yet in looking at a map, they are looking for direction. **If you're looking for direction, you can wisely start here by saying or singing the Shema twice daily before His joyful Face.**

The Shema, Twice Daily

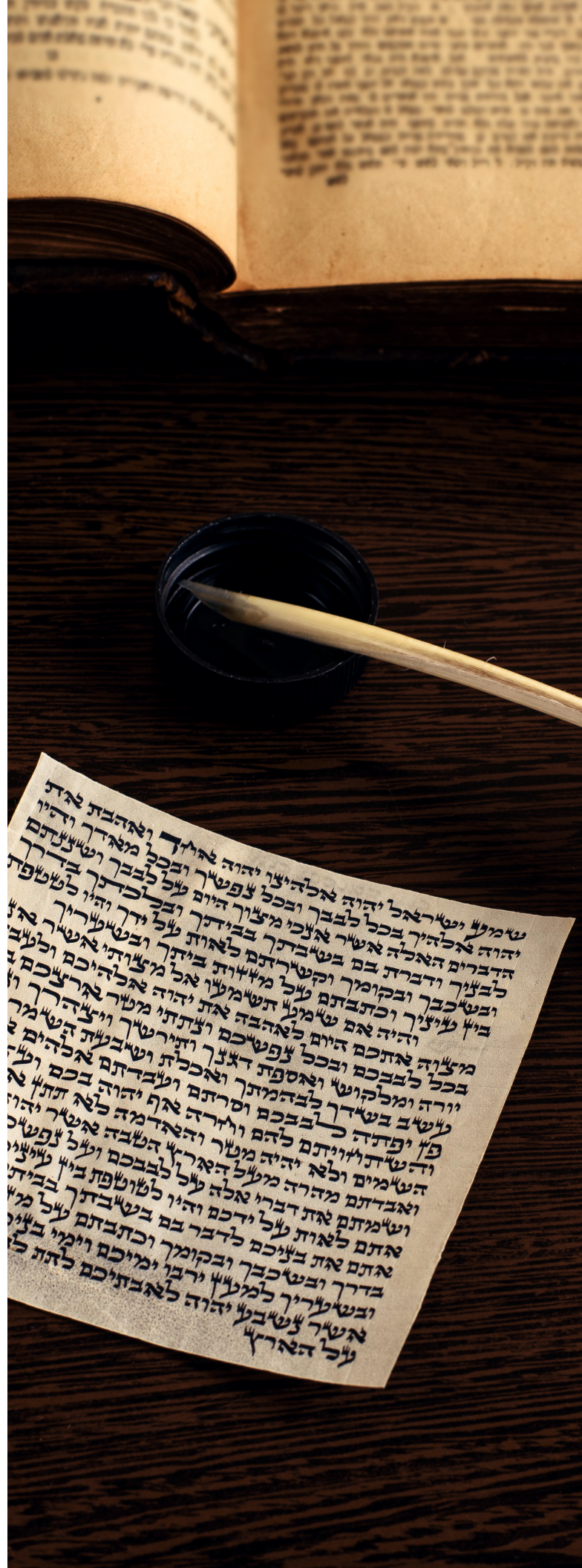
Jews since ancient times have prayed the Shema as the first prayer when they would wake, and the last prayer before they slept. (Deut. 6:5-9) It is the first prayer Jewish children learn, and the last prayer uttered by Jewish martyrs, or as a Jewish person is passing away. *It can be called a prayer of confessed allegiance or loyalty.*

Is This Old Tradition Irrelevant to Our Needs in the Contemporary World?

While Yeshua did correct some *human traditions* among His people that were being taught as if they were doctrines of God with the effect of making void the commandments of God, He did not correct all the practices among His people. (Matt. 23:2) Saying the Shema when He arose and when He retired, was considered by Him to be a Sacred Tradition that He fully embodied and likewise desired to be passed on as wisdom from *generation to generation* among His Messianic Jewish followers.

When You Arise, When You Lie Down — For Who? You? Me?

Starting and ending your day by saying or singing the Shema keeps *first thing first* in your life, *Love Relationship*. While there is a Jewish-specific and traditional expression of the practice of saying the Shema that I respect and especially



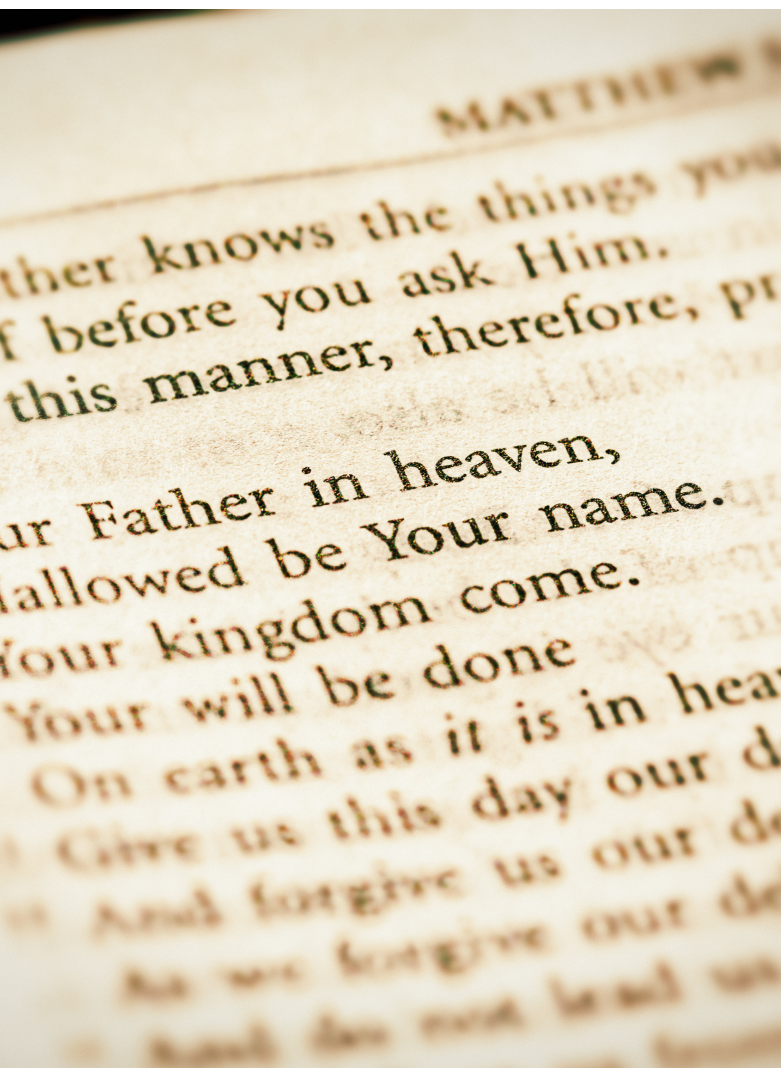
encourage Jewish disciples to learn and practice as led (see the book, *To Pray as a Jew* by Rabbi Hayim Donin). From this we find that there is principle and priority of the Shema which was/is transmitted by Messianic Jews to the Disciples among all Nations (1 Cor. 8:6). And it is wisdom of the ages to find ways to put it into daily practice. As someone of the Nations, I have decided to apply the principle taught to me by the Jewish people, by saying or singing twice a day a New Covenant expression of the Shema that includes Messiah fully in the identity of the LORD, the one God of Israel:

For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for Him. And one LORD, Yeshua the Messiah, through whom are all things, and we exist for Him, and I also say or sing the command to love the LORD and love neighbor. (Deut. 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18; Mk. 12:28-31).

Why Plan To Say or Sing the Shema Twice Daily?

For me, I want to daily remember who redeemed me, that I exist for Him, and what is most important to Him and to me - loving relationship with God and neighbor. ***There is a basic principle of life, without repetition, we tend to forget.*** I tend to trust this ancient wisdom of twice daily that has been passed down for millennia by the Jewish people. I have experienced its fruits over the days, weeks, months, and years. It has become a means of the Holy Spirit's river of grace to flow into my human spirit and heart so that the meaning of the Shema now lives in me, and continues to invite me to turn towards Him to walk in closeness with God before His joyful and loving Face.

So, if you're not in this liturgical habit, give it a try, and build this Spirit formed habit. Do this over 3, 6, 9, or even 12 months, and then evaluate the fruit of the practice. In addition, I want to give one more suggestion, pray the Messiah's Sanctification Prayer three times daily.





Pray the Messiah's Sanctification Prayer Three Times Daily (the "Our Father")

After being inspired by His prayer life, the Jewish apostles (talmidim) asked Yeshua to teach them these spiritual disciplines near the time of 100 CE. Messianic Jewish believers thus documented the life of Discipleship in what became known as the Didache. The Didache served to prepare disciples among the nations for immersion. **It is very explicit in its teaching that disciples were being taught to pray this prayer, three times daily** (continuing the pattern of prayer that was established in connection to the Temple-Service). While the Messiah's Prayer can rightly be seen and used as an outline for prayer. I think we need to be on guard against an unconscious or subtle influence of an anti-Judaic perspective in not wanting to see this as a liturgical prayer. Yeshua does express that when you pray, "say" in Luke 11:2. Telling us to say this prayer sounds pretty liturgical to me. He also taught that whenever we stand praying (in Jewish practice, it was already common to do this three times per day),

we are forgiving those who have sinned against us, and receiving any forgiveness we need. (Mk. 11:25) It is not a coincidence that this flow of forgiveness is built into Messiah's liturgical prayer. (Matt. 6:9-15)

I would like to highlight only one benefit among the endless benefits of praying the Messiah's prayer; building the Spirit-led relational habit of daily receiving and giving forgiveness freely.

Imagine if as disciples and whole congregations we prayed, "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us" three times daily. We would be releasing people from their sins against us about 90 times per month. Some of these sins may be known to us, but many are not known at all. A primary hindrance to intimacy and closeness with God would be removed daily. We would habitually live in the joy of being forgiven by God and the joy of forgiving others without resentment, grudges, bitterness, etc. In the cancel culture spirit of this age, the Jewish people and the Nations need to be people of forgiveness.

In the next article I will speak more about Messiah's prayer, but will focus more on the prayer book of Israel and the Church, the Psalms, as we continue our exploration of the Spiritual Discipline of Liturgical Prayer.



"AS CREATURES
OF HABIT, WE
NEED A HEALTHY
ROUTINE AND
REPETITION FOR
HEALTH."

-RICHARD CLEARY





THE FALL FEASTS

Tekiah! The first blast of the Shofar sounds on the Feast of Trumpets, Rosh Hashanah. What follows are 23 action-packed days, the details of which are described in the final verses of Leviticus 23. From that first Tekiah blast, we hear the call to an assembly, the reality of which we have not yet seen. So it is with all of the fall commanded gatherings of the Lord, pointing to future realities not yet experienced.

MICHAEL WEINER



Leviticus 23 is our “go-to” text for understanding the feasts of the Lord. (Their biblical name is - מועדי יהוה

Mo'adei Adonai or God's times). From this Shabbat Torah reading in Parashah Emor, we are reminded of the Garden of Eden experience when there was no striving, but instead only shalom. Weekly Shabbat is with us all year long, not only as a memorial to Adam and Eve, for it also speaks of the new heaven and new earth promised but not yet come.

Pesach, and the combining of Yom HaBikkurim and Shavuot are the spring gatherings that have already been celebrated in reality at the first coming. They memorialize the crucifixion (the paschal Sacrifice Lamb), first fruits (first harvest - resurrection), and giving of the Holy Spirit on Shavuot (Pentecost). These are the major events of Yeshua's first coming.

All the feasts, whether it be the spring feasts or those in the fall are given by God as “appointed times” and appointed gatherings and assemblies which peppers the year as we mark these times according to God's plan for eternity. The spring feasts honor the events that have already taken place during the first coming of Yeshua, while the fall feasts signify events only prophesied, but have not yet been fulfilled. They will be fulfilled at the second coming of Yeshua.





As we advance the calendar six months to the fall of the year, we first find the Feast of Trumpets signifying the crowning of Yeshua as King. Secondly, only 10 days later, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement or Judgment Day arrives, followed four days after that by Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles. To help in understanding these events, let's look at them through the lens of liturgy and the customs connected to each of these appointed meetings.

Rosh Hashanah (Day of the Shout, the Sound the Shofar, the Feast of Trumpets)

The prayer book of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur is called a Machzor, and "Chozair" is God's call for each of us to return to Him. The Machzor is full of prayers of repentance. The featured prayer of Rosh Hashanah is Psalm 24.

Crown Him King! He is the King of glory! (Psalm 24:8-10) The prophetic ear can hear His coronation being proclaimed! It truly is a "Feast of Trumpets." This coronation celebration is followed by the ten Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim). These ten days between Yeshua's coronation and the judgment day is also spoken of in Revelation 8:1 where the earth will be made quiet with anticipation of the judgment about to come in stating,



"Now when the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour."

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement, Yom HaDin, the Day of Judgment)

The first words of the Yom Kippur morning liturgy are, "The King sits on (His) throne high and lifted up." And so it will be on Judgment Day. This prayer is joined with "Avinu Malkeinu" (our Father our King) and is as a series of one-line prayers of contrition, petition, and repentance. Each one begins with those two words, "Avinu Malkeinu." In total, there are 44 short prayers that are prayed in various ways in different traditions around the world.

During this time, Jews pray that their names would be written in the Book of Life for another year, year by year. As followers of Yeshua, saved by grace, we know that our names have been written into the Book of Life for all eternity, for as noted in Revelation 3:5: *"The one who overcomes will be dressed in white clothes; I will never blot his name out of the Book of Life and will confess his name before My Father and His angels."*

In Revelation 20 verses 11 and 15, we are reminded that judgment day is coming with different results for the righteous and unrighteous: *"Then I saw a great white throne, and the One seated on it."*

The earth and heaven fled from His presence, but no place was found for them.... And if anyone was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire, but we have a hope and confidence in Yeshua that our sins are forgiven."

Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles)

Only four days after Yom Kippur, we empty ourselves. We leave our "palatial estate" and move into a humble, temporary dwelling known as a Sukkah. This command is given "... so that your generations may know that I had B'nei Yisrael to dwell in sukkot when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am Adonai, your God." (Leviticus 23:43)



During these seven days of Sukkot, we wave the Lulav and Etrog together. From one Messianic tradition, the Lulav as represented by three species signifies the Father (the Palm, straight and tall), Yeshua, the Son (the Willow, bent by the brook) and the Ruach haKodesh (signified by the Myrtle, with leaves shaped like lips). The Etrog is a citrus fruit chosen because it is the size and shape of a human heart. These four are held together and waved before the Lord in a prophetic gesture that serves to demonstrate that our destiny is to be united with God.

That is the point! We take a week to acknowledge our dependence on God. That's also what we're doing during every weekly Shabbat. We trust that God can do more in six days than we can do in seven. We take a day of rest to honor His goodness toward us.

There are elements of every holiday in each weekly Shabbat celebration and in turn, a little of our weekly Shabbat is represented in every Jewish holiday. On Sukkot, we take the last week of all the annual holidays to get back to the Garden of Eden, where it all began. When Yeshua returns to establish His Kingdom here on earth, every nation will come to Jerusalem on Sukkot. This is best seen in Zech. 14:16:

"Then all the survivors from all the nations that attacked Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Adonai-Tzva'ot, and to celebrate Sukkot."



summary

As we celebrate these fall feasts, let us be mindful of the future and the fact that God commands for us the practice of fall feasts to honor the realities connected to the second coming of Yeshua which we have not yet experienced, while the spring feasts memorialize the historical events of Yeshua's first coming.

Together the entire year celebrates the deliverance and restoration of the whole world.

Until we have the expected reality in its fullness, let's celebrate God's fall feasts with anticipation of prophecy fulfilled.





I CALL YOU *Friend*

Agape Friendship Love

PAUL WILBUR

In John 15:15, Yeshua calls His disciples together and makes an amazing statement. He says, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I call you friends...”

Rabbi Yosef Mitzrachi says that the Hebrew word for friend (*chaver*) has the same root as the word “connection” (*chivur*). It is for this reason that a *friend* is someone “with a deep connection and a bond of loyalty.”

But there is more to this word than meets the eye.

Asher Intrater’s book, *Covenant Relationships*, deeply explores this subject. His book has had a tremendous impact on my life and the lives of others. It is taught and used in many Bible schools and Seminaries around the world, and is highly recommended by many, including myself.

The Greek word for friendship, *philia*, is one of the 6 major words in the New Covenant Scriptures that we translate as LOVE, and it is the kind of love that the Greeks seemed to value most. Why is that? What is it about this form of “love” that was so attractive to the Greek mind and their cultural sensitivities? I read that the Greeks were afraid of the eros or passionate, sexual kind of love because it seemed to have the ability to take over a man’s emotions and sensibilities, causing an individual to do and say irrational things. In contrast to eros, where we get the word “erotic,” is *philia*, a love-friendship which appears to be a “love” based on loyalty, trust, and faithfulness.

Proverbs 18:24 says, “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a *friend* (*ahav*, love or lover) who sticks closer than a brother.”

Drawing from this same kind of love, Proverbs 17:17 continues by stating, “A friend (*re-ah*, neighbor as in Exodus 20:16,17) loves (*ahav*, lover) at all times, and there is a brother who is born for adversity.” This theme is continued in the New Covenant in John 15 where Yeshua exhorts, “Greater love (*agape*, Godlike love) has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends (*philos*, companions).” Call me a romantic, but it seems to me that a real “friend” is a lover of the best kind.

Can I say then, that true friendship is born out of a love that is loyal and trustworthy? I am reminded of the friendship (or love) between David of Bethlehem and Jonathan the son of King Saul. This friendship literally saved the life of David more than once, and even preferred David above his own right to the throne of Israel. Jonathan demonstrated a kind of lover and friendship that Yeshua was speaking about many years later. So it is safe to say that a true friend is one who lives the *philia* kind of love in a relationship with you. A friend is a lover of the purest kind; and then there’s Yeshua ... He says that there is a friend and lover who carries a higher kind of love, (*agape* in the Greek) that would even lay his own life down for his friends.

Now this really gets my mind spinning. What kind of friend am I? Do I have these kinds of friendships in my life? Thankfully, I do.



First, I married my best friend. I didn’t know it at the time, but I have come to appreciate her love and friendship through more than 45 years of challenges, disappointments, victories and defeats that have proven the kind of friendship-love, AGAPE-friendship-love, which Yeshua was speaking about. How well I have returned that friendship-love is not for me to say. I only hope it is of the quality that she so richly deserves. And yes, there are several men in my life with whom I share this special covenant kind of relationship with as well.



Several years ago I had a very bad day. I sat for almost an hour, with another man listening in, while I was chastised, accused, belittled and challenged about my integrity, honesty and character. OUCH! I thought this much younger man really loved and appreciated me. I kept my mouth shut and took it, but the words went deep, and the pain that ensued for days, even weeks, was very real. The resolution I found came in the form of a sound; the sound of my true friends' voices. Just the sound of their voices washed over my soul like a cool drink of water over some very parched ground.

The voice of a friend ... powerful stuff.

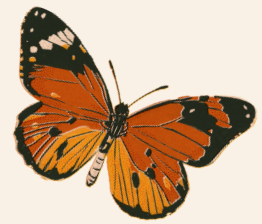
The obvious song I hear in my mind as I try to convey something that would take more space and time than I have here, is the one penned by Carol King and made more famous by James Taylor..."You've got a friend." Is it possible that the love-friendship of God that has been shed abroad in our hearts has been given so that we could be a lover/friend to others?

There's a great line in the first SHREK movie where Shreck asks Donkey, "Why are you doing this?" Donkey's answer is perfect, "Because that's what friends do!"

Let's go and be true friends to one another!



True friendship
is born out of a
love
that is
loyal and
trustworthy.



-PAUL WILBUR

FORGIVENESS AND INTIMACY

REFLECTIONS ON THE HIGH HOLY DAYS



AARON ALLSBROOK

The high holidays. Every Jew knows about them and it's usually the only time most Jews go to any type of service. These are big events, that is, Rosh Hashanah and, especially, Yom Kippur. Many irreligious Jews fast even to some degree on Yom Kippur. Whatever one has done for the other 364 days of the year, Jewish people all over the world typically set this day aside as a day to dress up, attend services, fast (some or all), and ask God for forgiveness. Of course, breaking the fast is really where it's at when all get together and celebrate the end of the solemnity and eat bagels and lox for dinner.

Yom Kippur has become the pinnacle really for the modern Jewish calendar. Yes, the Torah does ascribe to this day great awesomeness, even calling it a Shabbat Shabbaton (Lev 16:31, 23:32), loosely translated as a super Shabbat. On this day we "afflict our souls," traditionally meaning to fast, and, in the days of the Temple, the high priest would engage in his biggest and most important work day. If all went well, God would forgive and cleanse the priesthood, the people, and the Temple. Once this day was over it surely would be a time to celebrate as God's mercy has been poured out again.

“THOSE WHO FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIPS WILL HAVE THE GREATEST LEVELS OF JOY, WHICH IS INEVITABLY THE MOST ATTRACTIVE.”

Five days following Yom Kippur is Sukkot, the feast of booths. It is the most joyous of the festivals (Dt 16:15). Why such great joy? In a way, given Yom Kippur's sanctity, shouldn't there be the greatest of joy, say, following the fast and all the sacrifices and subsequent forgiveness and cleansing? Moreover, if Yom Kippur is the most important of all the holidays, why isn't it on the 15th of Tishrei, the 7th month, just like Passover is on the 15th of Nissan (Aviv), the 1st month?



The moon is brightest on the 15th of the month; all those congregating are able to have their joy at the fullest because each one's face is the most visible. Passover is on the 15th of the month (certainly, this makes it easier to get out of Egypt), but Yom Kippur is on the 10th of the month. What happened on the 10th of Nissan? The children of Israel took their lamb that was about to be sacrificed to ensure their whole family's freedom. Taking the lamb is truly significant, but the main purpose is so that the people have it ready for the 15th, the day when God takes His people to be His own. Likewise, Yom Kippur, however significant, serves to get us ready for a time of intimacy with our God.





There is another layer to this. According to Zechariah (ch. 14), arguably the greatest day in the Millennial Kingdom is Sukkot when all the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship the King. They don't come and gather on Yom Kippur to seek atonement—that's already been provided for. They don't come on even Passover to ask for redemption—that too has been covered. They come at Sukkot, the time of intimacy. Jeremiah phrases it like this,

"Again the word of *Adonai* came to me, saying: 'Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, thus says Adonai: I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, and the way you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was *kadosh* to *Adonai*, the firstfruits of the harvest. All who devoured him were held guilty. Catastrophe overtook them.' It is a declaration of *Adonai*." (Jeremiah 2:1-3)

The goal of God has always been intimacy. Over and over again, God says, "I will be their God and they will be my people." Yeshua even describes His love for Jerusalem, the heart of the Jewish people, being like a hen wanting to gather her chicks close to her. (Matthew 23:37) Intimacy, closeness, and relationship is what God desires most.

Forgiveness and atonement are essential. They are, however, not the endgame. What is provided on Yom Kippur is to provide for us a means by which we can be with God without spot or wrinkle. The same is with Yeshua: He died, was buried, rose again, and ascended to the Father *so that* we could return to our Father. (see Colossians 1:19-20)

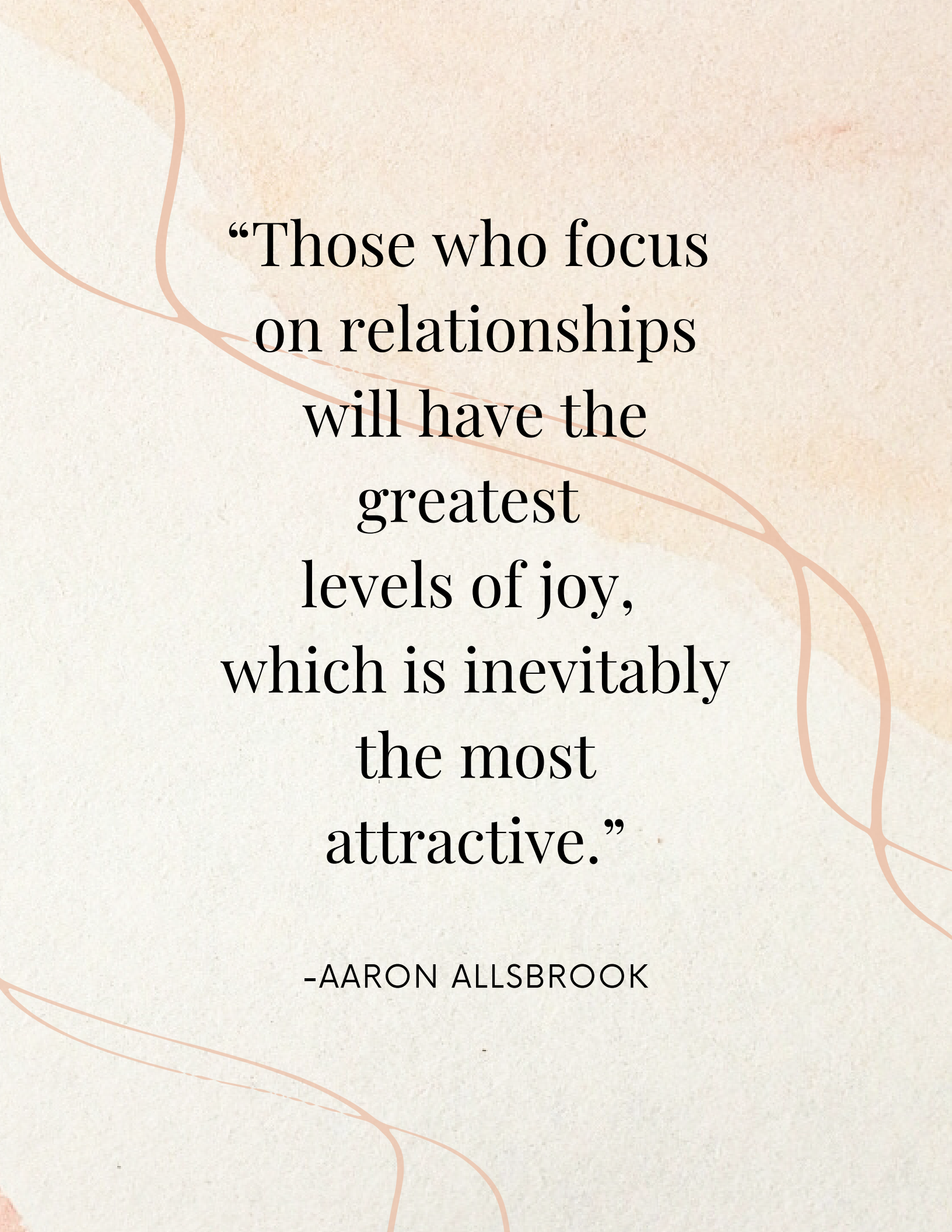
The unfortunate part is that many stay focused on just the atonement and they don't prioritize and celebrate the true intimacy we have now with our Father and Yeshua. The same is within the traditional community: Yom Kippur is the pinnacle and Sukkot has taken a back seat.

We at Tikkun know that joy is paramount, and joy comes from relationships, real relationships; where one sees one another's face, where one is close both with God, and with man. Yes, we celebrate our atonement and forgiveness in Yeshua, but let us press on to celebrate even more our restored relationship with our Father in heaven, and with His sons and daughters around us.

Those who focus on relationships will have the greatest levels of joy, which is inevitably the most attractive.

As we go through the High Holiday season, thank God for atonement. Thank God for forgiveness. Thank God for Yeshua being willing to lay down His life and make a sacrifice greater than that of bulls and goats. But don't stop there. Know how much your Father loves you, that He desires to be close to you, that Yeshua will reveal Himself to those who love Him and keep His commandments. (see John 14:21) Likewise, let us draw near to our brothers and sisters around us. We have restored relationships with not just God, but with man. Forgiveness makes way for true and life-giving intimacy.





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greatest
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-AARON ALLSBROOK

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