



Call of T'shuvah

“Esher (happy) is the people that know the tēruw`ah (war cry [of the shofar]), they shall walk O Yahweh in the light of Your paniym (faces).”
(Psalm 89:16)

“Esher (happy) are you Yisrael my nation yasha (saved) by Yahweh, the shield of your help, the rising sword and Your enemies will be found out liars and you shall tread down their Bamah (platform used for religious leaders).” (Deuteronomy 33:29)

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a kodesh mikra (set-apart nation), Elohim's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”
(1 Kepha 2:9 quoting Exodus 19:6 & Deuteronomy 7:6)

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understand the Scriptures and forever will bear the guilt for the death of J-sus."

From Egypt to the modern era, the nation of Israel has been kicked like a worn deflated soccer ball from one super power nation to the other. In recent times, without a country of its own and without its own defence force, the nation's occupants got rounded up from everywhere, losing their rights, livelihoods, belongings, loved ones, hair, gold fillings, body parts and eventually their lives in that order while the majority of world turned its back.

I ask you, do you have a death wish? The Word says, we are blessed, chosen, a royal priesthood, a special treasure. Really? I have sat in envy at the peace of the wicked, knowing there are no chains that hold them back until they die? Their vitality throughout their lives always appears sound. They are not included in the toil of frail humans and they are not plagued as we are. They wear arrogance around their necks like jewellery and they are insulated from violence with their eyes bulging from abundance. They're affluent lifestyles have even exceeded the fantasies of their hearts. They consume the weak and speak evil in public. They speak against heaven, ridiculing us with their tongues strutting on earth. Their success undermines the prestige of the Torah, where it should feel like a flowing river, it seems more like a trickle for us. Their success draining our joy. They ask, how can we be assured of an interventional Creator when we die just like them? These are the wicked and they are always at ease, accumulating wealth? Surely in vain have I purified my heart and ritually cleansed my hands. For I'm plagued all day long and I am chastised every morning with Your reality. If these thoughts became known, I would cause many to stumble in the Way. When I reflected to understand this privately it seemed like this faith was the source of my iniquity.

I just quoted from Psalm 73.

Recently, I sat in quiet reflection over the coming High Holidays almost upon us and I toiled over the events of the last year, working out my salvation with fear and trembling. At the same time, I looked at the secular person, even the mainstream Christian, people going about their lives, totally oblivious of the importance of Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur, and yet they seem quite happy.

Sometimes, at this time of year we can feel so anxious that the allure of our former lives can seem like a grass greener on the other side.

King David's director of music, Asaf, went through the same trivial in Psalm 73. But listen to what he continues to say: "It seemed like the source of my iniquity sprang from my faith, but then my thoughts came to the sanctuaries of Elohim. In other words, the apparent unfairness of life continued to puzzle me as long as my vision remained profane, measuring success according to material attainment and physical comfort, but when I shifted my gaze to loftier things I realised that the tearing down of my body was building my soul into a magnificent sanctuary of eternal bliss. The wicked are bankrupt, for they have squandered all their merits in this world, and are condemned to eternal damnation in the hereafter (Rashbam & Radak). Through the Ruach HaKodesh, I gazed into the future and saw the fate of those who dared to attack Elohim's sanctuaries (each Temple and every Elohim fearing man or woman who ever walked). The wicked attack us and in so doing seal their ultimate doom (Ibn Ezra).

The Egyptians, Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Greeks, the Persians, the Romans, and even as recent as the Germans under Nazi rule have all ceased to exist, but the Jew remains the same. Only on slippery places does Elohim place the wicked and He throws them down into darkness. He turns them to desolation and brings them to an end with terrors. They will be as if caught in a bad dream that never ends and all the while their own stench will fill their nostrils. I felt like a fool contemplating the prosperity of the wicked, like an animal that walks alongside you knowing nothing, but still I walked along side you. You cut down all who stray from You. I put my refuge and hope in You and I shall relate Your rescue mission.

Asaf comes to his senses, but he does what every believer who is worth their salt should do, reflect and ponder honestly and openly with Yahweh Elohim. Don't be afraid to tell Him how you really feeling. If you talk openly and honestly with Him, he'll deal openly and honestly with you.

Everyone's worried about Donald Trump, Isis, chem-trails, the illuminati, but the truth is our one and only concern should be our own spiritual condition before Yahweh.

“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Messiah Yahshua came into the world to save sinners--of whom I am the worst.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

We've all sinned and Yahweh didn't arrange His calendar to catch us out and condemn us! He arranged it to remedy our sin, not kill us in the midst of it. Yahweh doesn't punish us or kill us, we punish us and kill ourselves.

Our sin and iniquity cause the separation. Sin and iniquity are not thrust on us; we work them into our lives with great effort.

(Slide) Your iniquities have separated you from Elohim, your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

In the absence of sin, Elohim's presence would be evident everywhere! Gradually we push Him away and He gradually retreats from our sight. This is fine until we need Him again. You see we work hard to sin. We walk along way from Elohim's House to sin. It takes a lot of mental, verbal and physical effort. And when we find ourselves damaged by sin, we want an instant teleportation back into Elohim's house! Unfortunately, Messiah Yahshua, renamed J-sus Christ by the masses has helped to serve up this instant repentance just add water solution. As a consequence, his redefined persona has for many replaced the requirement to observe the Hebrew Calendar at all.

But what about those of us that have pushed through the myriad of smoke screens and come to the knowledge of the truth. Is life any easier for us than it is for the one walking in ignorance?

We should know that this walk is not a guarantee against sin. But it is a guarantee for removal of sin and renewal of the soul. According to a Jewish Midrash, there is an interesting take on sin from three different levels of revelation within Scripture.

- According to **Wisdom sin** is a **harmful** deed.
- According to **Prophecy sin** is **death**.
- According to **Torah sin** is **folly**.
- According to **Elohim sin** is an **opportunity**.

- Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni on Psalms 25)

According to Wisdom sin is a harmful deed. According to Prophecy it is death. Torah sees it as folly. And Elohim sees it as an opportunity. - The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni on Psalms 25)
How's this work? Three of the four Scriptural interpretations regarding sin's effect seem to have a similar take on sin and yet Elohim himself says something that seems completely different. Well, no doubt you've been hearing about Rosh Hashanah and how it's a Day of Judgment that comes each year and all of creation gets judged. If you're anything like me, you're taking that seriously. But you can be bowled over by it or use it to bowl over your sin. So how is sin an opportunity?
Yahweh Elohim invented the laws of nature (both physical and spiritual) and the Wisdom that recognizes how they operate. Elohim is the source of life, and it is He who decreed that it should flow to the human soul via a channel constructed (or disrupted) by the deeds of man. And Elohim gave us the Torah and its formulae for spiritual sanity, self-discovery and transcendence. So Elohim is the source of the first three perspectives on sin.

But the fourth perspective is Elohim's alone: sin as the opportunity for "return" (*teshuvah*).

Teshuvah is a process that, in its ultimate form, empowers us to not only transcend our failings but to also redeem them: to literally travel back in time and redefine the essential nature of a past deed, transforming it from evil to good.

To achieve this, we first have to experience the act of transgression as a negative thing. We have to agonize over the utter devastation it has wrecked on our soul. We have to recognize, disavow and renounce its folly. Only then can we go back and change what we did.

So is sin a bad, harmful deed? Is it the very face of death? Is it mere stupidity, to be shrugged off by an inherently wise and pristine soul? Is it a potent opportunity for conquest and growth? Turns out, it's all four. But it can only be the fourth if it's also the first three.

עבירה

Aveira

Meaning: "To pass over"

There are three categories of a person who commits an aveira.

- The first one is someone who does an aveira intentionally, called "B'mezid." This is the most serious category.
- The second is one who did an aveira by accident. This is called "B'shogeg," and while the person is still responsible for their action it is considered less serious.
- The third category is someone who is a "Tinok Shenishba," which is a person who was raised in an environment unaware of the proper halacha. This person is not held accountable for his or her actions.

The usual word for sin, *averah*, is from the root *avar*, "to pass over," hence "transgression," overriding Elohim's will.

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תשובה

T'shuvah

Meaning: "To return"



The word *Teshuvah* in Hebrew may be read "tashuv hey," literally "returning the letter Hey." The last letter Hey of the Tetragrammeton refers to *Malchut*. *Malchut* is synonymous with *Shechinah*, which is how Elohim manifests Himself as a sovereign within the creation.

יהוה

Hey

Hey

When we do t'shuvah in an area, we are returning the sovereignty of Yahweh back to our lives in that place.

(Slide) The usual word for repentance is *t'shuvah*, meaning "turning"—that is, from sin to Elohim. The word *Teshuvah* in Hebrew may be read "tashuv hey," literally "returning the letter Hey." The last letter Hey of the Tetragrammeton refers to *Malchut*. *Malchut* is synonymous with *Shechinah*, which is how Elohim manifests Himself as a sovereign within the creation. When we do t'shuvah in an area, we are returning the sovereignty of Yahweh back to our lives in that place.

T'shuvah comprises chiefly four steps.

1. Regret. To regret what we have done wrong.
2. Leaving the negativity behind. To stop dwelling on the transgression in thought and action.
3. Verbalisation. To verbally state the transgression
4. Resolution for the future. To be determined not to let the transgression happen again.

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Maimonides wrote: "let not a penitent man imagine that he is afar off from the excellency, or degree of the righteous, because of the sins and iniquities he has committed, the thing is not so; but he is beloved and desired before the Creator, as if he had never sinned; for his reward is great; for lo, he hath tasted the taste of sin, and hath separated from it, and hath subdued his evil imagination: the wise men say, the place where "penitents" stand, the "perfect righteous" cannot stand; which is as if it was said, their degree of excellency is greater, than those who never sinned, because they have subdued their imagination more than they."



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The High Holidays were given amid the framework of the Torah to enable us to regulate righteous living. Rosh Hashanah, the Ten Days of Awe and Yom Kippur are designed to repair, refresh and restore our souls. They were not given to condemn us each year. Every day, every week, every month and all year round the Father is calling us to turn around. On Rosh Hashanah the shofar is sounded as a final alarm of this constant calling.

The shofar sound on Rosh Hashanah is to awaken us to t'shuvah!

Paradoxically, in Orthodox Rosh Hashanah liturgies there is no reference to sin or forgiveness. Why? Because Rosh Hashanah is the preliminary stage of the final rout of t'shuvah for each year. This is called Hirhur t'shuvah (the awakening of t'shuvah).

The interesting thing about *hirur t'shuvah* is that it is a form of t'shuvah that lacks all the above stages of t'shuvah. This is why Rosh Hashanah is so awesome. This form of *t'shuvah* overrides the multi-step process of normal *t'shuvah*.

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An example of *hirur t'shuvah* can be found in the martyrdom of Rabbi Chanina ben Teradyon. The Gemara in Avodah Zarah (18a) relates that when he was taken out to be burned at the stake by the Romans, the tufts of wool soaked in water were placed over his chest in order to prolong the agony. The executioner, intensely moved by his suffering, asked Rabbi Chanina whether he could be guaranteed a place in the World to Come were he to remove the tufts of wool and increase the intensity of the fire so as to hasten Rabbi Chanina's death. When Rabbi Chanina answered in the affirmative, the executioner acted accordingly, the latter subsequently hurling himself into the flames as well. At that point, a voice emanated from Heaven and proclaimed that both Rabbi Chanina and the executioner would enter the World to Come. The emphasis on the story was not that they only earned a share in the World to Come, but that the executioner achieved the same level as Rabbi Chanina.

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In response to this Divine verdict, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi wept, marvelling at how some individuals merit the World to Come only after a lifetime of effort, while others acquire such a reward after only a brief moment. But why did Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi weep? Because, though prior to the incident, he had knowledge of *t'shuvah*, he never knew of *hirur t'shuvah*.

But to those of you that might have trouble relating to this old story, there is another example of *hirur t'shuvah* in one of the unlikeliest of sources. The science fiction movie Return of the Jedi. In this movie, the evil Darth Vader watches as his evil mentor, the Emperor proceeds to electrocute his son to death. Watch what happens (Que Slide).

So this Rosh Hashanah, if you feel you've had a bad year, may the sound of the shofar bring you *hirur t'shuvah* and may you be reconciled to the body of Messiah Yahshua. Amein.