

Return to Me, and I Will Return to You

“²² I have blotted out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you (shuvah elai ki ge’alticha)” ²³ Sing, O heavens, for Adonai has done it! Shout, depths of the earth! Break forth into singing, mountains, forest, and every tree in it! For Adonai has redeemed Jacob and will be glorified through Israel” (Isa 44:22-23).

He who created you without you will not justify you without you. (Augustine)

“⁷ “From the days of your ancestors you have turned aside from My statutes, and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,” says Adonai-Tzva’ot. Yet you say: “How should we return?” (Mal 3:7)

⁹ Remember the former things of old: For I am God—there is no other. I am God, and there is none like Me—¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning, from ancient time, what is yet to come, saying, “My purpose will stand, and I will accomplish all that I please” (Isa 46:9-10).

“‘Seek Adonai while he is available, call on him while he is still nearby. Let the wicked person abandon his way and the evil person his thoughts; let him return to Adonai, and he will have mercy on him; let him return to our Elohim, for he will freely forgive.’ (Isaiah 55:6,7) When does this apply to an individual? Rabbah bar Avuhah said: These are the ten days between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.” (Rosh Hashanah 18a).

Maimodenes (Rambam): 24 Sins that create a great spiritual canyon between God and sinners

A. Four sins so great that G-d blocks the sinner’s way toward repentance:

1. Causing the multitude to sin or preventing them from performing a mitzvah
2. Enticing an individual to sin
3. Standing idly while one’s child—or anyone else he can influence—slides into the path of sin
4. One who says, “I will repent later” or “I will sin and Yom Kippur will atone for me”

B. Five sins or attitudes that, by their very nature, stand in the way of repentance, because they make it very difficult for the sinner to accept the need to repent or to heed the admonition to do so:

1. One who separates himself from the community
2. One who disputes the wise men from his time
3. One who disparages (depreciates, belittles or discredits) the commandments
4. One who insults his teachers
5. One who hates admonitions

C. Five sins that prevent someone from repenting, because these sins involve other people, and the sinner will not know of whom he must beg forgiveness or to whom he must return property:

1. One who curses a crowd, so that he does not know to whom to apologize
2. One who shares in stolen goods, without knowing the victim
3. One who does not announce or return stolen property
4. One who persecutes the poor and the homeless, who remain anonymous
5. One who accepts bribes, so he cannot know the extent of his miscarriage of justice

D. Five sins from which it is difficult to repent because the violator considers them so trivial that they are not even sins:

1. One who eats from a meal that does not suffice for his hosts
2. One who uses the security deposit of poor people
3. One who looks at immoral and obscene displays, and deludes himself into feeling that he has not committed an immoral act.
4. One who glorifies himself through a disparaging comparison with another person, even though his comrade was not present to suffer embarrassment

5. One who suspects another unjustly

E. Five sins that entice the transgressor to commit them constantly and that become irresistible to him:

1. Gossip-mongering
2. Slander
3. Anger
4. Harboring evil thoughts
5. Associating with the wicked

Since these sins make a great chasm between people and God, who/what can deliver them? How can the Jewish people draw near unto God?

The special quality of the Ten Days of Awe (and Repentance) has been that Adonai is accessible and He is near. We who are Messianic Jews have even more access through Messiah Yeshua's Atonement on our behalf. Can we not take advantage on this Yom Kippur to draw close to Him and make complete peace with our Maker?

"¹² So then, the Torah is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. ¹³ Therefore did that which is good become death to me? May it never be! Rather it was sin working death in me—through that which is good—so that sin might be shown to be sin, and that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful. ¹⁴ For we know that the Torah is spiritual; but I am of the flesh, sold to sin. ¹⁵ For I do not understand what I am doing—for what I do not want, this I practice; but what I hate, this I do. ¹⁶ But if I do what I do not want to do, then I agree with the Torah—that it is good. ¹⁷ So now it is no longer I doing it, but sin dwelling in me. ¹⁸ For I know that nothing good dwells in me—that is, in my flesh. For to will is present in me, but to do the good is not. ¹⁹ For the good that I want, I do not do; but the evil that I do not want, this I practice. ²⁰ But if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I doing it, but sin that dwells in me. ²¹ So I find the principle—that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. ²² For I delight in the Torah of God with respect to the inner man, ²³ but I see a different law in my body parts, battling against the law of my mind and bringing me into bondage under the law of sin which is in my body parts. ²⁴ Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ²⁵ Thanks be to God—it is through Messiah Yeshua our Lord!^[d] So then, with my mind I myself serve the Torah of God; but with my flesh, I serve the law of sin" (Rom 7:12-25).

⁸ Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded! (James 4:8)