

## ***A Night of Experiencing His Forgiveness***

How important is repentance in Judaism? According to Jewish thought, without the possibility of repentance, the world could not exist, because – as our common experience makes all too clear – man stumbles more than he strides. If there were no possibility of wiping the slate clean, man could have no hope of rising above his frequent sins. They would always remain to condemn him, never allowing him to escape inevitability of judgment and punishment. For this reason, *T'Shuvah* had to be created before the universe, for *Elohim* would not create a world that was doomed from its inception (*"<sup>8</sup>All who dwell on the earth shall worship him—everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb who was slain" Revelation 13:8*). In Jewish understanding the possibility of repentance always exists – in fact, it must exist. *Elohim* has been waiting from Elul 1 to the end of Tishri – anxiously and expectantly, as it were – for the His people and Believers to return to His embrace. He is more responsive at this time, He assists those groping for His closeness, and He regards our failure to respond to this opportunity as a transgression of an uncommon magnitude. Like Wisdom, Repentance was with Him in the beginning.

*Adonai* commanded us to consider our ways and repent in last week's *Parashat Vayelech*. This is serious and it involved the entire nation as they stood in front of the River Jordan. The Promised Land was on the other side, and they were about to enter into it. As a congregation, we are also standing today in front of our Promised Land (our future). It is time that we do what our ancestors practiced and face the reality of our shortcomings and our transgressions/sins. I challenge us as a congregation to get our affairs right with one another individually and as a congregation to be: *Chazak! Be courageous!*

There is probably no greater suffering in the life than the pain of being wronged by a brother/sister (biological or in the Lord). This kind of suffering can be *Adonai's* reminder that we have violated His ways: *"<sup>71</sup>It is good for me that I was afflicted (humbled), so that I may learn Your decrees" (Ps. 119:71)*. Also, this suffering can be *Adonai's* way to draw others to Himself: *"<sup>18</sup>For Messiah once suffered for sins also—the righteous for the unrighteous<sup>[a]</sup>—in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Ruach" 1 Peter 3:18*. But our calling when another person offends us is to forgive them so we can then be forgiven by *Adonai Himself*: *"<sup>12</sup>And forgive us our debts (trespasses) as (in the same manner) we also have forgiven our debtors (those who trespass against us.)" (Matt. 6:12)*. Why are we here tonight in His Presence on Yom Kippur? Because we seek forgiveness for our Nation (both for the US and for Israel) so we must ourselves practice releasing our debtors so that *Adonai* can release us as the *firstfruits* of repentance for our nation – it must always begin with us!

What is *Adonai* expecting us to do and what is His kind of forgiveness? He is *NOT expecting us to pardon our offenders* because forgiveness is releasing an offender emotionally — while pardon requires an authority (like Him) who has jurisdiction over the matter to cancel out the consequences. We do have that kind of jurisdiction, but He does! Also, forgiveness is freeing *Adonai* to reward us unexpectedly because His forgiveness sees an offender's needs and *Adonai's* solution. Let us release and allow Him to do this great work in us!

Are you ready to experience His Forgiveness? *Chag Yom Kippur Tov!*