

The Ten Days of Awe – Preparing Ourselves for God

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Is your life the postcard for harmony and serenity? Do you live in a peaceful state of bliss? Does everything in your life smell like roses and do all conversations begin and end with a genuine, loving smile? My guess is that most of you will answer “no” to these questions.

Most of us live positive joy filled lives with God as our focus, but we all face adversity in some way throughout our daily lives. We all have things we are trying to get through and relationships that we are struggling with. Most of us have challenges with certain individuals in our lives. We all probably have those people that really make that serenity and harmony seem almost unachievable.

I'm sure you all can think of someone that really makes your life challenging. Maybe it's multiple people. Take a moment, if you will, and think about the people you know. Who is that one person that you have the biggest challenge being around or communicating with? I don't mean a person that's abusive or truly doing harm to you or loved ones. With those people I highly suggest you seek help from a wise counselor or the local authorities if necessary. But the person I want you to think of is someone who just doesn't see things your way, someone who seems to always be combative, or that person that you feel owes you or has taken something from you in some way. Or just someone with whom you haven't really meshed with lately.

These are the people I would like for you to have in your minds as I continue, because coming soon are the 10 Days of Awe, also known as the 10 Days of Repentance.

These are the 10 days, beginning with Yom Teruah (Rosh Hoshanah or Feast of Trumpets) where we focus, especially, on getting right with our brother, so we can be right with God on the coming Day of Atonement – Yom Kippur. These are the days where we really want to show God where our hearts are, as we rapidly approach Atonement. These 10 days should be a time of rejoicing because we are AT-One with our brother. So, if we aren't able to allow ourselves to rejoice with them right now, what can we do to change that?

I'd like to explore 2 Timothy 2 as we keep this in mind:

2 Timothy 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

So, this is our goal. We want to be an honorable vessel for God. We want to be cleansed so that we can do His EVERY good work. So as we read on we'll see how to do this.

22 Flee also youthful lusts; this is one thing that really rings true to me as I get older. I made so many foolish mistakes when I was younger that would never even enter my mind now. Things that I thought were cool or harmless; I look back on now as the major challenges in my life, some of which I am still trying to overcome. Some of those things were the start of me

drifting from God when I was younger. Only by God's grace did I come back to Him and begin to right the ship and now have a family that I can teach His ways. Almost every one of my friends growing up has drifted as I did and has yet to seek God to my knowledge. For a parent, this is probably one of the biggest areas of strife and quarrels with their children. Trying to find a way for their children, that they love so dearly, to not have to go through some of the things that they went through. Trying to save them the difficulty, while hoping and praying that they stay close to God and keep Him at the center of everything. It's so hard for the youth today, because they are pulled in so many ways and being enticed by Satan so subliminally. So, if we are pursuing youthful lusts, there's sure to be someone near to you, wiser, who wants to steer you away. This is where you sometimes may find strained relationships. This is a huge part of why so many people are at odds with each other, especially within families.

I say to everyone, young and old, if you focus on fleeing youthful lusts, your relationships will improve. Plus, you'll find that people will have more trust in you and respect your decisions more.

22 but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Instead of focusing on the youthful lusts of life, we should be focusing on growing closer to God, learning his way, trusting Him, loving others and seeking to have unity with everyone.

23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all,

Gentleness to everyone... Gentleness goes a long, long way when it comes to building relationships with others. When I think of someone not being gentle, I think of two different things. I see it all the time and I myself have had times where I struggle with this as well.

The first is when we don't have patience with those close to us, or when we treat them harshly while, at the same time, those we work with or meet for the very first time we give great respect and shower with kindness. I see it all the time, it's like a light switch to some people. They can be very short and blunt with those they love, yet in seconds they can turn to someone they barely know and shower them with smiles, compliments and kindness. Why is that we are the most impatient with those we love most?

I also see the opposite quite a bit. Impatience with those we don't know, especially without knowing their story, and assuming incompetence. Like driving a car and being impatient or unhappy with the oblivious driver. You know who I mean. Those who are unaware of their surroundings, driving slow in the fast lane, or coming to a complete stop and not merging on to a highway when they don't have a stop sign... What about the employee at the drive-thru that gets your order wrong? Incompetence!? Or, the customer service person on the other end of the phone, trying to follow the company policies they're given, which don't match up with your expectations? Are we gentle with them?

What if it was YOUR Grandmother or a dear elderly person you know driving the car that's camped out in the fast lane? Would you have more patience with her. Would you be thinking "Oh, she's so sweet.....she doesn't quite have the awareness she used to, but she is the most generous person I know. I would never tailgate her and cut her off due to impatience....."?

Do we ever think that the person at the drive-thru or on the other end of our phone call could

be a young 17-18 year old from your local congregation, working his/her 1st job just trying to do their best to help take care of the family and do their part in a tough economy? If you knew this about them, would you be more patient? Would you be more gentle? Do we **need** to know these things about them in order to be more gentle?

24 able to teach, patient, which goes right along with gentleness...

25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition,

"in humility correcting those who are in opposition"!!! WOW!!!

A lot can be learned from those few words. To correct someone humbly means that you are taking yourself completely out of the situation. Completely removing any kind of ego or having to be understood.

It's not about you and your beliefs, it's about trying to do right in God's eyes.

Let's pause for a moment and think about any kind of disagreement. One you've had, one you've observed or, one you've heard of.....Now remove any kind of self-interest. Remove the thought of either party trying to be right, or have his needs met. When one is humble, one is gentle, soft spoken with no desire to be heard and understood. How much of a disagreement will there be?

Humility is the key to building and strengthening relationships. Without humility, we are self-absorbed and focused on our own wants and desires. The opposite of love and humility... When we are self-centered and focused on our own needs and desires, this is when we start looking at how others have done us wrong. We start placing blame on others and start keying in on those things that others have done to you that have made your life difficult. If you are focused on yourself, you aren't going to be able to reconcile and get closer to others. You aren't going to be able to reconcile with your brother during these days and before Yom Kippur. We have to forgive others for the way you perceived them to do you wrong, reconcile and remove your self-centered feelings and be humble.

Being forgiving is a huge part of reconciling with our brother. Let's turn to Matthew 18 and review how we are taught by Messiah Yeshua to forgive.

Matt 18:21-35 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. 26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' 27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' 29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me,

and I will pay you all.' 30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. 31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. 32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' 34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

NKJV

Forgiving our brother is so incredibly important, especially when it comes to this time of the year. Forgiveness in this example is monetarily, but most of our forgiveness is for words said or actions done against us. Forgiveness is really part of what I was talking about earlier. It's humility in action. It's removing that festering uneasiness about this person that resides within you, because you are no longer thinking about yourself and what that person did to harm you. To be forgiving, you have to put aside those inner feelings of payback or justification. You have to remove it from yourself.

Forgiveness isn't just about something someone did wrong against you. It could be a feeling about someone, or resentment towards them. Maybe someone else got the promotion at work that should have been yours. Or maybe you don't agree with the choice your sister made for a husband, or your son's choice for a girlfriend. In your mind this person just isn't right, so you've condemned them in your mind and think that they are destroying your loved one's life. Talking about this person in a negative way is your way of getting back at them, even if they don't even know it. Even harboring thoughts about someone is not completely forgiving them. These thoughts about how someone has hurt YOUR loved one, help feed that self-centeredness within you. There are so many other perceptions like this and feelings that we have toward others that affect our relationship with them. We have to humbly forgive those people in our minds before we can humbly move on and build that relationship.

So, as we forgive as in Matthew 18, flee youthful lusts, pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, avoid foolish disputes, and be gentle to all with patience and humility, let's go back to the beginning of this article...

Let's think again about that person that is making our life challenging. What do we need to do to reconcile with them? How do I remove the resentment or trouble I have with them? This is what these days are for. They are to get right with our brother.

And beginning with this, we can **begin** to be right with Our Loving Heavenly Father.

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