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The Hebrew Root of Repent

The Hebrew word most often translated as repentance is “*teshuva*”.

The root word is *shuv*, which means “turning back.” We find this word first used in Genesis 3:19 which properly sets the tone for this word as something that is the return back to its original state:

Genesis 3:19

By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return.”

The original state of man was declared by our Creator to be “good.”

Genesis 1:31

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

After Adam and Even turned away by disobeying YHWH’s instructions, YHWH’s goal for all of mankind is repentance, or to turn back to Him.

Our life should be a constant state of *teshuva* as we constantly fight the flesh, which is against the Torah, and turn back to YHWH, the source of Torah. In the end, as we battle the flesh through *teshuva*, we will be restored back to our original state in creation, as “good.”

Paul makes these points rather well in Romans:

Romans 8:5-25

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. **For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law (Torah); indeed, it cannot.** Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus (Yeshua) from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus (Yeshua) from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **For if you live according to the flesh you will die (against Torah), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (pro-Torah).** For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. **For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.** For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, **the redemption of our bodies.** For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Greek repentance is defined as a “changing of mind.” However, the Hebrew understanding is more concrete. It recognizes that a true “change of mind” will be reflected in behavior...meaning this, if you believe the Torah, or Word of God to be true, then the only result is that you will want to live out the Torah. Paul defined living for the Torah as living in the Spirit, and living against the Torah as living in the flesh.

It is this turning back to Torah that incorporates the action of restoration, the true goal of YHWH for all of mankind. The opposite of *teshuva* is disobeying YHWH, like Adam and Eve in the garden.

This is why the whole purpose of man is obedience, which necessitates the preceding and ongoing act of *teshuva*.

Ecclesiastes 12:13

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

The pictograph Hebrew offers us an even more understanding of the nature of *teshuva*. The word *teshuva*, in pictograph form, is an all-consuming fire that connects through the nail, the house.

The Hebrew understanding is that offending someone equates to a broken house. It is disconnected, just as Adam and Eve became disconnected from the House of YHWH.

Until one “reconnects”, the house is “out of order” or “in chaos.” The “vav” in “teshuvah” represents a nail, or a hook. Repenting is like using a nail (vav) to reconnect your house with a nail to someone else.

To repent is to turn, and to turn is to reconnect. The reconnection to YHWH is realigning with His Torah. When one properly aligns with His Torah, because the Torah is instructional, it causes obedience to the Torah. It causes action.

Acts 26:20

but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, **that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.**

Repentance is not saying “I’m sorry.” It is a change in lifestyle. It is turning back to YHWH and living out His Word.

As our Messiah Yeshua declared:

Matthew 4:17

From that time Jesus (Yeshua) began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mark 1:15

and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Mark 6:12

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.

Luke 5:32

‘I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.’

Luke 13:3

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

We pray that this teaching blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

Shalom

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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