

“REPENTANCE,”

EncJud 14 Red-SI (1972) 73-74
(J. Milgrom)

NOTES FROM THE ARTICLE
AND SOME BIBLICAL TEXTS

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“Repentance is a prerequisite for divine forgiveness: God will not pardon man unconditionally but waits for him to repent.

In repentance man must experience genuine remorse for the wrong he has committed and then convert his penitential energy into concrete acts.

Two substages are discernible in the latter process: first the NEGATIVE one of ceasing to do evil

Isa 33:15

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
הלך צְדָקָתוֹ וְדָבַר מִיִּשְׁרָיִם מִסָּא בְּרָצָע מְעַשְׂקֵתוֹ נָרַע כְּפֹי מִתְמַךְ בַּשָּׁחַד אָטַם אָזְנוֹ מִשְׁמַע דָּמִים וְעָצַם יַעֲנֹי מֵאֲרָתוֹ בְּעֵר:		15 Those who walk righteously and speak uprightly, who despise the gain of oppression, who wave away a bribe instead of accepting it, who stop their ears from hearing of bloodshed and shut their eyes from looking on evil, ...

Why is it that so many biblical people, including “Christians” engage in lies and slander (=murder); refuse to repent, self-righteously remain convinced of their “perception” as the truth; are unwilling to listen to both sides of the story; ram down their “ideology” down the throat of even learned teachers and pastors; oppress, “rape,” and mistreat persons of integrity, ... and why is it that such persons are heard by the authorities and not the cries of the victim of their misdeeds? ... well, this is the age-old problem: Why do the wicked prosper.” (e.g., Jer 12:1) The victim has often no recourse, neither to a secular court nor to a “heavenly court.” And even God does not listen most of the time and does nothing to curtail the wicked. And what happens when it is, actually, God who does the wicked deed? See the story of Job.

Ps 15

Ps 24:4

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV-Dahood-Michel)
נִיָּק כַּפַּיִם וְרַב־לֵבָב אֲרָשׁ -אֶל־נִפְאֵשׁ לִשְׂאוֹ נִפְיֵשׁ וְאֵל נִשְׁעֵב לְמַרְמָה:		24 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, D the clean of hands and pure of heart who do not lift up their souls to what is false, D who has not raised his mind to an i/Idol and do not swear deceitfully. D nor sworn by a f/Fraud

WLM: אוש is a very interesting word. I will make a few comments. Think of the commandment of not taking the name of YHWH “in vain.”

and second, the positive step of doing good

Isa 1:17

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
<p>לְמַדוּ יְהִבֵּט דְרָשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט אֲרִישׁוּ תְמוּזִים שִׁפְטוּ תִיּוֹם בִּירוֹ אֶלְמָנָה: ס</p>		<p>17 learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.</p>

Ps 34:15-16 (14-15)

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
<p>סֵרוּ מֵעַוְבֹת־הַשָּׁבוּ בִקְשׁוּ לְשׁוֹם וְרַדְפֵהוּ: עֵינֵי יְהוָה הֲלֹא־צִדִיקִים וְאָזְנוּי הֲלֹא־שׁוֹעֲתִים:</p>		<p>14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. 15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry.</p>

The Bible is rich in idioms describing man’s active role in the process of repentance, e.g.,

‘incline the heart to the Lord’

(Josh 24:23),

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
<p>וַעֲקֵת הָרִיסוּ תְּתַאֲלָלִים הַנִּזְכָּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהִטּוּ תְּתַאֲלָבְבְּכֶם הֲלֹא־הֵיָהוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>		<p>He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”</p>

‘make oneself a new heart’

(Ezek 18:31)

MASORETIC TEXT TRANSLITERATION TRANSLATION (NRSV)

<p>הַשִּׁילְכוּ מֵעֵילֵיכֶם הַתֹּאֲפָלִסִּים אֲרֹשׁ פְּשַׁעְתֶּם בָּם וַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם בַּל הַדָּשׁ רוּחַ הַדְּהָשׁ וְלֵמָּה תִּמְתּוּ תֵיב יִשְׂרָאֵל:</p>	<p>31 Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?</p>
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'circumcise the heart'

Jer 4:4

MASORETIC TEXT TRANSLITERATION TRANSLATION (NRSV)

<p>הַמְלוּ הַיֵּלְהוּ וְהִרְסוּ עֲלֵרְתוֹ לְבַבְכֶם יֵאֵשׁ הַיְהוּדָה וַיֵּשִׁיב רִיזוֹשְׁלָם כִּן־תִּצָּא קֶאֱשׁ חַמִּית וּבְעָהָר וַיֵּאֵן מִכְהָב מִפְּנֵי רֵעַ מֵעֵלְיֵיכֶם:</p>	<p>4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, remove the foreskin of your hearts, O people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or else my wrath will go forth like fire, and burn with no one to quench it, because of the evil of your doings.</p>
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'Wash the heart'

Jer 4:14

MASORETIC TETX TRANSLITERATION TRANSLATION (NRSV)

<p>כַּבֵּיס מְרָהֵעַ לִבְךָ רִיזוֹשְׁלָם לְמַעַן תִּשְׁוִיעַ עַד־מִית תִּלּוּ בְּמַרְבֵּךְ מִחֶבְשָׁא תוֹנֵךְ:</p>	<p>14 O Jerusalem, wash your heart clean of wickedness so that you may be saved. How long shall your evil schemes lodge within you?</p>
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and 'break one's fallow ground'

Hos 10:12

MASORETIC TEXT TRANSLITERATION TRANSLATION (NRSV)

<p>זָרְרוּ לָכֶם לְצִדְקָה קַצְרוּ לְפִי־יְהוָה גְרִיזוּ לָכֶם גְּרִי וְתַע לְרִדּוֹשׁ הַתֹּאֲהִיָּהוּ עַד־בִּיאוּ וַיִּהְיֶה צְדָקָה לָכֶם:</p>	<p>12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek the LORD, that he may come and rain righteousness upon you.</p>
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“However, all these expressions of man’s penitential activity are subsumed and summarized by one verb which dominates the Bible, בָּשׁוּב (shwb, ‘to return’) which develops ultimately into the rabbinic concept of teshuvah, repentance.

“This root combines in itself both requisites of repentance: to turn from the evil and to turn to the good. The motion of turning implies that sin is not an ineradicable stain but a straying from the right path, and that by the effort of turning, a power God has given to all men, the sinner can redirect his destiny.

“...this concept ... is not a prophetic innovation but goes back to Israel’s ancient traditions ... Amos uses it without bothering to explain its meaning

Amos 4:6-11

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
וְגַם־אֲנִי נָתַתִּיתְּ לָכֶם נִיקּוּן שָׁנִים בְּכָל־עִירְכֶם וְחָרֵס לָהֶם בְּכָל מְקוֹמֵיכֶם וְ־אֲלֹשְׁבָתְכֶם עָנִיד נְאֻם־ה'יְהוָה: וְגַם אֲנִכִּי מְנַעַיִת מִכֶּם תְּ־אֲהַהֲשֵׁם עֲבָדוּ שְׁלֹהֶשׁ חֳדָיִשׁ לִקְצָרֵי וְהִמְטַרְתִּי עַל־רִיעַ אֶתְּחַ וְעַל־רִיעַ אַחַת אֶל אֲמָרִית חֶלְקֶךָ אַחַת תִּמְרָט וְחֶלְקֶךָ אֲ־רִשְׁ־אֶל־תִּמְרֵי עֵילֶה יִתְבָּשׁ: וְנָעוּ שְׁתַּיִם שְׁלֹשׁ עִירִים תְּ־לֹאֲרִיעַ אַחַת לְשִׁתּוֹ מִיָּם וְאֵל יִשְׁעָבוּ וְ־אֲלֹשְׁבָתְכֶם עָנִיד נְאֻם־ה'יְהוָה: הִפַּיִת אֶתְּכֶם בַּשָּׂדֶפֶן וּבִגְמִרוֹן הִרְבֹּתוּ גִזְוֵי־תְּכֶם וְכַרְמֵיכֶם וְתֹאֲנִיכֶם וְיִזִּיתְכֶם אֵיכֶל הַגָּזֶם וְ־אֲלֹשְׁבָתְכֶם עָנִיד נְאֻם־ה'יְהוָה: ס שְׁלַחְתִּי בְּכֶם דָּרָב בְּדָרְךָ מִצְרַיִם הִרְגִיתִּי בַחֶבֶר חַבְוִירְכֶם עִם שֶׁס יְבוּיִסְכֶם וְאֶעֱלֶה בְּאֵשׁ מִחֲנִיכֶם וּבְאַפְּכֶם וְ־אֲלֹשְׁבָתְכֶם עָנִיד נְאֻם־ה'יְהוָה: הִפְכִיתִּי בְּכֶם כְּמִהַפְכַת אֱלֹהִים תְּ־אֶסְדֹּם וְ־תֹאֲמֶנְהָר וְתִהְיֶה כְּאֲדוֹ מִצָּל מִשְׁרָפָה וְ־אֲלֹשְׁבָתְכֶם עָנִיד נְאֻם־ה'יְהוָה: ס		6 I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities and lack of bread in all your places yet you did not return to me says the LORD. 7 And I also withheld the rain from you when there were still three months to the harvest; I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; one field would be rained upon, and the field on which it did not rain withered; 8 so two or three towns wandered to one town to drink water, and were not satisfied; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD. 9 I struck you with blight and mildew; I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards; the locust devoured your fig trees and your olive trees; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD. 10 I sent among you a pestilence after the manner of Egypt; I killed your young men with the sword; I carried away your horses; and I made the stench of your camp go up into your nostrils; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD. 11 I overthrew some of you, as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a brand snatched from the fire; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD.

Amos and Isaiah thought that "the people has dinned to such an extent, that they had overstepped the limits of divine forbearance and the gates of repentance were closed

Amos 7

Isa 6

Cf. the parable of the "Closed Door" attributet to Jesus

Matt 25:1-12

THE GREEK TEXT

The Greek text will be supplied
at another time

TRANSLATION (*NRSV*)

- 1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this.
Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went
to meet the bridegroom.
- 2 Five of them were foolish, and five were wise.
- 3 When the foolish took their lamps,
they took no oil with them;
- 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.
- 5 As the bridegroom was delayed,
all of them became drowsy and slept.
- 6 But at midnight there was a shout,
'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'
- 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up
and trimmed their lamps.
- 8 The foolish said to the wise,
'Give us some of your oil,
for our lamps are going out.'
- 9 But the wise replied,
'No! there will not be enough for you and for us;
you had better go to the dealers
and buy some for yourselves.'
- 10 And while they went to buy it,
the bridegroom came,
and those who were ready went with him
into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut.
- 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying,
'Lord, lord, open to us.'
- 12 But he replied,
'Truly I tell you, I do not know you.'
- 13 Keep awake therefore,
for you know neither the day nor the hour.

I do not understand why Christians do not take this message seriously. Many Christians wallow in the mistaken belief of “Cheap Grace,” = “Oh, Jesus died for my sins, everything is fine, I do not have to do a thing.” How wrong and misguided such persons are. The “atonement” with God - no matter how it is stated or “achieved” (by God or by humans) - makes of the sinner one who is again part of the people of God, a reunited child of God, again part of the family. Now, the obligation is to behave in the manner expected of family members.

It’s like having been fished out of the ocean just before drowning. Now, one is in the boat, not because of any merit in one self. Good. But, now to jump out of the boat, purposely, is the height of stupidity. So, every “sin,” every un-gracious act is like jumping out of the boat.

Neither the Tanakh/OT nor the NT teaches that one will be fished out of the ocean, again and again. There is a limit, there is a “closed door (i.e., death). See, e.g., the rest of Matthew 25.

Isaiah then speaks of a “remnant” which will re-turn.

“This surviving remnant will itself actively engage in a program of repentance to qualify for residence in the New Zion, e.g.,

Isa 10:20-23

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹסֵף עֲדוֹ שֶׁרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל וּפִילַתֵּט לְהִשָּׁעַן עַל־מַכּוֹהוּ וּנְשָׁעַן עַל־הָיְהוָה דְּקוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֵמֶת: שֶׁרָא יָשׁוּבוּ שֶׁרָא יַעֲבֹק הָאֱלֹהִים גְּבוּרֵי: כִּי אִם־יִהְיֶה עַמּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּחֲלוֹ הַיָּם שֶׁרָא יָשׁוּבוּ בּוֹ כַּלּוֹן כְּחֹץ שׁוֹטֵף צְדָקָה: כִּי קֵהַל וַנְּתַרְצֶה אֲדֹנָי הָיְהוָה צָצְבָתוֹ עֲהָשׁ בְּקִבְרֵי כָּל־הָאָרֶץ: ס		<p>20 On that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on the one who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth.</p> <p>21 A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.</p> <p>22 For though your people Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness.</p> <p>23 For the Lord GOD of hosts will make a full end, as decreed, in all the earth.</p>

Indeed, the name of this prophet’s firstborn was imprinted with this message: ‘[Only] a remnant will return’ (Shear-Jashub; Isa 7:3).”

“When Jeremiah despairs of man’s capability of self-renewal, he postulates that God will provide a ‘new heart’ that will overcome sin and merit eternal forgiveness

Jer 31:32-33

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
אֵל כְּבָתִּיר אֲרָשׁ כְּרִיתֵי תַאבְּאוֹתָם יְבוּם הַחַיִּיזִיק בְּיָדָם הַלּוֹצִיאָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם		<p>32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt</p>

<p>אֲרִשְׁמָהּ הַפְרוּ תִּבְרִית וְאֲנֹכִי בְעֵלִית כֶּם נְאֻם־יְהוָה: כִּי תֵאָז הַבְּתִיר אֲרֹשׁ אֶכְתֹּר תִּתְּמִיב יִשְׂרָאֵל אַחֲרַי הַיָּמִים הֵהֵם נְאֻם־יְהוָה נָתַתִּי תִּתְּמִיב בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְעִלְלֶכֶם אֶכְתָּבָנָה וְהִיִּיתִי לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים וְהֵמָּה יִהְיוּ לְעַמִּי:</p>	<p>-a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. 33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.</p>
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Jer 32:39-40

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
<p>וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם בַּל אֶדְחַ וְדַרְךְ אֶדְחַ לְיִרְאָה אֲוִית כָּל־הַיָּמִים טִלְבוּ לָהֶם וְלִבְנֵיהֶם אַחֲרֵיהֶם: וְכָרַתִּי לָהֶם בְּעַד תִּירוּלָם אֲרֹשׁ -אֲלֹאֲשָׁבוּ מֵאַחֲרֵיהֶם לַיהִיטָא יְבוֹתֶם וְתִתְּמִיב אֶתְּנוּ בְּלִבְכֶם לְבַל־סֹף יִתְּרוּ מֵעָלַי:</p>		<p>39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them. 40 I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them; and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me.</p>

cf. **Deut 30:6**

Ezek 36:26-27

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
<p>וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם בַּל חֲדָשׁ רוּחַ חֲדָשׁ אֶתְּנוּ בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהִסְרִיתִי תִּתְּמִיב הַאֲבֹן מִבְּשָׂרְכֶם וְנָתַתִּי לָכֶם בַּל בָּרֶשׁ: וְכִתְּמִיב אֶתְּנוּ בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְעִישִׂיתִי תֵאָרְשׁ בְּחֻקֵּי תִלְכוּ וּמִשְׁפִּיט תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעִישִׂיתֶם:</p>		<p>26 A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances.</p>

For me the most sobering, frightening text is Amos 5:14-15. The “may be” indicates that repentance does not force God to forgive.

THE GREAT MAY BE

Amos 5:14-15

MASORETIC TEXT	TRANSLITERATION	TRANSLATION (NRSV)
<p>דְּרִשׁוּ טוֹב וְלֹא רָע לְמַעַן תִּיחַיו וְיְהִיכֶן ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַצְּבָאוֹת אִתְּכֶם כְּאָדָּם אָמַרְתֶּם: שִׂנְאֵי רָע וְאֹהֲבֵי טוֹב וְהַצְדִּיק בִּשְׁעַר מִשְׁפַּט</p> <p>אוֹיֵל</p> <p>יִחַן ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַצְּבָאוֹת שְׂאֵי תִירוּסָף: ס</p>		<p>14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said.</p> <p>15 Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate;</p> <p>IT MAY BE</p> <p>that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.</p>