

DAY 17 — REPAIR

30 Days of Repentance + Heart Preparation | Companion Word Study

Scripture focus: Matthew 5:23–24; Luke 19:1–10; Romans 12:17–18; Numbers 5:5–7

Based on themes from Chaim Bentorah’s “Word Study – Erev Yom Kippur” (March 16, 2014). These are original study notes and reflection questions, not a reproduction of his article.

1 | Erev Yom Kippur: Before the Day of Atonement

Erev means “evening” or “eve”; **Yom Kippur** is the Day of Atonement. Bentorah describes a Jewish practice of seeking reconciliation with other people before approaching the solemn day of atonement. His larger point is that devotion to God cannot be used as an excuse to ignore damaged relationships.

Study distinction: The custom provides historical and devotional context, but the precise practice should not be mistaken for a direct command in the Torah. Matthew 5:23–24 is Jesus’ own instruction about pursuing reconciliation.

2 | Matthew 5:23–24: Reconciliation interrupts worship

Jesus imagines someone already at the altar who remembers another person has a grievance against them. The striking detail is the order: pause the offering, seek reconciliation, then return. Repair is not an optional add-on to religious activity.

Bentorah explores the Greek expression behind “has something against you” and an Aramaic interpretation emphasizing broken unity. His proposed Aramaic word connections are a devotional interpretation, not a settled linguistic translation of Matthew’s Greek text.

Consider: What does it mean to take another person’s grievance seriously without automatically agreeing with every accusation?

3 | Luke 19:1–10: Zacchaeus makes repentance visible

Zacchaeus does more than express regret. He offers generosity to the poor and substantial repayment to anyone he cheated. His response shows how changed priorities can become tangible action. The passage does not teach that every situation requires the same financial formula.

4 | Numbers 5:5–7: Confession and restitution

The law links wronging a neighbor with unfaithfulness to God. It calls for confession, full repayment, and an additional fifth. Repair involves acknowledging the harm and addressing its cost when possible—not merely seeking relief from guilt.

5 | Romans 12:17–18: Responsibility has limits

Paul calls believers away from retaliation and toward honorable conduct. His qualifiers matter: “if it is possible” and “as far as it depends on you.” You can pursue peace, apologize, repay, or change your behavior. You cannot guarantee trust, forgiveness, restored closeness, or another person’s cooperation.

Reconciliation does not always mean renewed access or returning to an unsafe relationship. Where contact would cause harm, accountability and repair may require a safer, indirect approach.

Dig deeper

- Where do these four passages move from inward repentance to outward action?
- What is the difference between an apology, restitution, forgiveness, and reconciliation?
- Is there a specific harm I can acknowledge or repair without demanding a particular response?
- Am I confusing making peace with keeping everyone happy?
- How might I honor both God’s call to repair and the need for wise boundaries?

Prayer prompt

Lord, show me where I need to take responsibility rather than merely feel sorry. Give me humility to confess, courage to make things right where I can, and wisdom to recognize what is not mine to control. Help me pursue peace without confusing it with pretending no harm occurred. Amen.

Source and further reading

Chaim Bentorah, “Word Study – Erev Yom Kippur” (2014):

<https://www.chaimbentorah.com/2014/03/word-study-erev-yom-kippur/>