

0 Death, Where Is Your Sting?

As we commemorate the Passover and remember once again the death, burial and Resurrection of Yeshua our Messiah, we think about and rejoice in the truth, that on that Passover so many years ago Yeshua truly did conquer death and the grave. Recall the words Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:55, "Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?"

Yet, for a few years, this verse from 1 Corinthians 15:55 has jumped in and out of my mind stirring my soul and my heart.

Now, let me begin by asking you to forgive me for using this verse out of its context. I am aware of how Paul meant these words and his purpose in loosely quoting from Hosea 13. However, while both Paul's and Hosea's context is different from how I'm using these words today, that doesn't make my usage of the statement any less valid. When Paul asked the question, he was referring to the truth that our atonement through faith in Yeshua has robbed death of its sting.

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Yet, sometimes we forget that the sting of death that was removed dealt with the eternal, not the temporal. In other words, we know that a born-again believer has no fear of the sting of death because their sins have been forgiven and the handwriting of the ordinances against them were nailed to the cross.

But, that doesn't mean death no longer has a sting. Over the past few years, I have lost nearly 20 close friends, and if the question "Where, O Death, is your sting?" was asked of me, I would honestly say death's sting is in my heart, like a sharp sword or spear. or maybe the stinger of a scorpion.

Please don't read these words to say that I am questioning my faith, or in any way doubting G-D's love, grace, or mercy. Because neither of those things are true. While my faith is strong and I have joy for those who have completed their race and entered eternity with Yeshua, my faith doesn't diminish the sting in my heart at the loss of my friends.

The truth is that at this point in my life, there is nearly nothing that I do that doesn't cause a sting. In the morning, as I drink my coffee, I remember a friend no longer here and I feel death's sting. When I drive to my office at my synagogue, I pass by the homes of friends who have "gone on ahead" and I feel death's sting. Every restaurant, hotel, airplane, cruise ship, conference, and synagogue service brings with it death's sting. No Holy Day, wedding, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, or graduation ceremony is experienced without the pain of death's sting.

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I'm not writing this to complain or to gain sympathy. I'm writing this because I know there are thousands, if not millions, of believers who experience death's sting just as I do and need to know that it is okay to feel death's sting. After all, G-D designed you and I with feelings and emotions. We are supposed to feel death's sting.

For a moment, consider the death of Yeshua's friend, Lazarus. Yeshua wept at his tomb, even though He knew Lazarus was going to be resurrected. Yeshua felt death's sting and wept. These words gave me the strength to be weak. They helped me to understand that it's okay for me to feel death's sting, even though I know one day my loved ones will be resurrected also.

Another example of Yeshua experiencing death's sting in this way is found in Matthew 14, after hearing of his cousin John's

death, Yeshua went out to the desert to grieve alone.

So, when I hear the words "O Death, where is your sting?" I no longer pretend or attempt to ignore my pain. I point to my heart and answer "right here." Because I know that pain isn't just proof of feeling the loss. The pain isn't a sign of weak faith; it is actually proof of my love for those I've lost and a demonstration of my strong faith. Because I know it isn't a contradiction to both celebrate their place in the world to come, while also mourning their absence from my life. I believe that feeling death's sting is just one more way I am able to emulate the example of Yeshua.

Eric Tokajer is the author of *Overcoming Fearlessness, What If Everything You Were Taught About the Ten Commandments Was Wrong?*, *With Me In Paradise*, *Transient Singularity*, *OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry*, *#ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer*, *Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians* and *Galatians in Context*. Visit his website at .

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