

“What You Feel Today, You may not Feel Tomorrow.”

By Rabbi David Wolpe

Are you angry? Depressed? Joyous? The usual answer is: "it depends when you ask me. What I feel at this moment is not necessarily what I will feel later." "Childhood," wrote George Eliot, "is soothed by no memories of outlived sorrow." When a child feels sorrow, or frustration, they do not understand that it is temporary. But adults should know that moods do not endure. That is why words spoken in anger are regretted later. It is why so many New Year's resolutions last as long as the after-effects of the party.

When we are in the grip of some powerful emotion, it is hard to keep this elementary truth in mind. What we feel seems true, and everything else false. "My moods do not believe each other," wrote Emerson. When I am calm, the rage of anger seems to belong to someone else. When angry, "strike back" drowns out the placid counsel of my better self.

Moses strikes a rock, and forfeits the land. Jethro makes a hasty vow, and his daughter pays a terrible price. Samson is a captive to his continuously changeable moods. We should learn from experience and from our predecessors: Words spoken cannot be recalled; deeds done cannot be erased. When we feel something that seems overwhelming and eternal, the wisdom of Solomon should whisper in our consciousness: "This too shall pass." Repentance may be possible after the fact, but wisdom before it is far better.