

# Forgiveness

Forgiving is the single thing all humans most need, yet forgiveness is the single thing all humans struggle extending. We all have different thresholds of forgiveness.

Some of us are extremely thin-skinned and touchy; prickly people with an amazing capacity for finding fault in others while remaining blind to our own limitations.

Others are slow to be offended, but once they are, the long slow-burning grudge may remain for years.

Some of us find it easy to allow the many small, petty offenses of day-to-day living to slide right off our backs, but if the pain has penetrated deeply enough, is sharp enough or sufficiently catastrophic, we lash out in an explosion of hate and revenge.

In order to properly live forgiving lives, we need a proper understanding of what forgiveness is and is not. **Forgiveness can be understood as cancelling a debt.**

- **Matthew 6:12 HCSB** And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

It means setting aside something that may be rightfully yours for the sake of peace or for the benefit of another. When you truly forgive, you decide that you don't have to hear "I'm sorry" from the person who offended you. You decide that you don't have to "get even" or "set things straight". You see, forgiveness is more about you than it is about the offender. It's about determining what is best for both of you and choosing that path, rather than yielding to your yetzer hara, thereby increasing your pride and darkening your mind further.

**Forgiveness is NOT excusing sin.** Forgiveness is not saying wrong was not done.

- **Isaiah 5:20 HCSB** Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

**Forgiveness is NOT the same thing as reconciliation.** It takes two to reconcile but it only takes one to forgive. You may choose to forgive the person for the wrong they did but it doesn't mean you are stupid. You learn from every experience. If, for instance, the person has stolen from you, you may choose to forgive them, but you don't keep leaving money laying around in their presence. If they have an acerbic, rude, and hurtful manner, you may choose to forgive them,

but it doesn't mean you have to force yourself to hang around them and keep taking their abuse.



**Forgiveness is NOT letting the guilty off the hook.** It is moving them off of your hook and onto God's.

- **Romans 12:19-21 HCSB** Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: **Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay**, says the Lord. (20) **But If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head.** (21) Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.

**Forgiveness is NOT evidence of weakness.** Forgiveness is very hard. It is demanding. Any old Lowlander can hold grudges or lash out. That doesn't take a lot of character. Just watch any spoiled child's reaction when you offend them!

[Short vid clip](#)

**Forgiveness is NOT about fairness.** It was not fair that Joseph was sold into slavery and falsely imprisoned for years, yet he found it in himself to forgive his brothers nevertheless. It was not fair that Jesus should take our sins upon Himself on the cross, yet He did. It was not fair that Stephen should get stoned for speaking the truth, yet he did and forgave his persecutors.

Thus far we've considered what forgiveness is NOT. Let's take a couple minutes and think about what forgiveness IS.

**Forgiveness is about obeying Hashem's command.**

- **Ephesians 4:32 HCSB** And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.

**Forgiveness is about recognizing our own need for constant forgiveness.**

- **Colossians 3:12-13 HCSB** Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility,

gentleness, and patience, (13) accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must *forgive*.

- **Matthew 18:26-28 HCSB** "At this, the slave fell facedown before him and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything!' (27) Then the master of that slave had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan. (28) "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 denarii. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, 'Pay what you owe!'"

Forgiveness is about recognizing the inherent sinfulness of holding grudges.

- **James 4:17 HCSB** So, for the person who knows to do good and doesn't do it, it is a sin.

Forgiveness is about acknowledging and living out our new identities as ministers of reconciliation.

- **2 Corinthians 5:18-21 HCSB** Now everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: (19) that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." (21) He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

So, how do we approach offenses with a biblically oriented forgiving spirit? What does this look like? **First, you need to acknowledge the offense.** Don't deny it. Don't minimize it because sin is never ok. Don't enable sin by too quickly looking the other way.

- **Ephesians 5:11 HCSB** Don't participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead, expose them.

For true forgiveness to take place, there must be a true offense. Don't stick your head in the sand. Don't deny reality.

- **Ephesians 4:25 HCSB** Since you put away lying, **Speak the truth, each one to his neighbor**, because we are members of one another.

**Allow yourself to feel what you feel.**

- **Ecclesiastes 3:1 HCSB** There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every activity under heaven:
- **Ecclesiastes 3:8 HCSB** a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace.
- **Ephesians 4:26-27 HCSB** **Be angry and do not sin.** Don't let the sun go down on your anger, (27) and don't give the Devil an opportunity.

Failing to feel the offense may result in denying pain, denying truth, and denying justice. Feel what you feel but don't think you have the right to puke it out on other people. Take it all to the Lord.

**Second, don't assume that quick forgiveness is full forgiveness.**

Someone who will quickly say, "That's ok I forgive you" is just as likely to quickly change their mind and hate you. Think fully and carefully about the situation. Determine what your true feelings are and whether or not you're going to need to do some work to fully forgive this person. Is the offense something that needs to be dealt with? What will happen if you forgive the offense and let it slide? What will happen if you try to deal with it? Is the person approachable? Is it likely that they will change if they are confronted? Don't be rash.

- **James 1:19-20 HCSB** My dearly loved brothers, understand this: everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger, (20) for man's anger does not accomplish God's righteousness.

Then, if after consulting the Holy Spirit, you discover that you need to forgive this person, **FORGIVE THEM! Don't complain about not "feeling like it."** Your yetzer hara will NEVER feel like forgiving. Forgiveness, like real love, is not a feeling but an act of the will that results in a feeling. The feeling is a byproduct of the process.

- **Luke 17:10 HCSB** **In the same way, when you have done all that you were commanded, you should say, 'We are good-for-nothing slaves; we've only done our duty.'**

**Forgive, because you hope God will do the same thing for you!**

- **Mark 11:25 HCSB** And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven will also forgive you your wrongdoing.
- **Matthew 6:14-15 HCSB** "For if you forgive people their wrongdoing, your heavenly Father will forgive you as well. (15) But if you don't forgive people, your Father will not forgive your wrongdoing.

Just get yourself out of the way and deliberately give them over to the Holy Spirit's convicting power.

- **Romans 12:19 HCSB** Friends, do not avenge yourselves; instead, leave room for His wrath. For it is written: **Vengeance belongs to Me; I will repay**, says the Lord.

Trust me – the Lord will be far better able to deal with this than you ever will be. Just get out of the way. Forgive them.