

## God's Forgiveness

Derash for Yom Kippur 2010

**Isaiah 55:6-7 HCSB** Seek the LORD while He may be found; call to Him while He is near. (7) Let the wicked one abandon his way, and the sinful one his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will freely forgive.

God calls sinners to seek Him and promises them forgiveness when they repent. However, though He is patient, there is a limit to His patience. We must not presume upon His grace.<sup>1</sup> The prayer for forgiveness must be timely and accompanied by clearly demonstrated repentance.

Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, prayed that God would forgive His people if and when they repented of their sins and sincerely served Him.<sup>2</sup>

Adonaic Christians who have confessed their sins and truly repented of them, place their faith in this wonderful aspect of God and believe that their sin-darkened hearts are made as white as snow.<sup>3</sup>

**National confession.** Like Solomon, we should seek forgiveness not only for ourselves individually but for our people. Nehemiah and Solomon both confessed and sought forgiveness for the sins of God's people.<sup>4</sup> If we stubbornly insist that our nation is always in the right, that it never makes mistakes, is never greedy and never sins, we will lose God's favor. We will lose the blessings that He has so graciously given us.

**Authority.** Authority, whether civic or religious, means nothing before God. Even Yahweh's ministers need to confess their sins, repent of them and seek His forgiveness. For example, Zechariah had a vision of the high priest in filthy clothes, which were removed and replaced with pure white garments.<sup>5</sup>

**David.** Forgiveness brings joy to the repentant heart. David sang joyfully after he repented of adultery and God forgave him.<sup>6</sup> Up until that time David had been depressed.<sup>7</sup> That is the way of sin. The thing we thought would bring pleasure and freedom actually brings depression, fear and imprisonment.

However, God readily forgave David when he repented and confessed his sin.<sup>8</sup> David rested his hope of forgiveness, not on his good works or on his ability to "turn over a new leaf" but on Hashem's faithful love and abundant compassion.<sup>9</sup>

In his confessional Psalm David wrote,

- **Psalms 51:10-12 HCSB** God, create a clean heart for me and renew a steadfast spirit within me. (11) Do not banish me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. (12) Restore the joy of Your salvation to me, and give me a willing spirit.

**Chess cheater.** A king enjoyed playing chess with one of his officers. Now the king was very good and nearly always won which frustrated the officer to no end. One day, while the king was distracted, the officer cheated by removing one of the king's knights. Sure enough, the officer managed to win shortly thereafter. However, his sin beset his conscience unmercifully.

Only a few days later, the king was able to capture two thieves who had been trying to steal his treasure. As soon as he had locked the thieves up, the king convened his counsel (including the cheating officer) and asked, "Gentlemen, what should I do with a person who has stolen from me? What punishment befits the crime of stealing from the king?"

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<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 55:6-7

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 8:33-36, 46-53

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 1:18-20

<sup>4</sup> Nehemiah 1:6-7; 1 Kings 8:50

<sup>5</sup> Zechariah 3:1-5

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 32:1-2

<sup>7</sup> Psalm 32:3-4

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 32:5

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 51:1

The officer, completely wracked by his guilt, immediately assumed that the king was talking about him and blurted out, "My king! I am truly sorry for stealing your knight. I repent of my sin and beg you to please forgive me!"

The king was pleased to see that his officer's conscience was so sensitive and readily forgave him. God is always glad to see that we have sensitive consciences and graciously forgives us.

**Receiving forgiveness.** Asking for and receiving forgiveness is probably one of the most satisfying actions in our spiritual lives. However, if we are in need of forgiveness, we should first **acknowledge** sin<sup>10</sup> and actually **ask forgiveness** for our sin.<sup>11</sup> Then, if at all possible, we should seek to make **restitution** for our sins.<sup>12</sup> From that point on we not only **resolve** but we put in **concrete steps** to ensure we **never committing that sin again**. After all, Jesus did not respond with a confirmation of salvation until **Zacchaeus** humbly demonstrated a willingness to make restitution for his sins. Also, the **Prodigal** did not receive forgiveness until he was willing to set aside his rights as a son and simply work for his father as a hired hand.

Once we do this, we must **believe** that God will indeed forgive us and **quit feeling guilty**. To hold on to our guilt is, in a twisted way, to maintain our pride. We are demonstrating our lack of faith in the One who has extended forgiveness.<sup>13</sup>

**Deliverance.** Through forgiveness, Christ provides complete deliverance from the penalty of sin.<sup>14</sup> The wage of sin is death. We are delivered from spiritual death and from the spiritual consequences of our sin.

God's mercy cannot even be measured. It is as high as the heavens. When He forgives our sins,

- they are infinitely far from us.<sup>15</sup>
- God not only puts our sins out of sight;
- He also put them out of reach;<sup>16</sup>
- He puts them out of mind;<sup>17</sup>
- in fact, He puts them completely out of existence.<sup>18</sup>

**Consequences.** That is not to say that there will not be any consequences. David publicly confessed his sin, demonstrated contrition and offered to make restitution. The prophet Nathan, speaking for God, actually told him he was forgiven. Nevertheless, the child of his sin died as a direct consequence of his sin.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery.<sup>20</sup> However, she still had to deal with her betrayed husband and with the whispers that would continue for years. As wonderful as forgiveness is, it is far better to not sin in the first place.

**Conclusion.** However, we need to believe God when He says that He will not despise a broken spirit and contrite heart.<sup>21</sup> God wants to help us. He does not want us to live a life characterized by or dominated by fear.<sup>22</sup> Hashem is ready and waiting to forgive anyone who asks.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Psalm 51:2-4

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 51:7-12

<sup>12</sup> Luke 19:8-10; Luke 15:17-24

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 32:1-6

<sup>14</sup> Colossians 2:13-14

<sup>15</sup> Psalm 103:11-12

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 38:17; Micah 7:19; Psalm 103:12

<sup>17</sup> Jeremiah 31:34

<sup>18</sup> Psalm 51:1, 9; 43:25; 44:22; Acts 3:19

<sup>19</sup> 2 Samuel 12:12-14

<sup>20</sup> John 8:11

<sup>21</sup> Psalm 51:17

<sup>22</sup> Isaiah 44:2

<sup>23</sup> Psalm 86:4-7