

# Elul Fidelity

*By HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok*

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Elul is upon us again; the time of the Virgin who stands before the Scales. We all know that Rosh HaShana, Judgment Day is only one month away. Elul is the time to review our actions, show remorse over our misgivings and to repent. Every year we go through this cycle. Every year we seem to repent over the same exact things. Every year we go through the same ritual motions without much real internal change and I wonder is if this is what real repentance is supposed to be?



Since the beginning our Sages have taught us that to understand the ways of Heaven we should learn by observing their reflections in the ways of human behavior. How we act towards one another is a reflection of how Heaven acts towards us. This being said let us explore by way of human example the true meaning of repentance.

Married couples have certain expectations from one another; the most important being the need for fidelity. Yet, what happens when one partner, for whatever reasons, decides not to be faithful to the other? How does the wronged partner feel? In most cases, the wronged partner views the act of infidelity as the breach of marital vows and thus the end of marriage. Nasty, bitter divorces usually follow. In rare cases, when the offending party is willing to comprehensively change one's course of action and make extra amends to show remorse for the offending behavior, then there is a possibility for the marriage to survive.

Under such dire circumstances, a mere apology of words is not enough. In most cases, even the most austere forms of remorse will not be enough. No, the offending party in infidelity has to go a long, long way to convince the offended party of their sincerity and absolute re-commitment to their relationship. For a long time the offended party will be hurt and suspicious of the one who was once trusted but who violated said trust. It shows the magnanimity of the offended party to forgive the horrible offense and to give the relationship another try; a chance that the offending party certainly does not deserve.

As it is with marriages here on Earth between human beings, so is it with the marriage of our Souls to Heaven. When we walk our selfish paths through life, we are in essence violating our vows to Heaven. We violate and cheat on our marriage vows to Heaven every time we are intimate with "the Earth" and all the physical cravings we so selfishly draw from it. Heaven is the offended innocent party, while we are the adulterous offenders.

By every right, Heaven should disassociate with us and leave us to the designs of our own makings. This would be tantamount to a spiritual divorce. If this were the case then none of us would ever have any hope. Life would become a meaningless drudge, one which we would regret more and more from day to day. Yet, Heaven is not like a human marriage partner. Heaven clearly is not of this Earth, just like our Souls are also from a place beyond.

Heaven knows our human frailties, weaknesses and limitations. We are not held responsible for not doing that which we cannot. However, we are very much indeed responsible for all that we can do and do not. ***Heaven knows what we cannot do, and allows us our humanity; but it also knows very well what we can do and requires of us our humanity.*** Although we may not know ourselves, Heaven knows us, and expects us to be who we are: human beings, created in the Divine Image, with all the sublime obligations that come along with it.

In each and every Elul we begin again the annual tradition of saying prayers and temporarily becoming more religious. We believe that our small tokens of religious piety will somehow show Heaven how righteous we truly are and how worthy we are of rich and abundant showers of blessings. In essence, we are approaching Heaven and saying, "I've been good; now give me my candy." Needless to say, this type of juvenile mentality and approach to Heaven is no real approach at all. It is a façade and a charade, one appropriate for a small child but not for a mature adult.

Think about this, if we were guilty of marital infidelity, would the amount of remorse and repentance that we show in Elul towards Heaven be enough to convince our offended spouse to forgive us here on Earth? I think not! More so, I believe you agree! Being that this is the case, what do you have to say about the nature and sincerity of the ways that we express repentance these days? I believe that we must comprehensively redefine the meaning of repentance so as to revive its true essence.

Most of us know that repentance in Hebrew is called Teshuva; a word that actually means return. The obvious implication is that we need to return to G-d and our spiritual relationship with Heaven. Yet, what must such a return entail? Does it mean just becoming more religious in an ethnic and ritual way, or is there more to it than this?

According to the Biblical prophets, there is whole lot more to teshuva than mere ethnic ritual behavior. Real teshuva, the Prophets describe, requires of us a change of personality, character and behavior. Essentially real teshuva begins on the inside with a change of heart; this then motivates one in every aspect of one's being, to be better. It is this same requirement that is necessary to save an Earthly marriage blemished by infidelity, so it is equally required to save our spiritual marriage with Heaven.

The Biblical Prophets have always used the metaphor of marriage to describe our bond with Heaven. I assure you that Heaven looks upon us with as much intensity as one looks upon a lawfully wedded spouse. This being said, we all pretty much know for sure what our spouses will and will not tolerate in the arenas of flirting and infidelity. Yet, as cautious as we are with our spouses regarding this, many of us tend to cheat on Heaven in ways we think do not matter.

While a spouse can wear a wedding ring and constantly speak about how much he/she loves their spouse, still, at the same time, an offending spouse may be acting flirtatiously or being outright unfaithful in multiple ways. Indeed, today, with the proliferation of computer chat rooms, the amount of intimacy shared between a married individual and a complete stranger has been given the name “emotional adultery,” where the spouse feels closer and more open to confide deep inner feelings with the other online or in phone calls. This too is a violation of the marital covenant. Heaven views this with even more seriousness than might we. Often many of us dabble with ideas, philosophies and other things that we have no business being involved with; this can be called an emotional adultery towards Heaven.

While many today proclaim themselves religious, and are surrounded by the accoutrements of religion and ritual, still, their hearts are far, far away from the love and attention their true spiritual spouse in Heaven requires, demands and deserves.

Now, ask yourselves this, what does G-d really want from us? Does Heaven want us to be more ethnically religious; to observe what for us are more meaningless rituals; or does Heaven want from us something completely different; something we may not know even how to provide? Like a demanding spouse, does Heaven not desire of us to be sincere and that we love and serve with desire and devotion? Our Earthly spouses expect nothing less from us, why would we think that Heaven would be any different?

The Torah and Prophets are full of communications from Heaven where G-d says over and over again, that our sacrifices (ritual observances) mean nothing unless there is real sincerity and devotion in them. Service of Heaven and love of G-d both start within us. They are psychological states of being that start with us recognizing how we are truly small and insignificant individuals in a greater and grandiose universe. ***The Grace of G-d is with us and takes us through every step and every day. Were it not for the Grace of G-d none of us would be able to take the next breath. Every day is a miracle and a gift.*** We take so much of this for granted. We seldom pay attention to the important things about Heaven; about our own lives here on Earth and about our true inner selves.

Elul is spelled in Hebrew, Alef Lamed, Vav, and Lamed. These four letters are the initial letters of the statement in the Song of Songs, Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li, “I am my beloveds and my beloved is mine.” These are words of passion and devotion. No one needs to warn the speaker of these words against infidelity. Such a thing is the farthest thing from their hearts. Now, what about us?

True repentance means return. We must return to Heaven as a repentant adulterer/es seeks forgiveness from the offended party. Thank G-d, Heaven is not so vengeful as a wronged human spouse. Heaven is waiting for our return; our return to sincerity, devotion, caring and love. One cannot have Torah without these. ***One may indeed have the semblance of a religious life without the inner commitment, but somehow, the missing heart always shows itself and causes even the most beautiful of religious observances to become ugly and meaningless.***

The time of change is upon us. But will we change? Will we do more than what we are accustomed to do from year to year? Will we merely repeat the same old empty rituals and expect Heaven to accept them and bless us with showers of abundance? Will we continue to live by the motto, “I am in control of my life and my needs come first.” Many will definitely continue

in this path, regardless of all their religious rituals and accoutrements that seem to suggest the opposite. Yet, Heaven knows the heart!

Heaven knows the heart. This is the only thing that this tried on Rosh HaShana Judgment Day. You can easily fool me and others around you, convincing us all how truly religious and sincere you are, but you are missing the point! We are not your spouse; Heaven is! Your spouse in Heaven knows you more intimately than anyone here on Earth can. You can lie to us; you can even lie to yourself, but you can never ever lie and conceal the truth from Heaven.

G-d knows your heart and judges your actions accordingly. Returning to Heaven therefore is really a big task. The time is now. I pray that you are up for the challenge.

**Personal Note:**

*Here at KosherTorah, I have devoted my entire career and essentially my life to get this very message across. The original Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed for one single reason; this being because we failed to listen to the Prophets who warned us in G-d's Name what to do and not to do.*

*Here we are centuries later and I wonder how much has really changed. We as individuals have such great potentials within us, if only we live up to being what it means to be truly human. G-d never commanded us to be angels. He only commanded us to be human. Torah was not given to angels; it was given to us human beings.*

*We will never impress Heaven by trying to act like angels. We will however impress Heaven when we act like fully intelligent, compassionate and caring human beings. This is what Torah is all about. Try reading through the words of the Biblical Prophets and you'll see this message for yourselves.*

*The time of change is upon us. We have to revert to the innocent and sincerity of the desirous and passionate Virgin. This is the time. Will you make the place?*

*Please remember KosherTorah in your prayers and with your financial support. We have a lot of work to do, I pray, together!*