

Forgiveness 101

A Lesson in Common Sense

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There is no forgiveness from God for those offenses that we commit against our fellow man. This is a foundation of Yom Kippur/the Day of Atonement.

If you have offended God, pray and repent. God will forgive you.

If you have offended, hurt, or otherwise harmed a fellow human being, pray all you want. God will not forgive you until you have appeased the one you have offended, and made restitution. This is the law of man, and the way of Heaven.

All too many people come into the High Holiday period with a subtle arrogance thinking that if, for a while, they adopt certain stricter religious rituals, they will somehow be impressing God, and soliciting Divine favor. Do we really believe that God is so petty, to be fooled by such a superficial, platonic show of hypocritical behavior? While most people will respond, no, in their hearts, they nevertheless believe, yes.

After the High Holiday/Succot/Simhat Torah season is finished, we settle back down to normal life. Is anything really different then? Have the blessings of Heaven showered down upon us? Have all our problems magically disappeared? Has God heard all our prayers, and is busy at work fulfilling them? Will our New Year really be so different, and better than the last?

We all have high hopes for the future, but how many have realistic expectations? We all are hoping for the best, but how many have made the commitment to also prepare for the worst?

When we say that, God will provide, what does this mean? How is God supposed to provide? Biblical and Talmudic examples teach us that we ourselves must prepare the vessel in order for God to fill it with Divine blessing. Yet, how many are busy at work making vessels, and getting them ready for Divine service?

The vessels of which I speak are not metaphors or symbols. I am speaking about real, practical, tangible items, arrangements, and other practicalities that each of us must make in our lives. If we want to be healthy, then we must live a healthy life-style. If we want to be wealthy, then we must make every effort to work hard.

Our actions, and our behaviors are the vessels that God will bless. The absence of the work of our hands, symbolically speaking, ties up God's Hands and prevents Him from

manifesting Divine blessing. This is the law and way of Heaven. God blesses the work of our hands, and God helps those who help themselves.

If we want peace on earth, then it is we who must create it.

God will bless our endeavors, but it is we who must take the first steps. God will walk with us, but we must, nevertheless, get up off our lazy behinds, and start walking.

God is with us. We will never walk alone.

Then again, we must be with God. God will not walk alone either.

As individuals, each of us lacks the power, and ability, to change the world. So, why try to do the impossible? Rather than mourn over what we cannot do, we must instead focus on what we can do!

While we cannot change the whole world, we very well can change little pieces of it, specifically those within the orbits of our lives.

We can each make a difference by being role models of proper action, high morals, and impeccable character.

Talk is cheap, so shut up!

Don't instruct people, telling them what is right and what is wrong! What makes you think that they will listen to what you have to say?

Rather, lead by example, don't tell them what they should do, rather, show them what you, yourself, are doing!

Let them see, what they cannot hear. Sometimes, seeing is believing. When they see you acting right, they very well might mimmick you, and also do what's right. This is the old game of "monkey see, monkey do." So, make sure the monkeys see the right thing so that they will do the right thing.

Monkeys that do the right thing are no longer monkeys, rather they stand tall as sacred souls, human beings, created in the Divine Image. This is our destiny and our calling.

When it comes to repentance, and getting it right before God for the Day of Atonement, let us remember that this means getting it right with one another.

When we are right and proper with one another, and we walk the path of righteousness, God will then indeed bless the path we walk, the actions we perform, and the works of our hands.

This, and this alone, is true atonement, or if you will at-one-ment!