



A TIME TO *Forgive*

Yom Kippur is upon us, and anyone who has ever been hurt by a friend, or some other individual (haven't we all?) knows exactly how hard it is to forgive. Those on the receiving end have nothing but their anger to use as a defense. What else are they left with? Their dignity has been crushed by having been publicly insulted. Their bodies are still battered after being hit or run over.

After all that, how can we now ask them to set aside those feelings and forgive those who wronged them? In doing so, the perpetrators walk freely, with a broad smile on their faces, while their victims, who are compelled to forgive their attackers, often continue to carry the incident with them throughout their lives.

Those asking for forgiveness don't have it any easier. What they did may have been completely inadvertent, but now they need to peel away their respectability and approach someone claiming to have been wronged by them and ask for forgiveness for what they may have done to that individual.

And it might not end there. The victim might make things difficult for the one trying to ask for forgiveness.

Why must we go through this complicated process that may be demeaning or frustrating for one or both of the sides involved?

Our Sages tell us that "Whoever lets things 'slide' a little, G-d will also let his sins 'slide'" (Rosh Hashanah 17a). In other words, nobody can claim to have a spotless record when under close scrutiny.

If someone was wronged by someone else, the one who was wronged had obviously wronged another person, and vice-versa.

Therefore, the only way we can face our Creator in judgment with some degree of confidence is if we say to our Creator: "I've been able to be forgiving in my scrutiny. I've repressed my anger and frustration against someone who has wronged me, so now, You could do the same for me. If I was able to humble my heart and ask for forgiveness from someone I've wronged, perhaps You too can 'humble' Yourself and judge me with mercy."

There are those who say that Yom Kippur does not atone for a person's

sins against G-d if he has not effected reconciliation with others.

This idea seems somewhat puzzling. What does a person's unwillingness to excuse someone for having wronged him have to do with how he sinned against G-d?

The answer to this question relates back to what we've just discussed.

Those who cannot make an effort to approach those they have wronged; those who cannot set aside their (or the other person's) frustration and ego will probably not take the matter seriously when they appear before their Creator as well.

Once a year, as we approach Yom Kippur, it seems as though we all desire a moment of grace – this is the time when we all know we can still be different, regardless of how much we have endured.

We can be reconciled with ourselves and with those around us, for this is a time of forgiveness.

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