



CHOSEN PEOPLE
MINISTRIES

THE PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS



DAY 8



Here are three practical steps to begin the process of forgiveness.

1. **Begin the process with repentance.**

Try and see yourselves through the eyes of a holy God and recognize the depth of your sin, your need for forgiveness, and your inability to merit God's forgiveness through your own efforts. The beginning of finding God's grace is to recognize your need for forgiveness and your unworthiness to be forgiven.

As the prophet Isaiah recognized once he had a vision of the holiness of God, *"Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts'"* (Isaiah 6:5).

It is only when we see ourselves as God sees us that we can begin to fathom the breadth of His love and mercy toward us.

2. **Accept His forgiveness by receiving Jesus as your Messiah.**

The sounding of the shofar reminds us of the righteousness of Abraham and the symbolic passing of our sins to another through the sacrifice of an innocent substitute. This sacrifice of the ram in place of Isaac took place on Mount Moriah, where, later in Jewish history, David would purchase land and his son Solomon would build the Temple.

It was on this holiest of sites that millions of animals shed blood as a type and in anticipation of the One true sacrifice to come, who was offered on a tree located on this same mountain range! As Moses wrote, *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement"* (Leviticus 17:11).

Our blood is required because the penalty for sin is death. But God, in His mercy, allows us to live because He provides the sacrifice. He did so for Abraham, He did so for the Jewish people worshipping at the Temple in Jerusalem, and He did so for each of us by sending His only Son, Yeshua, to die in our place. As the Apostle Paul wrote, *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in*

Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

We must repent and recognize our inability to merit forgiveness. And then, by faith, we must accept the Messiah Yeshua as our personal atonement for sin.

3. Unconditional forgiveness leads to reconciliation and the restoration of broken relationships.

As a younger believer, I was often taught that forgiveness of others was based on the other's repentance. In other words, I believed that an individual who wanted my forgiveness needed to apologize first for the way they hurt me to earn my forgiveness. I want to tell you that this is contrary to the biblical teaching and does not work in practice. Moreover, this method usually results in harboring bitterness toward the person for whom you are waiting—sometimes for a lifetime—to repent and take responsibility for what they did to you. Forgiveness is not earned; it is granted freely, as a gift.

When we forgive others, it shows that we understand what it means to be forgiven by God Himself. We did not earn His forgiveness any more than others will earn ours. We will never deserve forgiveness any more than others will deserve ours. Extending forgiveness is always a decision on our part to release others from their sin debt to us, deliver it to God to judge, and to clear the path for reconciliation and restoration, which can only take place if the other person responds similarly.

Reconciliation and the restoration of relationships are different and are more of a process that takes time. But forgiveness is the first step.

Sometimes we do not take the first step because we believe the rest of the process is unreachable. But true restoration becomes all the more possible when, by faith, we take this first step in forgiving those who have offended us! Then we trust God to work in the heart of the one we have forgiven and remain patient, since the Lord is all about restoration. Look at what He has done for us!

A Chasidic tale (story told by ultra-religious Jewish people who tend to view life through the Law as well as through Jewish mysticism) describes the link between being forgiven and forgiving others.

Once, on the evening before Yom Kippur, one of the chassidim of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk [a city in Russia] asked his Rebbe [a revered Chasidic rabbi] to allow him to see how he, Rabbi Elimelech, observes the custom of *kaparot* [the killing of a chicken and shedding the animal's blood as a reminder of what was done in the Temple].

"How I do *kaparot*?" repeated Rabbi Elimelech. "How do *you* do *kaparot*?"

"I am an ordinary Jew—I do what everyone else does. I hold the rooster in one hand, the prayer book in the other, and recite the text, 'This is my exchange, this is in my stead, this is my atonement....'"

"That's exactly what I do," said Rabbi Elimelech. "I take the rooster in one hand, the prayer book in the other, and recite the text. Actually, there might be a certain difference between your *kaparot* and mine: you probably make sure to use a white rooster, while to me it makes no difference: white, black, brown—a rooster's a rooster...."

But the chassid persisted that his Rebbe's *kaparot* was certainly no ordinary event. He had been coming to Lizhensk to pray with the Rebbe every Yom Kippur for more than twenty years now, and had always wanted to observe his Rebbe at this most solemn moment.

"You want to see an extraordinary *kaparot*?" said Rabbi Elimelech. "Go observe how Moshe the tavern-keeper does *kaparot*. Now, there you'll see something far more inspiring than my own, ordinary *kaparot*."

The chassid located Moshe's tavern at a crossroads several miles outside of Lizhensk and asked to stay the night. "I'm sorry," said the tavern-keeper. "As you see, this is a small establishment, and we don't have any rooms to let. There's an inn a small distance further down the road."

"Please," begged the chassid, "I've been traveling all day, and I want to rest awhile. I don't need a room—I'll just curl up in a corner for a few hours and

be on my way.”

“O.K.,” said Moshe. “We’ll be closing up shortly, and then you can get some sleep.”

After much shouting, cajoling and threatening, Moshe succeeded in herding his clientele of drunken peasants out the door. The chairs and tables were stacked in a corner, and the room, which also served as the tavern-keeper’s living quarters, readied for the night. Midnight had long passed, and the hour of *kaparot* was approaching. The chassid, wrapped in his blanket under a table, feigned sleep, but kept watch in the darkened room, determined not to miss anything.

Before dawn, Moshe rose from his bed, washed his hands and recited the morning blessings. “Time for *kaparot*!” he called quietly to his wife, taking care not to wake his guest. “Yentel, please bring me the notebook—it’s on the shelf above the cupboard.”

Moshe sat himself on a small stool, lit a candle, and began reading from the notebook, unaware that his “sleeping” guest was wide awake and straining to hear every word. The notebook was a diary of all the misdeeds and transgressions the tavern-keeper had committed in the course of the year, the date, time and circumstance of each scrupulously noted. His “sins” were quite benign—a word of gossip one day, oversleeping the time for prayer on another, neglecting to give his daily coin to charity on a third—but by the time Moshe had read through the first few pages, his face was bathed in tears. For more than an hour Moshe read and wept, until the last page had been turned.

“Yentel,” he now called to his wife, “bring me the second notebook.”

This, too, was a diary—of all the troubles and misfortunes that had befallen him in the course of the year. On this day Moshe was beaten by a gang of peasants, on that day his child fell ill; once, in the dead of winter, the family had frozen for several nights for lack of firewood; another time their cow had died, and there was no milk until enough rubles had been saved to buy another.

When he had finished reading the second notebook, the tavern-keeper lifted his eyes heavenward and said: “So you see, dear Father in Heaven, I have sinned against You. Last year I repented and promised to fulfill Your commandments, but I repeatedly succumbed to my evil inclination. But last year I also prayed and begged You for a year of health and prosperity, and I trusted in You that it would indeed be this way.

“Dear Father, today is the eve of Yom Kippur, when everyone forgives and is forgiven. Let us put the past behind us. I’ll accept my troubles as atonement for my sins, and You, in Your great mercy, shall do the same.”

Moshe took the two notebooks in his hands, raised them aloft, circled them three times above his head, and said, “This is my exchange, this is in my stead, this is my atonement.” He then threw them into the fireplace, where the smoldering coals soon turned the tear-stained pages to ashes.[1]

Remembering our own need for forgiveness softens our hearts to forgive. And the grace on which we depend to be forgiven is the same grace that helps us forgive.

Open shame belongs to us, O Lord, to our kings, our princes and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God belongs compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him; nor have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in His teachings which He set before us through His servants the prophets. Indeed all Israel has transgressed Your law and turned aside, not obeying Your voice; so the curse has been poured out on us, along with the oath which is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against Him. (Daniel 9:8–11)

[1] “The Paper Chicken,” Chabad.org, accessed September 8, 2020, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/87879/jewish/The-Paper-Chicken.htm.

Scripture Meditation:

One of my favorite prayers in the Bible is the cry of repentance by Daniel found in chapter nine. He repents of his sins, and those of his fellow Jews, with heartfelt passion. And I find that just reading this prayer inspires me to do the same. You might try reading the entirety of the prayer.

I believe we need to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves and with God if we are going to be able to accept God's forgiveness fully. I believe that one of the greatest challenges we face during the Ten Days of Awe is to be honest with ourselves and with God about our personal failings and sins.

We might understand His forgiveness, but all too often it is hard to forgive ourselves.

If we are this honest about our sin and recognize that we are without excuse, and simply accept the depth and magnitude of our transgressions, then and only then will we be able to appreciate His forgiveness. It is only when we are this honest that we can appreciate that the eternal love of God, revealed through the death of the Messiah, is powerful enough to wash us clean. We must be honest and not shade the truth since He knows it anyway. Let us dig deep and confess our sins, knowing that His grace and mercy extend to each transgression. How wonderful to be honest, forgiven, and free.

We will never be able to accept His forgiveness if we minimize our own sin. Spiritual honesty and transparency with God are where we must start. Daniel's prayer will provide an excellent beginning for our own prayers of repentance.

Today's prayer:

Abba, as we pray Daniel nine, please open the eyes of the Jewish people so that we can all recognize the depth of our sin, our need of forgiveness, and our inability to merit it through our own efforts. Thank you for sending Jesus to die in our place and for granting forgiveness and freedom to all who believe in Him! We ask that, this year, many more Jewish people would come to faith and receive this priceless gift!