

In Hebrew, forgiveness is primarily expressed as סְלִיחָה (selichah), meaning pardon, atonement, and relational rest

The word is only used in the Tanakh by God. It is not used between humans. The key to understanding what's going on in ancient cultures is understanding the importance of hierarchy. This is an honor culture.

### Jacob Reunites with Esau

Genesis 33... Then Jacob glanced up and saw, behold, there was Esau coming—and 400 men with him. So he divided the children among Leah, Rachel and the two female servants. <sup>2</sup> He put the female servants and their children first, then Leah and her children behind them, then Rachel and Joseph behind them. <sup>3</sup> But he himself passed on ahead of them, and bowed to the ground seven times until he came near to his brother.

<sup>4</sup> But Esau ran to meet him, hugged him, fell on his neck and kissed him—and they wept. <sup>5</sup> His eyes glanced up and he saw the women and the children, and said, “Who are these with you?”

### Luke 15:17-24 Prodigal Son

<sup>17</sup> “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have food overflowing, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I’ll get up and go to my father, and I’ll say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your presence. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.

<sup>20</sup> “And he got up and went to his own father. But while he was still far away, his father saw him and felt compassion. He ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your presence. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him! Put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it! Let’s celebrate with a feast! <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine

was dead and has come back to life—he was lost and is found!’ Then they began to celebrate.

## Tamar and Judah

Genesis 38... “Bring her out!” Judah said, “and let her be burned.”

<sup>25</sup> As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law saying, “I’m pregnant by the man to whom these things belong.” Then she said, “Do you recognize whose these are—the seal, the cords and the staff?”

<sup>26</sup> Then Judah recognized them and said, “She is more righteous than I, since I didn’t give her to my son Shelah.” He was not intimate with her again.

*While there is no information about how people may have felt sorry for what they did, in an honor culture a person recognizes their position and elevates the other. It is very public. While there’s no exchange of “I’m sorry” / “You are forgiven” it is understood from the action taken.*

### *Questions:*

- 1. When we come to God to ask forgiveness, how do we balance saying we are sorry with acknowledging God being over us / our Lord or King?*
- 2. Back in Temple times, when an offering was made (thanksgiving, peace, sin, etc.) how important would having an honor culture outlook be?*