

October 20, 2017

Dear BQLI Region Friends,

Try as we might to be good people, good Jews, no sooner do the High Holy Days pass, that we slip up. This is the way of humans because we are just that...human. However, it is what we do to right our wrongs, how we choose to acknowledge and make up for our indiscretions, that really speaks to whom we are as individuals.

Yom Kippur comes but once a year. Are you going to wait until then express your remorse? That's one option but, as far as I'm concerned, not the best one. Unless you're going to keep a running tally of each transgression, you're likely to forget the specifics and circumstances involved.

Admitting, actually giving voice to the idea of having failed, sets you on the path of actually doing and being better. This is daily work, important work. It's interesting to note, in Jewish tradition, one cannot be right with God without first being right with his or her fellow man. In other words, we believe that people come first. If you know you have hurt someone, you need to ask for his or her forgiveness before God will forgive you.

On the flip side, letting go of a hurt can be difficult. It's natural to want the perpetrator to apologize, to acknowledge that he or she was hurtful. It's also natural to bear a grudge when no apology is forthcoming. The Sages, with their deep understanding of human nature, established a special forgiveness prayer to be said each night. The traditional prayer that Jews recite before going to sleep is the *K'riat Shema al Ha-mitah*, the bedtime *Shema*. It is the same prayer we all know from synagogue, *Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad*, accompanied by this additional liturgy: "I forgive all those who may have hurt or aggravated me either physically, monetarily, or emotionally, whether unknowingly or willfully, whether accidentally or intentionally, whether in speech or in action, ..."

Apologizing and forgiving are freeing. With your clean slate now before you, I hope each of you does your best to keep it that way with year-round teshuvah, tefillah, and tzedakah... repentance, prayer and charity. You'll not only improve valued relationships with others but with God as well.

B'Shalom,
Grace