

Reconciliation in the Jewish Tradition

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Source Sheet by Rachel Isaacs

Reconciliation at the Foot of the Grave: Abraham and His Sons

Genesis 25:8-9

(8) And Abraham breathed his last, dying at a good ripe age, old and contented; and he was gathered to his kin. (9) His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, facing Mamre,

בראשית כ"ה:ח-ט'

(ח) וַיָּגַלַע וַיָּמָת אַבְרָהָם בְּשִׁיבָה טוֹבָה זָקֵן
וַיִּשָּׁבַע וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל-עַמּוּיוֹ: (ט) וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ
יִצְחָק וְיִשְׁמָעֵאל בְּנָיו אֶל-מְעָרַת הַמְּכַפְלָה
אֶל-שְׂדֵה עֶפְרָן בֶּן-צֹחַר הַחִתִּי אֲשֶׁר
עַל-פְּנֵי מַמְרֵה:

Rashi on Genesis 25:9

(1) ISAAC AND ISHMAEL יצחק וישמעאל
— From this we gather that Ishmael repented of his evil ways (cf. Bava Batra 16b) and yielded the precedence to Isaac. This is what is meant by the “good old age” mentioned in connection with Abraham (Genesis Rabbah 38:12).

רש"י על בראשית כ"ה:ט'

(א) יצחק וישמעאל. מִכָּאן נִשְׁעָשֶׂה
יִשְׁמָעֵאל תְּשׁוּבָה וְהוֹלִיךְ אֶת יִצְחָק לְפָנָיו,
וְהִיא שִׁיבָה טוֹבָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בְּאַבְרָהָם
(בראשית רבה):

Joseph, His Brothers, and His Past

Genesis 45:1

(1) Joseph could no longer control himself before all his attendants, and he cried out, “Have everyone withdraw from me!” So there was no one else about when Joseph made himself known to his brothers.

בראשית מ"ה:א'

(א) וְלֹא-יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנֹּצְצִים
עָלָיו וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָל-אִישׁ מֵעִלָּי
וְלֹא-עָמַד אִישׁ אִתּוֹ בְּהִתְוַדַּע יוֹסֵף
אֶל-אֶחָיו:

Or HaChaim on Genesis 45:1

(1) **Joseph could no longer contain himself, etc.** He could not wait until all those present would leave of their own accord, but he called out loudly that everyone other than the brothers be removed from his presence immediately. The Torah adds the words **ולא עמד איש אתו**, that no one remained with him, to underline the speed with which his servants left his presence. (2) **בהתודע יוסף, when Joseph revealed himself.** The letter ב before התודע means "on account of" (his revealing himself). In order for the brothers to accept Joseph's claim that he was their brother, the matter of his sale had to be aired. Joseph wanted to spare his brothers the embarrassment of becoming known as people who had sold their brother, hence he had to clear everyone out of the room. When the Torah mentions immediately afterwards that Joseph wept loudly when he revealed himself and all of Egypt heard about it, this is a clear indication that Joseph was not concerned that he could be overheard. He was only concerned that his brothers' part in all this should not be overheard.

Genesis 45:2-5

(2) His sobs were so loud that the Egyptians could hear, and so the news reached Pharaoh's palace. (3) Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still well?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dumfounded were they on account of him. (4) Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come forward to me." And when they came forward, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, he whom you sold into Egypt. (5) Now, do not be distressed or reproach yourselves because you sold me hither; it was to save life that God sent me ahead of you.

אור החיים על בראשית מ"ה:א'

(א) **ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק.** פירוש שלא עצר כח להמתין עד שיצאו כל הנצבים מעצמן וקרא בקול גדול הוציאו כל איש פירוש במהרה לא שיאמרו להם לצאת כי כשיצאו מעצמן יצאו במיתון ולא סבל אורך זמן ההוצאה, ואמר **ולא עמד פי' לא** נתעכב איש אלא במהרה תיכף יצאו יחד: (ב) **בהתודע יוסף וגו'.** פירוש בשביל התודעות אל אחיו פירוש הכרת דבר כדי שיכירו ויצדיקו כי הוא יוסף ודבר זה צריך להזכירם במכירתו ולא רצה לזלזל באחיו שיחזיקו אותם בדבר נבלה כזו למכור אחיהם, ואמר בסמוך **ויתן את קולו בבכי וישמעו מצרים וכו' הרי זה** מגיד כי מה שמנע הזולת בהתודעו לאחיו לא לצדו כי הוא קרא בקול ושמעו כל העיר את הדבר אלא לצד בושות אחיו הוא שעשה מטעם הנזכר:

בראשית מ"ה:ב'-ה'

(ב) **ויתן את קולו בבכי וישמעו מצרים** וישמע בית פרעה: (ג) **ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו** אני יוסף העוד אבי חַי וְלֹא־יָבֹלְו אָחִי לַעֲנֹת אֲתוֹ כִּי נִבְהָלוּ מִפְּנָיו: (ד) **ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו** גִּשְׁו־נָא אֵלַי וַיִּגְשׁוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִי יוֹסֵף אֲחִיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי מִצְרָיִם: (ה) **ועתה** | אֶל־תַּעֲצֹבוּ וְאֶל־יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם כִּי־מָכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי הֲנֵה כִּי לְמַחְיָה שָׁלַחְנִי אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵיכֶם:

Genesis 41:51

(51) Joseph named the first-born Manasseh, meaning, "God has made me forget completely my hardship and my parental home."

בראשית מ"א:נ"א

(נא) וַיִּקְרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת-יָשָׁם הַבְּכוֹר מְנַשֶּׁה
כִּי-נִשְׁכַּח אֱלֹהִים אֶת-כָּל-עֲמָלִי וְאֶת כָּל-בֵּית
אָבִי:

Repentance and Reconciliation**Reconciliation:**

an act of reconciling, as when former enemies agree to an amicable truce.

the state of being reconciled, as when someone becomes resigned to something not desired.

the process of making consistent or compatible.

התפייסות, פיוס; (חשבונאות) התאמה

Reconciliation – פיוס - זכר

סיום סכסוך ברוח טובה, השקנת שלום

Ending of conflict with a good spirit, creating a dwelling place of peace

Repentance:

deep sorrow, compunction, or contrition for a past sin, wrongdoing, or the like.

regret for any past action.

הכאה על חטא, תשובה, תשובה

pain on account of sin, engraving/regret, return

Mishneh Torah, Repentance 2:9

(9) Neither repentance nor the Day of Atonement atone for any save for sins committed between man and God, for instance, one who ate forbidden food, or had forbidden coition and the like; but sins between man and man, for instance, one injures his neighbor, or curses his neighbor or plunders him, or offends him in like matters, is ever not absolved unless he

משנה תורה, הלכות תשובה ב' ט'

(ט) אין התשובה ולא יום הכפורים
מכפרין אלא על עבירות שבין אדם למקום
כגון מי שאכל דבר אסור או בעל בעילה
אסורה וכיוצא בהן. אבל עבירות שבין
אדם לחברו כגון החובל את חברו או
המקלל חברו או גוזלו וכיוצא בהן אינו
נמחל לו לעולם עד שיתן לחברו מה

makes restitution of what he owes and begs the forgiveness of his neighbor. And, although he make restitution of the monetary debt, he is obliged to pacify him and to beg his forgiveness. Even he offended not his neighbor in aught save in words, he is obliged to appease him and implore him till he be forgiven by him. If his neighbor refuses a committee of three friends to forgive him, he should bring to implore and beg of him; if he still refuses he should bring a second, even a third committee, and if he remains obstinate, he may leave him to himself and pass on, for the sin then rests upon him who refuses forgiveness. But if it happened to be his master, he should go and come to him for forgiveness even a thousand times till he does forgive him.¹⁰

וְהָיָה חַיֵּב לוֹ וִירְצָהוּ. אִם עַל פִּי שְׁהֶחֱזִיר
לוֹ מָמוֹן וְהָיָה חַיֵּב לוֹ צָרִיד לְרָצוֹתוֹ
וְלִשְׁאֹל מִמֶּנּוּ וְשִׁמְחַל לוֹ. אֲפִלּוּ לֹא הִקְנִיט
אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ אֲלָא בְּדָבָרִים צָרִיד לְפִסּוֹ וְלִפְגַּע
בּוֹ עַד שִׁמְחַל לוֹ. לֹא רָצָה חֲבֵרוֹ לְמַחֵל לוֹ
מִבֵּיא לוֹ שׁוּנָה וְשָׁלַח בְּנֵי אָדָם מֵרַעִיו
וּפּוֹגְעִין בּוֹ וּמְבַקְשִׁין מִמֶּנּוּ. לֹא נִתְרַצָּה לָהֶן
מִבֵּיא לוֹ שְׁנִיָּה וְשְׁלִישִׁית. לֹא רָצָה מְנִיחוֹ
וְהוֹלִךְ לוֹ וְזֶה שְׁלֹא מַחֵל הוּא הַחוּטָא. וְאִם
הָיָה רַבּוֹ הוֹלִךְ וּבָא אֲפִלּוּ אֵלָּה פְּעָמִים עַד
שִׁמְחַל לוֹ:

Mishnah Yoma 8

(9) One who says: I shall sin and repent, sin and repent, they do not afford him the opportunity to repent. [If one says]: I shall sin and Yom HaKippurim will atone for me, Yom HaKippurim does not effect atonement. For transgressions between man and God Yom HaKippurim effects atonement, but for transgressions between man and his fellow Yom HaKippurim does not effect atonement, until he has pacified his fellow.

משנה יומא ח'

(ט) הָאֹמֵר, אֶחָטָא וְאָשׁוּב, אֶחָטָא וְאָשׁוּב, אֵין מִסְפִּיקוֹן בְּיָדוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה. אֶחָטָא וַיּוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר, אֵין יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר. עֲבֵרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְמָקוֹם, יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר. עֲבֵרוֹת שְׁבִין אָדָם לְחֵבֵרוֹ, אֵין יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים מְכַפֵּר, עַד שִׁירְצָה אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ.

"Forgiveness is Not Always a Virtue" - Rabbi Ruti Regan

<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/forgiveness-is-not-always-a-virtue/>

Forgiveness can make a lot of things possible — and not all of those things are good. The possibility of forgiveness is not intended as a way to allow people to manipulate the system and harm others with impunity.

Forgiveness can erase many things, but it can't erase the need for all conflicts. Sometimes, taking the side of the oppressed means withholding forgiveness from an oppressor.

Sin Past the Point of Return -Rabbi Daniel Nevins

<https://rabbinevins.com/2018/09/27/shabbat-sukkot-5779-sin-past-the-point-of-return/>

Can it be true that some damage is irreparable? Isn't the power of repentance unlimited? An intense fatalism finds expression in Midrash Rut Rabbah (3:3) where we learn that repentance can help only before one dies. In the World to Come two people who committed the same crime will have divergent receptions depending on their conduct during the rest of their lives. One repented and is now counted among the righteous, but the one who never changed in life has no chance for repair in death. "This is the gate toward the Lord, the righteous (and only the righteous!) may enter it." In a beautiful but chilling passage the residents of heaven tell the new arrival, "this world is like Shabbat, whereas the world you came from is like Friday afternoon—if you don't prepare on Friday, what will you eat on Shabbat? This world is like the sea, and that world is like the land. If you don't pack provisions on land, what will you eat at sea? Or this world is like the desert whereas that world is like the town—if you don't prepare in town, what will you eat in the desert?"

This rabbinic view of heaven is rather odd—heaven is a place of powerlessness, at least for people. Like the sea, like the desert and also like Shabbat, it is a place where one can do nothing for oneself. Without a body or perhaps without a will, one cannot perform mitzvot, and so one is unable to acquire merit and earn reward. The only remedy for this rather dark view of heaven is that later generations are able to "add merit" for their ancestors by doing good in their memory. This is the motivation for studying Torah, saying prayers like Kaddish, pledging Tzedakah, and engaging in acts of kindness toward others in memory of the deceased. The basis for this redemptive view is found in Bavli Sanhedrin 104a, "the child adds merit to the parent (but a parent cannot add merit to the child)." In the medieval Sefer Hassidim, the doctrine is expanded (this may be the era when the custom of mourner's kaddish emerged).

A Path of Tears

Psalms 126:5-6

(5) They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy. (6) Though he goes along weeping, carrying the seed-bag, he shall come back with songs of joy, carrying his sheaves.

תהילים קכ"ו:ה'-ו'

(ה) הַזֹּרְעִים בְּדִמְעָה בְּרִגְהָ יִקְצְרוּ: (ו) הֵלֹךְ
יֵלֵךְ | וּבָכָה נֶשֶׂא מְשַׁבֵּה-הָעֹרֶע בְּאֵי-יָבוֹא
בְּרִגְהָ נֶשֶׂא אֶלְמִתָּיו:

A Piece of My Mind

Tears

Suzanne

Brother Paul! look!
—but he rushes to a different
window.
The moon!

I heard shrieks and thought:
What's that?
That's just Suzanne
talking to the moon!
Pounding on the window
with both fists:

Paul! Paul!

—and talking to the moon.
Shrieking
and pounding the glass
with both fists!

Brother Paul! the moon!

William Carlos Williams

I met Danny 9 years ago. This 3-year-old's face was as pale as the blonde curls matted to his sweat-drenched forehead. His thin arms propped him up as he bent forward chasing his next breath. By the time I had rotated onto pediatrics, 3 months after Danny's admission, everyone, including Danny, had accepted his fate—he was going to die. Abnormal cells had leaked out of his kidneys and invaded his lungs, tearing apart the delicate honeycombed tissue and causing him to spew blood with every coughing spasm.

As a new intern, I was chosen to play a role in only the last scene of this tragedy. Without benefit of having known Danny before he had reached this terminal state, I felt I was an intruder, and, since I had been told there was nothing more that could be done, I felt most like an impotent imposter. I cringed whenever his mother called me "Doctor"; apparently she wanted me to feel at ease. With the help of their religion and the support of the oncology social worker, Danny's family had obviously found peace. It had been a long, painful process, but they had finally given up their beautiful son to this disease. As for me, I had not yet arrived at this point of acceptance. I was angry, frustrated, and very sad. Only Danny's mother seemed to sense that I was being forced to find my way through this maze of emotions too rapidly, and without proper preparation. Her kindness only made me feel all the more guilty and useless.

I tried to follow the lead set by my superiors, who were avoiding all unnecessary contact with Danny. But this defense only made my anguish more intense. I sought my comfort in trying to comfort Danny. At night, when the ward was quiet, I would rub his head and hold the emesis basin while he coughed. Thankfully, unlike the first few times I had tried to help, he no longer begged me to make the coughing and bleeding stop. He knew I did not have that power, knew I would cry again if he began begging.

My seasoned attending physician offered me no words of wisdom to help me cope with this difficult situation. Instead, he chastised me for doing "nurses' work" and warned me I would lose the family's respect if I did not change my behavior.

During the days that followed, I tried to act "more like a physician." I was acutely aware that my every move was being monitored and judged. I struggled to be less spontaneous, to be in control, to avoid the controversy I felt I was causing.

I failed again. As an intern, I was charged with drawing

arterial blood gases. When I approached Danny with the syringe, he would retreat to the corner of his crib; it required three adults to hold him still. Since I was no longer allowed to nurture Danny, I became merely his unwilling tormentor.

I tried to imagine his wrist was attached to one of the disembodied plastic limbs on which I had practiced venipuncture. But his pulse was strong, his skin warm and soft, his whimpering a constant reminder that I was invading a living being—a little boy the same age as my own towheaded son.

To make matters worse, I became convinced this torture was unnecessary. Danny was a no code. His pale blue lips and nail beds made obtaining blood gas values superfluous. But my requests to have this procedure discontinued were met with further personal attacks. "Perhaps you should reconsider your chosen profession. Your involvement is interfering with your judgment. Maybe you don't have the stomach for this work."

Tears flowed all the more now during discussions with teachers, as my tension mounted. I wanted to rip out my lacrimal glands, those organs that were my handicap, the outward sign of my inner weakness. The attendings seemed more sympathetic to the residents who were using alcohol or other drugs to escape reality than they were to me. To them, tears were intolerable and became the focus of my evaluations, overshadowing otherwise excellent case management. To me, this crying was a reaction to the constant academic pressure, the turmoil of dealing with a dying child, the unending fatigue and the frustration of having to keep my opinions to myself—of having to fit the image, so foreign to me, of the confident, all-knowing, always-in-charge physician. Weren't tears a more appropriate outlet than screaming at nurses, being brusque with patients, or using drugs? To "them," my tears announced to the world that I was ill-equipped to be a physician, yet no one could point to one incident during which I had performed inadequately because of my "handicap." I wasted hours wondering if they were right.

Much has happened since that time, 9 years ago. Part of me was stubborn enough to stick it out and believe I could be a good physician. I was lucky enough to find other interns who shared similar doubts and concerns, and together we helped each other grow. I was not unstable, as one of my attendings had suggested, but I would admit to being unable to completely suppress, or repress, my emotions. I still cry too easily. I still get frustrated and angry when I feel helpless, still irritable when I am exhausted and overworked. I still feel very vulnerable. All that has changed is the context. Currently, as a physician in private practice, I find I have been able to deal with the realities of life and illness better than I dealt with the daily process of medical education. My patients judge me less harshly than my professors used to. Rather than assuming my tears are signs of weakness, my patients tend to see them as my way of acknowledging that we share the vicissitudes of the human condition and that they are not alone in their sorrow.

I rarely have to pound the window with both fists now.

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"Suzanne" from *Collected Poems Vol. II, 1939-1962*. Copyright 1944 by William Carlos Williams. Reprinted with permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.

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A Piece of My Mind

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Berakhot 32b

R. Eleazar also said : From the day the Temple was destroyed, the gates of prayer were locked ; as it is said, "Yea, when I

ברכות ל"ב ב

וא"ר אלעזר מיום שחרב בית המקדש
ננעלו שער תפלה שנאמר (איכה ג, ה)

cry and call for help, He shutteth out my prayer" (Lam. iii. 8). But although the gates of prayer are locked, the gates of tears remain unlocked ; as it is said, "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry ; keep not silence at my tears" (Ps. xxxix. 13).

גם כי אזעק ואשוע שתם תפלתי ואע"פ
ששערי תפלה ננעלו שערי דמעה לא
ננעלו שנאמר (תהלים לט, יג) שמעה
תפלתי יי ושועתי האזינה אל דמעתי אל
תחרש

All The Tears

by Adrienne Maree Brown

Ocean is a bowl of salt and water
So am I

Whispering and weeping of a son or daughter

Gone to the sky

Or the dirt
No one knows for bone deep certain

Which way is up

We spin towards the sun until it hurts

We spill the cup

It stings the face to try and dam it all in

What comes to flow

It wears us out to try and grasp the edge

When it's time to go
Goodbye, to the part of you who thinks

You see me from above

No enemy can know me without weeping in this way

In all this love



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