

G'mar Hatima Tova.

In the children's book, *The Hardest Word*, the bird, Ziz, had accidentally damaged the kids vegetable garden. He went to G-d to ask for help because he didn't know what to do and G-d told him to go find the hardest word. This is from the story: "By the evening of Yom Kippur, the Ziz had brought back over 100 words to Mt. Sinai. G-d had not accepted any of them. The Ziz was discouraged. He had tried and tried. He flew back to Mt. Sinai to have one more discussion with G-d. What word did you bring this time? G-d asked. No word, the Ziz said quietly. No word? G-d asked. No, the Ziz said sadly. I've come to say I'm sorry. I can't find the hardest word. You can't? G-d asked. No, the Ziz shook his head. I'm sorry. You're sorry? G-d asked. Yes. Ziz nodded his big purple head. I'm sorry. Good job! G-d said. You found the hardest word! I did? Now the Ziz was confused. Yes G-d said. The hardest word is SORRY. While all the words you brought me were hard, 'sorry' is the hardest. I always say 'I'm sorry' on Yom Kippur, The Ziz said. Well you should say it other times too. G-d answered. Like when I smashed the garden? Ziz asked. That's right, G-d said." This book shows that even though it is great to say sorry on Yom Kippur, you should say it every time you make a mistake. But beyond just saying the words "I'm sorry", we also need to repent which means to fix what you did wrong and to not do it again.

In this story, G-d says that "sorry" is the hardest word. It's a pretty short word, so that doesn't really make sense, but I think the story means that it is hard for some people to apologize. Maybe they have a hard time admitting that they did something wrong or maybe they feel so bad about what they did that they'd rather just not talk about it anymore.

On Yom Kippur we do a process called teshuva which is translated to "return." Teshuva involves four steps:

Regret – acknowledging that a mistake was made and feeling regret at having made it.

Cessation – Talk is cheap, but stopping the harmful action shows a true commitment to change.

Confession – To make it more "real," we admit our mistake verbally, and ask forgiveness from anyone we may have harmed.

Resolution – We make a firm commitment not to repeat the harmful action in the future.

Mistakes happen but the important part is to recognize and acknowledge that you did something bad and then apologize. It is also important to try to not repeat what you did. For example, if you bump into someone by accident, say sorry, and never do it again, that's okay. But if you knock into someone, say sorry, and then proceed to do it again many times, that's not okay! That is not fixing or repenting the mistake that you made. This is just one simple example of saying sorry but not really acknowledging what was wrong and doing something to fix what was wrong. On Yom Kippur we need to reflect on bigger mistakes that we have made and figure out how to do better, not just say sorry!