

SHABBAT SHUVAH DERASHA / RABBI ARIEL RACKOVSKY

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B R E A K U P or M A K E U P

Must We Forgive If We Cannot Forget?

Break Up or Make Up: Must We Forgive When We Cannot Forget?
Shabbat Shuvah 5780

1. Weekday Amidah (Nussach Ashkenaz)

סָלַח לָנוּ אֲבִינוּ כִּי חָטָאנוּ. מַחֵל לָנוּ מַלְכֵנוּ כִּי פָשַׁעְנוּ. כִּי מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אַתָּה. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', חַנוּן הַמְרַבֵּה לְסִלַּח:
Pardon us our Father for we have sinned, forgive us our King for we have willfully transgressed,
for You pardon and forgive. Blessed are You, O Lord, Who is gracious and ever willing to
pardon.

2. Amidah for Yom Kippur-(Nussach Ashkenaz)

כִּי אַתָּה סֹלֵחַן לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמַחֵלָן לְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל דּוֹר וְדוֹר וּמִבְּלַעֲדִיר אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ אֲלָא אַתָּה: בְּרוּךְ
אַתָּה ה' מֶלֶךְ מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ לְעוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְלְעוֹנוֹת עַמּוֹ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. וּמַעֲבִיר אֲשֵׁמוֹתֵינוּ בְּכָל שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה. מֶלֶךְ עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ
מְקַדֵּשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים:

For You are the Pardoner and the Forgiver in every generation, and beside You, we have no
king who forgives and pardons, only You! Blessed are You, King Who forgives and pardons our
iniquities, and the iniquities of His people, the House of Israel; and Who removes our trespasses
each year; King over the whole earth, Sanctifier of Israel and the Day of Atonement.

3. Bamidbar Chapter 14 Pesukim 19-20 (and Kol Nidrei Service)

סֹלַח-נִי אֲלֵעוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּגֹדֶל חַסְדְּךָ וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתָּה לָעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד-הַנְּהַ:
Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have
forgiven this people ever since Egypt.”

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סֹלַחְתִּי כַדְבַּרְךָ:

And the LORD said, “I pardon, as you have asked.”

**4. Daniel Statman-“Several Notes on Forgiveness in the Jewish Tradition”-
footnote 4**

השורש מ-ח-ל (במובן של forgiveness) אינו מופיע כלל במקרא, ואילו השורש ס-ל-ח מופיע במקרא
בהקשר של אלוקים בלבד, ולא במישור שבין אדם לחבירו.
The root M-H-L (meaning “forgiveness”) never appears in the Tanach, and the root
S-L-H only appears in Tanakh regarding interactions between human beings and God,
but never on the level or relationships between a human being and his or her fellow.

**5. The Principles of the Lexicon in the Writings of Hazal, Volume 1-Yechezkel
Kutcher, page 5**

...ודומה אני...כי שורש “מחל” תנייני הוא בלשון חז”ל. מבינוני אפעל של שורש “חלל” שפירושו ‘להתיר’
(השווה בערבית, וכן בעברית, למשל חלין= *”מחל<מחל)...
I believe...that the root M-H-L is more recent in the language of our sages...from the root
H-L-L whose meaning is to undo/untie...

Why is forgiveness important?

6. Mishnah Masechet Bava Kamma Chapter 8 Mishnah 7

אָף עַל פִּי שֶׁהוּא נוֹתֵן לוֹ, אֵין נִמְחָל לוֹ עַד שֶׁיִּבְקֶשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית כ) וְעַתָּה הֵשֵׁב אֶשֶׁת וְגו'. וּמִנֵּין שְׁלֹא יְהֵא הַמוֹחֵל אֶכְזָרִי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (שם) וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַבְרָהָם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים וַיִּרְפָּא אֱלֹהִים אֶת אַבְיִמֶלֶךְ וְגו'...
Even though a man pays [him that suffers the indignity], he is not forgiven until he seeks [forgiveness] from him, for it says: “Therefore restore the man’s wife... [and he shall pray for you]” ([Genesis 20:7](#)). And from where do we learn that he who must forgive should not be cruel? As it says: “And Abraham prayed unto God and God healed Avimelech” ([Genesis 20:17](#))...

7. Tosefta Masechet Bava Kamma (Lieberman) Chapter 9 Halacha 29

הַחוּבֵל בַּחֲבִירוֹ אַע"פ שֶׁלֹּא בִקֵּשׁ הַחוּבֵל מִן הַנִּחְבָּל הַנִּחְבָּל צָרִיךְ שִׁיבְקֶשׁ עֲלָיו רַחֲמִים שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית כ"ז) וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אַבְרָהָם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים וְכֵן אַתָּה מוֹצֵא בְרִיעֵי אִיּוֹב שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (אִיּוֹב מ"ב:ח') וְעַתָּה קָחוּ לָכֶם שִׁבְעָה פְרִים וְשִׁבְעָה אֵילִים מֵהוּא אֹמֵר (שם) וְהוּא שָׁב אֶת שְׁבוֹת אִיּוֹב בַּהֲתַפְּלִלוֹ בְּעַד רַעְהוֹ וְגו' ר' יְהוּדָה אֹמֵר מִשֶּׁם ר"ג הָרִי הוּא אֹמֵר (דְּבָרִים י"ג:ח) וְנָתַן לָךְ רַחֲמִים וְרַחֲמֶךָ וְהִרְבֵּךְ וְגו' זֶה סִימָן יֵהָא בִּידֶךָ כָּל זְמַן שֶׁאַתָּה רַחֲמֵן הַרַחֲמֵן מִרַחֵם עֲלֶיךָ.

He who injures his fellow, even though the one who did the injury did not seek [forgiveness] from the injured party-the injured party nonetheless has to seek mercy for him, since it says, *Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Avimelech* (Gen. 20:17). And so you find in regard to the friends of Job, as it is said, *[After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, “My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.] Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams and go to My servant Job, and offer us yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you, [for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly]”* (Job 42:7-8). R. Judah says in the name of Rabban Gamliel, “Lo, it says, *[None of the devoted things shall cleave to your hand; that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger,] and show you mercy and have compassion on you and multiply you, [as he swore to your fathers]”* (Deut. 13:18). “Let this sign be in your hand. So long as you are merciful, He will have mercy on you.” [As translated by Jacob Nesuner]

8. Louis E. Newman “The Quality of Mercy” in Past Imperatives: Studies in the History and Theory of Jewish Ethics, page 88

...The Mishnah, then, never proposes that one has a duty to forgive unilaterally, irrespective of the offender’s stance, but only as a response to an appropriate gesture of repentance on the part of the offender.

9. Ibid, footnote 6 page 245

I have found only one classical rabbinic source, T. Baba Qamma, 9:29, which suggests that the duty to forgive could be unconditional...This passage, which appears to be based on a different reading of the Abraham episode, stands alone and does not alter the fact that the overwhelming majority of sources understand the duty to forgive as conditional upon the offender’s prior repentance. It should be noted, of course, that the

offended party might voluntarily choose to forgive in this case, but Jewish law would not regard it as his duty to do so.

Bearing a Grudge

10. Vaykira Chapter 19 Pasuk 18

לֹא־תִקֶּם וְלֹא־תִטֹּר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ וְאֶהְבֶּתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה':

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your countrymen. Love your fellow as yourself: I am the LORD.

11. Rashi to Vayikra Chapter 19 Pasuk 18

לא תקום: אמר לו השאילני מגלך. אמר לו לאו. למחר אמר לו השאילני קרדומך. אמר לו איני משאילך כדרך שלא השאלתני, זו היא נקימה. ואיזו היא נטירה, אמר לו השאילני קרדומך. אמר לו לאו. למחר אמר לו השאילני מגלך. אמר לו הא לך ואיני כמותך, שלא השאלתני. זו היא נטירה, שנטר האיבה בלבו אף על פי שאינו נוקם:
You shall neither take revenge: [For example:] He says to him, "Lend me your sickle," and he [the latter] replies, "No!" The next day, he [the latter] says to him, "Lend me your ax." [If] he says to him, "I will not lend it to you, just as you did not lend to me!" this constitutes revenge. And what constitutes "bearing a grudge?" [For example:] he says to him, "Lend me your ax," and he [the latter] replies, "No!" Then the next day, he [the latter] says to him, "Lend me your sickle." [Now, if] he says to him, "Here it is for you; I am not like you, who did not lend me!" this constitutes "bearing a grudge," for he keeps the hatred in his heart, even though he does not take revenge. — [Torat Kohanim 19:44; Yoma 23a]

Forgiveness- Is it a verb or a noun?

12. Talmud Bavli Masechet Kiddushin 49b

ההוא גברא דזבין לנכסיה אדעתא למיסק לארץ ישראל ובעידנא דזבין לא אמר ולא מידי אמר רבא הוי דברים שבלב ודברים שבלב אינם דברים...

There was a certain man who sold his property with the intention of ascending to Eretz Yisrael, but at the time that he sold the property he did not say anything with regard to his intention. Ultimately, he did not ascend to Eretz Yisrael, and he wished to renege on the sale. Rava said: Since he did not explicitly state that he was selling his property on the condition that he ascend to Eretz Yisrael, that is an unspoken matter that remained in the heart, and unspoken matters that remain in the heart are not significant matters...

13. Tosafot to Talmud Bavli Masechet Kiddushin 49b

דברים שבלב אינם דברים - משמע דוקא משום שלא פירש דבריו אבל אם פירש דבריו להדיא ואמר בשעת המכר שהוא מוכרם לפי שהוא רוצה ללכת לארץ ישראל הוה המכר בטל...

Unspoken matters that remain in the heart are not significant matters- Implicit in this statement is that they are "insignificant" only when they have not been stated; however, when they have been stated explicitly, and he said at the moment of the sale that he is selling [the property] because he wants to ascend to Eretz Yisrael, [in such a case] the sale is null and void...

14. Gilyonei HaShas of R. Yosef Engel to Talmud Bavli Masechet Kiddushin 49b

שם ודברים שבלב אינם דברים נ"ב המבייש את חברו וכדומה ומחל לו בפיו אעפ"י שלא מחל לו בלבו אמרי' ב'י'
ג"כ דברים שבלב אינם דברים נימוקי מהרמ"מ שבסוף המהרי"ו דס"ד ע"ב דפוס קאפוסט...

There: "Unspoken matters that remain in the heart are not significant matters"-It seems to me that one who shames their friend etc. and [the aggrieved party] "verbally" forgives, even though he did not [truly] forgive in his heart-we also say about this "Unspoken matters that remain in the heart are not significant matters." So it is stated in the Nimmukim of Rabbi Menachem Mirzburk, page 62b in the Kapust edition...

Forgiveness Must Be Sincere- and Earned

15. Rabbi Ben-Zion Abba Shaul, Responsa Ohr L'Tzion Volume II:15

ג. המנהג לומר הריני מוחל וסולח לכל מי שהכעיס והקניט אותי וכו', והוא על פי הא דאיתא במגילה כ"ח ע"א, דמר זוטרא כי הוה סליק לפורייה אמר שרי ליה לכל מאן דצערן, וכן הביאו האחרונים. ונראה שמי שיש לו טינא או כעס על חברו ואינו מוחל לו, אין לו לומר קטע זה, שכיון שאינו מוחל איך יאמר הריני מוחל וסולח, והרי כתוב דובר שקרים לא יכון לנגד עיני (תהלים ק"א), ואיך ידבר שקר לפני הקב"ה, ולכן ישתדל למחול לו בליבו, ואם אינו יכול למחול, ידלג קטע זה עד שיעביר דבר זה מליבו לגמרי.

Concerning the custom to say "Behold-I pardon and forgive anyone who may have angered or annoyed me etc." This is based upon that which is stated in Masechet Megillah 28a, "...such as that of Mar Zutra. When he would go to bed at night, he would say: I forgive anyone who has vexed me." This is mentioned in the Acharonim. It seems to me, however, that one who has passion or anger towards their friend, and does not [cannot] forgive him, should not say this passage, because how can one say "I pardon and forgive," when the verse states "he who speaks untruth shall not stand before my eyes"? How can one speak untruth in front of God? Therefore, one should strive to forgive with a full heart; but if he or she cannot forgive, then they should skip over this passage until this matter has fully passed from their heart.

16. Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, Alei Shor Volume II Pages 240-241

ועד רביעי:קשה הוא להוכיח. קשה כפליים הוא למחול. מי שלא עקר מלבו לגמרי את הקפיידא ואת והטינא אסור לו לומר בפה "מחול לך, מחול לך", כי זוהי גניבת דעת. ואם מישהו מבקש סליחה בערב יוה"כ ומוחלים לו בפה אך לא בלב, גוזלים לו את כפרת יוה"כ שלו: הרי "עבירות שבין אדם לחברו אין יוה"כ מכפר עד שירצה את חברו" (מתני' ביומא פ"ח), ואם חברו אומר שמוחל לו אך בלבו נשארה הקפיידא, הלה אינו מרצה אותו יותר כי הוא סומך על מחילתו, אך מחילתו אינה מחילה והריצוי אינו ריצוי ויוה"כ אינו מכפר. ומה מגוחך הוא שבערב יוה"כ אומרים לכל מבקש "אני מוחל לך" מבלי לחשוב כלל על עקירת הקפיידות!

It is difficult to reproof, but it is doubly difficult to forgive. Whoever has not uprooted from their heart the negativity is prohibited from saying "You are forgiven," for that is deceitful. And if someone asks forgiveness on the eve of Yom Kippur and is forgiven with the mouth but not the heart, you are stealing from someone their atonement on Yom Kippur. For "interpersonal sins are not forgiven on Yom Kippur until a person appeases his friend." If the friend says he forgives him but still retains resentment in his heart, he will not appease his friend any longer because he will rely on the forgiveness he thought he received. In fact, his forgiveness is not forgiveness and his appeasement is no appeasement and Yom Kippur does not atone for his sins. How

comical it is that, on Yom Kippur eve, we say to everyone who asks, "I forgive you" without thinking at all about removing any trace of resentment?

איך לשחק עם מחילה. מעשה בהגה"צ ר' אליהו לופיאן זללה"ה שבא אדם לפניו ובקש מחילתו על שדיבר עליו שלא כהוגן. הגרא"ל הכריחו לספר לו בדיוק מה אמר עליו, ואחרי ששמע את דבריו הגיב: "אכן דבר קשה הוא, ואינני יודע אם אוכל למחול לך. אבל תחזור אלי בעוד שבועיים, ועד אז אלמוד הרבה מוסר על זה, אולי אצליח למחול לך בלב שלם." הלה הזדעזע לשמע הדברים, כי לא תיאר לעצמו שהמחילה היא דבר כה קשה ומסובך, והלך בפחי נפש. בעוד שבועיים חזר אל הגרא"ל, ואז קיבל פניו בשמחה ובישר לו: "ב"ה למדתי הרבה מוסר והצלחתי לפעול אצל עצמי למחול לך בלב שלם, והנני מוחל לך במחילה גמורה!" זהו מעשה רב, המלמדנו כי מחילה אמיתית-עבודה היא, ואסור למחול בפה עד שעוקרים את הקפידא מן הלב עד שלא יזכרו אותה עד עולם... Forgiveness is not to be trifled with. There is a story about the great genius and righteous man Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian, of righteous memory, in which a person asked forgiveness for speaking inappropriately about him. Rabbi Lopian forced him to relate exactly what he said about him, and after he heard his words, he reacted: "Indeed, this is a very serious matter, and I don't know if I can forgive you. Return to me in two weeks and until then, I will study *Mussar* texts and maybe I will succeed in forgiving you wholeheartedly. The other person was shocked to hear these words, for he didn't imagine that forgiveness was so complicated and difficult, and he left deeply dejected. After two weeks, he returned to Rabbi Lopian, who greeted him with joy and said, "Thank God I studied many *Mussar* texts and I succeeded in getting myself to forgive you wholeheartedly, which I do!" This story of a teacher shows us that true forgiveness requires work, and it is forbidden to say so if there is still residual resentment left in one's heart.

Broken engagements- when forgiving is hard to do

17. Isaac Bashevis Singer, In My Father's Court Page 22

Father surveyed the scene in his study. When he left it to enter the alcove, he had known nothing about these two. Now it had all become clear. He instructed both sides to declare their acceptance of their decision. He received his fee. Father's decree was that since both parties rejected each other, they could not be compelled to abide by their contract. The bride, however, was to retain possession of the gifts.

The girl appeared to smirk. Something began to glow in her eyes. I thought I could see the glitter of gold reflected in them. Only now I noticed that earrings dangled from her lobes, and a ring with a small diamond glittered on one of her fingers.

"Rabbi, I want him to give her an official writ of forgiveness," demanded the father.

If I remember correctly, both parties wrote out the proper documents of forgiveness, as is the custom in the case of a broken engagement. Both signed their names-itself an unusual accomplishment for Krochmolna street. When it was all over, the young man remained seated. Apparently he did not want to leave together with them. The father turned to the girl, "Come now, hurry!"

Then the girl said something that has remained indelible in my memory. She said, quickly: "Before I meet with another one like you, may I break both my legs!"

And I, although I was very young, understood that she still loved him. The betrothal had been broken only because of that miser her father.

18. Rabbi Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg Responsa Sridei Eish Volume I:91

נוסח שטר פיטורין

ב"ה

לידידי הרב הגאון מהרר"ב הלוי לייזרובסקי נ"י, אבד"ק מינכן
ע"ד אשר בקש ממני לחוות דעתי על נוסח שטר פיטורין מצד הכלה - גם לי אינו ידוע נוסח מיוחד לשטר פיטורין.
בספר נחלת שבעה, המביא כל נוסחאות השטרות השונים, אינו מביא נוסח שטר פיטורין ומכש"כ שאינו בספר
העיטור (גם בספר אוצר השטרות לגולאק אין נוסח שטר פיטורין) ועיקר המנהג לכתוב שטר פיטורין הוא בפולין.
ולכן יכול כל רב לכתוב את הנוסח כפי רצונו, היינו, שיכתוב שהכלה (או החתן) מחלה לחתן על עלבונה בלב שלם
והסכימה לפוטרו מכל חיוב ושעבוד שבעולם. ועכשיו אכתוב לכת"ר פרטי הדינים למען ידע לכוון מעשיו:
הנה עיקר הדין בביטול שידוכים נגעו בה מצד קנס להמבייש (ואין בה משום אסמכתא - עיין תוס' בבא מציעא ס"ו,
א ד"ה ומניומי אמר) ומצד חרם הקדמונים...

For my dear friend, the great genius Rabbi Boruch Leizerowski, the head of the Rabbinical Court of Munich,

With regard to your request that I express my opinion about the text for a document of forgiveness from the side of a bride, I don't know of a text specific for this document. In the work "Nachalat Shiva," which brings the texts for all sorts of halachic documents, there is no text mentioned, and there certainly is none in the *Sefer Ha'Ittur*. The custom to write such a document originated primarily in Poland. **Therefore, every Rabbi can write a text according to his own desire**-meaning that he should write that the bride (or the groom) forgives the groom wholeheartedly for the offense she suffered, and that she agrees to exempt him from any obligation or encumbrance. Now, I will write to his honor some of the details of this matter so he will know how to act. The primary laws relating to breaking engagements concern financial payments levied on the one causing the attendant humiliation, and as a result of a well-entrenched excommunication of those who do so....

19. Mishnat HaGrY"Sh On Matters of Marriage and Sheva Brachot pgs. 261, 263

לבטל שידוך זה שפיכות דמים

בחור הגיע לרבינו ושאלתו בפיו: עוד יומים אני צריך להתחתן, ואמי הגיע לבית הכלה אתמול כנהוג אצלנו, וגילתה שזה סגנון אחר לגמרי משלנו, ואומרת לי לעזוב הכל, כי לא יהיה לי טוב.
אמר לו רבינו: אתה צריך לדעת שלעזוב שידוך זה שפיכות דמים, ובמיוחד לפי מה שאתה אומר שהיא עשתה את כל ההכנות הנדרשות לחתונה, איזה בזיון גדול יהיה לה. ומה שאתה אומר בשם אמך - **אתה הוא החתן ואתה צריך להחליט**, ולא מעניין אותך מה שאומרים לך.
ואמר החתן: אבל אמי אומרת שלא יהיה לי טוב.
אמר רבינו: זה הכל היה טוב אם היה לפני שהתארסתם, אבל במצב הזה זה שפיכות דמים. וסיים: אני לא אומר לך מה לעשות, רק אתה רוצה שאני אעזור לך לבטל את השידוך, אני לא יכול לעזור לך.

Cancelling a *shidduch* is tantamount to bloodshed

A young man came to our teacher with a question: "In two days, I am scheduled to wed. My mother visited the bride's home, as is our custom, and she discovered that their lifestyle is completely different from our own, and she is telling me to leave everything, as this marriage will not be good for me."

Our teacher told him, "You need to know that leaving an engagement is tantamount to bloodshed, particularly as you say she has carried out all the necessary preparations for the wedding. What a humiliation she will suffer!" And that which you say in the name of your mother- know that **you** are the groom and **you** need to decide; it should not interest you what anyone says to you.

The groom said: "But my mother says it will not be good!"

Our teacher replied: "That would be fine if you had not yet gotten engaged. In this situation, however, it is bloodshed." And he continued, "I won't tell you what to do, but you want me to help you cancel an engagement, and I cannot help you."

צורת בקשת המחילה

נשאל רבינו: בחור שהכלה ביטלה לו את השידוך, ולאחר זמן קצר ביקשו ממנו משפחתה של הכלה מחילה. ונפשו של הבחור בשאלתו, היות והוא אינו מסוגל עדיין למחול, האם נקרא אכזרי בזה שאינו מוחל, כמבואר בשו"ע (או"ח תר"ו א'). והשיב רבינו שבקשת מחילה היינו שהצד הפוגע מסביר לנפגע שהוא מבין שפגע בו ועשה לו רעה, ומבקש ממנו מחילה ע"ז אבל סתם לבקש שימחל אינו כלום.

The manner in which forgiveness is asked

Our teacher was asked: A young man was engaged, and the bride broke the engagement. After a short while, the bride's family asked him forgiveness. The young man felt he was incapable of forgiving yet, and wanted to know if he is considered cruel for withholding forgiveness. Our teacher answered that asking forgiveness means that the offending side explains that they understand that they hurt the other side and asks forgiveness. Simply asking that the other side forgive is meaningless.

20. Gates of Repentance of Rabbi Yonah of Geronah, Gate 2:2

ותראה במנהג בשר ודם כי יחטא לאיש. ובעת צרתו יתחרט ויכנע אליו מפני שהוא צריך לעזרתו. תהיה החרטה הזאת גרועה בעיני חבירו כענין שאמר יפתח (שופטים י"א:ז') ומדוע באתם אלי עתה כאשר צר לכם. ומחסדי השי"ת שהוא מקבל התשובה מתוך הצרה ותהי לרצון לפניו. ויאהב נדבה את החוטא בשובו עדין ביום תוכחה ומקרב צרה

You can see that the custom of flesh and blood is that when a person sins toward another, and then suffers, experiencing regret and contrition only because he needs the person he wronged, that regret is viewed as inferior in the eyes of his peer. As Jephthah said, "Why are you coming to me now, when it is difficult for you?" One of the kindnesses of God is that He accepts our repentance even when it comes about through difficulty, and He loves the sinner when he returns to God from the days of rebuke and distress.

21. "Forgiveness, Resentment and Hatred" by Jean Hampton in Forgiveness and Mercy, pages 84-86

...the forgiver does not wait for the wrongdoer to prove himself to be morally reborn in order to reassociate with him. Instead, the forgiver *trusts* that, although he has undergone no rebirth, he is still "good enough" despite what he has done. Forgiveness is thus the decision to see a wrongdoer in a new, more favorable light. Nor is this decision in any way a condonation of wrong. The forgiver never gives up her opposition to the wrongdoer's action, nor does she even give up her opposition to the wrongdoer's bad character traits. Instead, she revises her judgement of the person himself-where that person is understood to be something other than or more than the character traits of which she does not approve. And she reaches the *honest* decision that this person does not merit her moral hatred, because he is still decent despite his action. She does not condone something bad by forgiving him, because the forgiveness is precisely the decision that *he* isn't bad (even though his action and the character trait that precipitated it are.)

We also have a definition which shows how forgiveness is *directed* at the wrongdoer. When someone bestows forgiveness upon a person, she grants him her approval of him as a person despite what he has done to her. It is therefore natural for her to communicate that approval to the wrongdoer and to seek to renew a relationship with him, although circumstances (e.g., the wrongdoer's death) might make that impossible. The Old Testament metaphors for forgiveness fit nicely with this definition. If the forgiver "sends away" the moral stain which appeared to be left on the wrongdoer by his action, then she can see him as unstained. If she "lets go" of her sense of herself as the victim of an immoral person, she thereby drops the perspective from which he looks like a morally rotten individual. The one who receives the forgiveness may thus feel cleansed of the stain, cured of the rot, because the forgiver's perspective enables him to see himself as decent rather than (to some degree) corroded or morally damaged. We also have an explanation for the locution "She forgave him for his _____," where the phrase is completed by some immoral action or character trait of the wrongdoer. To forgive someone for an action or a trait is a way of removing it as evidence of the state of his soul, so that one is able to judge him favorably without it. Again, such forgiveness will not be an act of condonation as long as it arises from the forgiver's honest belief that the immoral action does not provide good evidence of the condition of the wrongdoer's soul.

If this analysis is right, forgiveness promises great benefits for both the forgiver and the wrongdoer. It makes possible the benefits that come from a renewed friendship. And it also liberates each of them from the effects of the immoral action itself. The forgiver is no longer in the position of the victim defending herself, and the wrongdoer is no longer in the position of the sinner, stained by the sin and indebted to his victim.