

Teshuvah and Compassion

וַיַּעֲבֹר ה' עַל־פְּנָיו וַיִּקְרָא ה' ה' הַיָּאֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב־חַסֵּד וְנְאֻמָּת : נֹצֵר חַסֵּד לְאֲלָפִים.
נְשָׂא
עוֹן וְפָשַׁע וְחַטָּאָה וְנִקְהָה

YHVH passed before him and proclaimed: YHVH YHVH God, gracious and compassionate, long-suffering, abundant in lovingkindness and in truth, extending lovingkindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin... (Exodus 34:6-7)

מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹךָ נְשָׂא עוֹן וְעֹבֵר עַל־פְּשָׁע לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתוֹ
לֹא־הִחְזִיק לְעַד אַפּוֹ כִּי־חָפֵץ חַסֵּד הוּא
יָשׁוּב וְרַחֲמָנוּ יִכַּבֵּשׁ עוֹנֵתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטָּאתָם

Who God is like You, forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression; who does not hold on to anger forever, for You desire lovingkindness! Return and show us compassion, help us overcome our faults. Throw to the depths of the sea everything that causes us to miss the mark. (Micah 7:18-19)

Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 17a

Raba said: He who forgoes his right [to exact punishment] is forgiven all his iniquities, as it says, *Forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression* (Micah 7:18). Who is forgiven iniquity? One who passes by transgression [against himself].

R. Huna the son of R. Joshua was once ill. R. Papa went to inquire about him. He saw that he was on the brink of death and said to those present, "Make ready provisions for his journey" [i.e., prepare shrouds]. Eventually, however, he [R. Huna] recovered, and R. Papa felt ashamed to see him. He said to him, "What did you see [in your illness]?" He replied, It was indeed as you thought, but the Blessed Holy One said to them [the angels]: "Because Rav Huna does not stand on his principle [is tolerant of those who wrong him], do not stand against him," as it says, *Forgiving iniquity and passing by transgression*. Who is forgiven iniquity? He who passes by transgression.

Ilfai contrasted two texts: It is written, *rav chesed/abundant in lovingkindness* (Ex. 34:6) and then it is written, *v'emet/and in truth* (ibid). [How is this]? — At first, 'truth' [i.e. strict justice], but at the end, 'abundant in lovingkindness'.

YHVH passed before him and proclaimed...: R. Johanan said: Were it not written in the text, it would be impossible for us to say such a thing! This verse teaches us that the Blessed Holy One wrapped Himself [in a tallit] like a prayer leader, and showed Moses the order of prayer. God said to him: "Whenever Israel sins, let them perform this before Me, and I will forgive them."