ASTORIA CENTER OF ISRAEL
Judaism With Open Arms

Shabbat Shuvah: Our Shadow Knows

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Hosea 14:2	
שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בַּעֲוֹנֶךָ:	Return, O Israel, to the ETERNAL your God, For you have fallen because of your sin.

1. Teshuvah Reaches God

Bavli Yoma 86a	
רַב יְהוּדָה רָמֵי, כְּתִיב: ״שׁוּבוּ בָּנִים שׁוֹבָבִים אֶרְפָּא מְשׁוּבוֹתֵיכֶם״, וּכְתִיב: ״(הִנֵּה) אָנֹכִי בָּעַלְתִּי בָכֶם וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אֶחָד מֵעִיר וּשְׁנַיִם מִמִּשְׁפָּחָה״! לָא קַשְׁיָא: כָּאן מֵאַהֲבָה אוֹ מִירְאָה, כָּאן עַל יְדֵי יִסּוּרִין. אָמַר רַבִּי לֵוִי: גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁמַּגַּעַת עַד כִּסֵּא הַכָּבוֹד, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךָ״.	Similarly, **Rabbi Yehuda raised a contradiction** between two verses. **It is written: “Return, you backsliding children I will heal your backsliding”** (Jeremiah 3:22), implying that anyone can achieve healing, dependent only on repentance. But it also states: “Return, O backsliding children, says the Lord, **for I am a lord to you, and I will take you one from a city, and two from a family”** (Jeremiah 3:14), implying that repentance is available only to certain individuals. He resolved the contradiction and explained that this is **not difficult: Here,** it is referring to repentance **out of love or fear,** which few people achieve; **there,** it is referring to repentance **through suffering,** as everyone has thoughts of repentance when they suffer. **Rabbi Levi said: Great is repentance, as it reaches the heavenly throne, as it is stated: “Return, Israel, to the Lord your God”** (Hosea 14:2). This implies that repentance literally reaches to God.

Bavli Yoma 86b	
אָמַר רֵישׁ לָקִישׁ: גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁזְּדוֹנוֹת נַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ כִּשְׁגָגוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה׳ אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי כָשַׁלְתָּ בַּעֲוֹנֶךָ״, הָא ״עָוֹן״ — מֵזִיד הוּא, וְקָא קָרֵי לֵיהּ מִכְשׁוֹל. אִינִי?! וְהָאָמַר רֵישׁ לָקִישׁ: גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁזְּדוֹנוֹת נַעֲשׂוֹת לוֹ כִּזְכִיּוֹת, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״וּבְשׁוּב רָשָׁע מֵרִשְׁעָתוֹ וְעָשָׂה מִשְׁפָּט וּצְדָקָה עֲלֵיהֶם (חָיָה) יִחְיֶה״! לָא קַשְׁיָא: כָּאן מֵאַהֲבָה, כָּאן מִירְאָה.	**Reish Lakish said: Great is repentance, as** the penitent’s **intentional sins are counted for him as unwitting transgressions, as it is stated: “Return, Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity”** (Hosea 14:2). The Gemara analyzes this: **Doesn’t “iniquity”** mean **an intentional sin? Yet** the prophet **calls it stumbling,** implying that one who repents is considered as though he only stumbled accidentally in his transgression. The Gemara asks: **Is that so? Didn’t Reish Lakish** himself **say: Great is repentance, as one’s intentional sins are counted for him as merits, as it is stated: “And when the wicked turns from his wickedness, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby”** (Ezekiel 33:19), and all his deeds, even his

[1] All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

	transgressions, will become praiseworthy? The Gemara reconciles: This is **not difficult: Here,** when one repents **out of love,** his sins become like merits; **there,** when one repents **out of fear,** his sins are counted as unwitting transgressions.

2. God Loves Our Teshuvah

Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah 7:6	
גְּדוֹלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שֶׁמְּקָרֶבֶת אֶת הָאָדָם לַשְּׁכִינָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (הושע יד ב) "שׁוּבָה יִשְׂרָאֵל עַד ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ"...כְּלוֹמַר אִם תַּחֲזֹר בִּתְשׁוּבָה בִּי תִּדְבַּק. הַתְּשׁוּבָה מְקָרֶבֶת אֶת הָרְחוֹקִים. אֶמֶשׁ הָיָה זֶה שָׁנוּאַי לְפָנַי הַמָּקוֹם מְשֻׁקָּץ וּמְרֻחָק וְתוֹעֵבָה. וְהַיּוֹם הוּא אָהוּב וְנֶחְמָד קָרוֹב וְיָדִיד. וְכֵן אַתָּה מוֹצֵא שֶׁבְּלָשׁוֹן בָּרוּךְ הוּא מַרְחִיק הַחוֹטְאִים בָּהּ מְקָרֵב אֶת הַשָּׁבִים בֵּין יָחִיד בֵּין רַבִּים. שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (הושע ב א) "וְהָיָה בִּמְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יֵאָמֵר לָהֶם לֹא עַמִּי אַתֶּם יֵאָמֵר לָהֶם בְּנֵי אֵל חָי".	Teshuvah is great for it draws a man close to the *Shechinah* as [Hoshea 14:2] states: "Return, O Israel, to God, your Lord"...Implied is that if you return in Teshuvah, you will cling to Me. Teshuvah brings near those who were far removed. Previously, this person was hated by God, disgusting, far removed, and abominable. Now, he is beloved and desirable, close and dear. Similarly, we find God employs the same expression with which He separates [Himself] from the sinners to draw close to those who repent. [2:1] states: "Instead of saying to you: `You are not My nation,' He will tell you: `You are the children of the living God.'"

Sefer Hasidim 60:1	
כתיב בסוף הושע שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך גדולה התשובה שמגיע עד כסא הכבוד שנאמר (הושע יד ב) עד ה' והיא א' מן הדברים שקדמו לעולם והיא שקולה כנגד כל הקרבנות שנאמר (תהלים נא יט) זבחי אלהים רוח נשברה לא נאמר זבח אלא זבחי ואל יראה לבעל התשובה שהוא מרוחק ממעלת הצדיקים מפני העוונותו והחטאים והפשעים אשר העוה וחטא ופשע כי אין הדבר כן אלא אהוב הוא ונחמד לפני הבורא יותר מן הצדיקים שהרי טעם את החטא וכפה את יצרו ואחז"ל במקום שבעלי תשובה עומדים צדיקים גמורים אינם יכולים לעמוד:	It is written at the end of Hosea, “Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God” (Hos. 14:2). Repentance is great in that it reaches the Throne of Glory, for it is said, “Unto the Lord.” And it is one of those matters that had preceded the creation of the world. It is equal in importance to all the sacrifices for it is said, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit” (Ps. 51:19). It does not say “sacrifice” but “sacrifices of.” Let it not seem to the penitent that he is distant from the station of the righteous because of his past perversions, sins, and rebellion, for the matter is not so. He is loved and desired by the Creator more than the righteous, for he has tasted sin and has subdued his evil inclination and our scholars have said, “In the place where the penitent stand the completely righteous are unable to stand.”

3. Our Shadow Knows

Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*
The experience of darkness has been essential to my coming into selfhood, and telling the truth about that fact helps me stay in the light. But I want to tell that truth for another reason as well: many young people today journey in the dark, as the young always have, and we elders do them a disservice when we withhold the shadowy parts of our lives. When I was young, there were very few elders willing to talk about the darkness; most of them pretended that success was all they had ever known. As the darkness began to descend on me in my early twenties, I thought I had developed a unique and terminal case of failure. I did not realize that I had merely embarked on a journey toward joining the human race.

Bell Hooks
For me, forgiveness and compassion are always linked: how do we hold people accountable for wrongdoing and yet at the same time remain in touch with their humanity enough to believe in their capacity to be transformed?