

Introduction

1. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, *Without a Job, Who am I?*, pg. 36

Sybil was admitted for heroin addiction. She was a registered nurse who had not worked for six years because of her addiction. The reason she came for help was that she had used up all her veins and had none left for injecting heroin. In the first interview, I noticed that she was wearing a locket. "Is that real gold?" I asked. When she answered in the affirmative, I asked, "How come you still have it and did not sell it to get heroin?"

"I'll never sell this," she said. "This was my mother's."

"Let me see it, please," I said. Sybil handed me the locket, and I took the scissors lying on the desk and made as though I was going to scratch the locket.

"What are you doing?" Sybil said.

I said, "Don't get upset. I'm just going to scratch it up a bit."

"But that's mine," Sybil said.

"I promise I'll give it back to you," I said.

"But I don't want it scratched up," Sybil said. "It is beautiful and very valuable to me."

I said, "So, if something is beautiful and very valuable, you don't let it get damaged, right?" I took Sybil's arms, which were marked by the unsightly tracks and scars of abscesses. "Can you read what that says?" I asked. "It says, 'I am not beautiful. I am not valuable.'"

Tearfully, Sybil said, "I never thought I was any good."

Sybil recovered from her drug addiction and became very active in helping other nurses with drug problems. She discovered that she had a desire to help others. Now Sybil knew who she was.

2. Avot d'Rabbi Natan 12:3

כשהיה אהרן מהלך בדרך, פגע בו באדם רשע, ונתן לו שלום. למחר ביקש אותו האיש לעבור עבירה. אמר, אוי לי, היאך אשא עיני אחר כך ואראה את אהרן, בושתי הימנו שנתן לי שלום. נמצא אותו האיש מונע עצמו מן העבירה.

When Aharon was walking on the road, he encountered a wicked man and greeted him. The next day that man wanted to transgress, and he said, "Woe is me, how could I raise my eyes afterward and see Aharon? I would be embarrassed before him, for he greeted me." And so that man would keep himself from transgression.

Part 1: Honest Assessment

3. Steps 1, 4 and 5

We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

We admitted to G-d, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

4. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 1:1

כל מצות שבתורה בין עשה בין לא תעשה אם עבר אדם על אחת מהן בין בזדון בין בשגגה כשיעשה תשובה וישוב מחטאו חייב להתודות לפני הקל ברוך הוא שנאמר "איש או אשה כי יעשו וגו' והתודו את חטאתם אשר עשו" זה וידוי דברים, וידוי זה מצות עשה.

Regarding every biblical mitzvah, commandment as well as prohibition: When one violates any of them, whether intentionally or in error, and he performs teshuvah and returns from his sin, he is obligated to admit it before Gd. It is written, "When a man or woman performs... And they shall admit the sin they performed." This is verbal admission, and this verbal admission fulfills a commandment.

5. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:5

ושבח גדול לשב שיתודה ברבים ויודיע פשעיו להם ומגלה עבירות שבינו לבין חבירו לאחרים... וכל המתגאה ואינו מודיע אלא מכסה פשעיו אין תשובתו גמורה שנאמר "מכסה פשעיו לא יצליח". במה דברים אמורים? בעבירות שבין אדם לחבירו, אבל בעבירות שבין אדם למקום אינו צריך לפרסם עצמו, ועזות פנים היא לו אם גילם, אלא שב לפני הקל ברוך הוא ופורט חטאיו לפניו, ומתודה עליהם לפני רבים סתם, וטובה היא לו שלא נתגלה עונו שנאמר "אשרי נשוי פשע כסוי חטאה".

And it is greatly praiseworthy for a penitent to admit in public and inform them of his sins and reveal his social transgressions to others... And anyone who is arrogant and does not inform, and who covers up his sins, does not achieve full repentance, as Proverbs 28:13 says, "One who conceals his sins will not succeed." When is this said? Regarding social transgressions, but one need not publicize his own sins against Gd, and it would be brazen for him to reveal them. Rather, he should repent before Gd and specify his sins before Gd, and [only] admit in general in front of others. It is good for him that the guilt is not revealed, as in Tehillim 32:1, "Fortunate is the one whose sin is borne, whose transgression is concealed."

Part 2: Repair

6. Steps 8 and 9

We made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

We made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

7. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:9

עבירות שבין אדם לחבירו כגון החובל את חבירו או המקלל חבירו או גוזלו וכיוצא בהן אינו נמחל לו לעולם עד שיתן לחבירו מה שהוא חייב לו וירצהו

Social transgressions, like wounding another, cursing him, stealing from him and the like, are never forgiven until he gives the other what he owes, and he appeases him.

8. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), Orot haTeshuvah 10:6

על כל חטאת האדם, שבין אדם למקום, התשובה הרוחנית משיבה מיד את ישוע של אור הרוח, אבל בעברות שבין אדם לחבירו אי אפשר לנפש להשתלם עד שיתוקנו בפועל.

For every sin against Gd, spiritual repentance immediately restores that joy of salvation of spiritual light. But for social sin, the soul cannot become whole until the sins are actively repaired.

Part 3: A Searching Honesty

9. Step 4

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

10. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, *Addictive Thinking*, pg. 13

Alan, a recovering alcoholic, was oblivious to the effects of his drinking, in spite of what people said to him. Since he drank only beer, he was certain he did not have an alcohol problem. Eventually Alan became physically sick and could no longer deny that something was wrong. He concluded that by drinking half a case of beer daily, he was consuming too much fluid. So he switched to scotch and soda. When the physical symptoms got worse, he faulted the soda and switched to whiskey and water. As his symptoms got even worse, he eliminated the water.

11. Talmud, Sotah 3a

אין אדם עובר עבירה אא"כ נכנס בו רוח שטות

A person does not transgress unless a spirit of insanity enters him.

12. Talmud, Kiddushin 40a

כיון שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה הותרה לו. הותרה לו סלקא דעתך? אלא נעשית לו כהיתר.

Once a person commits a transgression and then repeats it, it becomes permitted to him. *Permitted to him?! Rather, it appears to him as though it was permitted.*

13. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:2

ומה היא התשובה? הוא שיעזוב החוטא חטאו ויסירו ממחשבתו ויגמור בלבו שלא יעשהו עוד, שנאמר 'יעזוב רשע דרכו'.
What is "teshuvah"? For the sinner to abandon his sin and remove it from his thoughts, and conclude in his heart that he will not commit it again, as it is written, 'The wicked one will abandon his path.'

Part 4: Divine Help

14. Steps 2, 3, 6 and 7

We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of G-d as we understood Him.

We were entirely ready to have G-d remove all these defects of character.

We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

15. Talmud, Berachot 33b

הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים

All is in the hands of Heaven, other than awe of Heaven.

16. Midrash, Eichah Rabbah 5:21

אמרה כנסת ישראל לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע שלך הוא השיבנו, אמר להם שלכם הוא שנאמר (זכריה א') שובו אלי ואשובה אליכם נאם ד', אמרה לפניו רבש"ע שלך הוא שנא' (תהלים פ"ה) שובנו אלקי ישענו לכך נאמר השיבנו ד' אליך ונשובה

The Jews said before Gd: Master of the universe, it is up to You, restore us! He replied: It is up to you, as it is written, 'Return to Me and I will return to you, this is the word of Gd.' The Jews said before Him: Master of the Universe, it is for You, as it is written, 'Bring us back, Gd of our salvation!' And so it says, 'Restore us to Yourself, Gd, and we will return.'

17. Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Kaidanover, 18th century Vilna, Kav haYashar 5

וזה יאות לכל בר ישראל להיות זוכה ומזכה לאחרים, ומכל שכן שצריך אדם להתפלל על רשעי הדור שיחזרו בתשובה, כדאיתא בגמרא בברכות בברוריה דביתהו דרבי מאיר שאמרה "יתמו חטאים" כתיב, ולא 'חוטאים'. על כן אסדר אני לפניך לכל איש ואשה לומר יהי רצון זה בברכת "השיבנו אבינו לתורתך, וקרבנו מלכנו לעבודתך", ויאמר: "יהי רצון מלפניך ד' אלקינו ואלקי אבותינו שתחתור התירה מתחת כסא כבודך לתשובת פלוני בן פלונית וכל העוברים על מצותיך, יהופך לבכם לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם, כי ימינך פשוטה לקבל שבים, והחזירנו בתשובה שלימה לפניך, בא"י הרוצה בתשובה."

This is good for every Jew, to earn merit and provide merit for others. Certainly, one must pray for the wicked of the generation to repent, as is seen (Berachot 10a) that Beruriah, wife of R' Meir, said, "It is written, 'May sins end,' not 'May sinners end.'" Therefore, I will arrange for each man and woman to say this prayer in the blessing of, "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah, and bring us close, our King, to Your service."

He should say: May it be Your will, HaShem, our Gd and Gd of our ancestors, that You tunnel beneath Your throne of honour for the repentance of so-and-so and all who violate Your command. May their heart be reversed to perform Your will wholeheartedly, for Your right hand is extended to receive those who return. And return us with complete repentance before You. Blessed are You, Gd, who desires repentance.

18. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), Orot haTeshuvah 7:5

כיון שהרעיון קשור לקדושה ולחפץ התשובה, אין מה לפחד כלל. ודאי יזמין השי"ת את כל הדרכים שהתשובה הגמורה המאירה את כל המחשכים באור חייה היא נקנית על ידם.

Because one's thoughts are bound to holiness and to the desire for teshuvah, one should not fear at all. Certainly, HaShem will prepare all of the paths via which complete teshuvah – illuminating all of the dark spaces with the light of its life – is acquired.

Part 5: Always an Addict

19. Step 10

We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

20. Talmud, Yoma 86b

עבירות שהתודה עליהן יום הכיפורים זה לא יתודה עליהן יום הכיפורים אחר, ואם שנה בהן צריך להתודות יום הכיפורים אחר, ואם לא שנה בהן וחזר והתודה עליהן עליו הכתוב אומר 'ככלב שב על קאו כן כסיל שונה באולתו'. רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר כל שכן שהוא משובה, שנאמר 'כי פשעי אני אדע וחטאתי נגדי תמיד'.

Regarding sins which one admitted on this Yom Kippur: One should not admit them on a subsequent Yom Kippur. One who repeated them must admit them on a subsequent Yom Kippur. Regarding one who did not repeat them, but who admitted them, it is written, 'Like a dog who sits upon his vomit, so is a fool who repeats his corruption.'

Rabbi Eliezer ben Yaakov said: He [who admits old sins] is all the more praised, as it is written, 'For I know my transgressions, and my sin is before me always!'

21. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:4

מדרכי התשובה להיות...משנה שמו כלומר "אני אחר, ואיני אותו האיש שעשה אותן המעשים."

Among the paths of teshuvah is for him to... change his name, as if to say, "I am someone else, not the person who committed those deeds."

22. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 2:8

עבירות שהתודה עליהן יום הכיפורים זה חוזר ומתודה עליהן ביום הכיפורים אחר אף על פי שהוא עומד בתשובתו שנאמר "כי פשעי אני אדע וחטאתי נגדי תמיד."

Regarding sins which one admitted on this Yom Kippur: One should admit them on a subsequent Yom Kippur, despite remaining in his repentance, as Tehillim 51:5 says, "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is before me always."

Relapse

23. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, *Addictive Thinking*, pg. 117

Because recovery is a growth process, relapse is an interruption of that growth. But relapse does not mean going back to square one. Yet almost without exception, that is what the relapser is likely to think. After two years or twelve years of recovery, a person who relapses may feel back at rock bottom. This conclusion is mistaken, however, and can negatively affect recovery from a relapse. Many people who relapse think, "What's the use? I've tried and it doesn't work. I might as well give up the fight."

24. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (20th century England), *Michtav meiEliyahu IV* pg. 276

כשעושים ניסויים להוציא פרח במראה חדש יש שזורעים שטחים גדולים והכל הולך לטמיון, ואם גם פרח אחד מצליח כבר שמחים בהצלחתם. כשיראה זאת מי שאינו מבין, יביט על הכמות הגדולה ההולכת לאיבוד ויתמה לעצמו "מה הם עושים כאן, הרי מפסידים כל כך הרבה צמחים וכל הוצאת גידולם, רק כדי שיצמח אחד, ולזה קוראים הצלחה?" אבל המבין יודע שזה האחד המצטיין באיכותו כדאי הוא להוציא על השגתו אפילו פי אלף ועדיין הצלחה גדולה תהיה.

When they experiment to produce a flower with a new appearance, they sometimes plant great fields and the entire thing is ruined, but if even one flower succeeds then they rejoice in their success. When someone who does not understand this sees it, he looks at the great amount that goes to waste and wonders to himself, "What are they doing here? They lose so many plants and all of the expense of raising them in order to get only one plant, and they call this 'success'?" But one who understands knows that this flower stands out for its quality, and is worth all of the expenses of acquiring it, and even an expenditure of a thousandfold more to acquire it would still be a great success.

25. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook (20th century Israel), *Orot haTeshuvah* 5:3

העולם מוכרח הוא לבוא לידי תשובה שלימה. אין העולם דבר עומד על מצב אחד כי אם הולך הוא ומתפתח.

The world is guaranteed to come to complete repentance. The world does not remain in one place; it perpetually evolves.