

# Repentance for Interpersonal Transgressions: A Practical Halachic Approach<sup>1</sup>

*Rabbi Shmuel Leshner*

The practice is as odd as it is ubiquitous. All around the world, on *erev yom kippur*, people ask each other for forgiveness. At first blush, this certainly makes sense. We are warned in the Mishnah<sup>2</sup> that although Yom Kippur has the power to atone for sins between man and G-d, it is ineffective for interpersonal sins unless one appeases his friend. Therefore, it is certainly logical that before Yom Kippur, we seek to appease those people we have wronged.

There is, however, a glaring problem with this practice. Why do we wait until *erev yom kippur*? Wouldn't it make more sense to ask for forgiveness as soon as possible? Moreover, the *Shulchan Aruch* codifies this practice, which seems unlikely if it were simply a case of "meeting the final deadline."<sup>3</sup> In order to answer this question, a closer examination of the the mitzvah of *teshuvah* (repentance) for *aveiros bein adam lachaveiro* (interpersonal transgressions) is necessary.

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1. Thanks to R. Ken Stollon, who greatly improved this article.

2. *Yoma* 85b.

3. O.C. 606. The title of this *siman* is "To Appease One's Fellow on *Erev Yom Kippur*," lending further credence to the notion that requesting forgiveness is deliberately left until then. It should be noted, though, that the authorship of the chapter titles in *Shulchan Aruch* is unclear. See *Teshuvos Shemesh Tzedakah* (O.C. 23) and *Zechor L'avraham* (5760-1, p. 111) regarding the provenance of the chapter titles in *Shulchan Aruch*.

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## True Holiness: Divine and Human

Judaism has always placed emphasis on both *mitzvos bein adam lamakom* (commandments between man and G-d) and *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro*. The aforementioned Mishnah actually seems to place significant emphasis upon the human realm - even over the Divine. After all, the Mishnah states that for *aveiros bein adam lachaveiro*, *teshuvah* is simply not enough. Based on this, R. Daniel Z. Feldman notes the power Judaism places in human hands. G-d delegates, so to speak, His capacity to grant atonement to human beings.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, if the individual who was wronged does not want to forgive the person who wronged him, that is within his power.

In fact, the Rosh emphasizes the importance of *bein adam lachaveiro* over *bein adam lamakom*. The first Mishnah in *Pei'ah*, which we recite every morning after *birchos hatorah*, states:

These are the things whose fruits one consumes in this world but whose full reward awaits him in the world to come: honoring parents, acts of kindness, arriving early at the house of study morning and evening, hospitality to strangers, visiting the sick, helping the needy bride, attending to the dead, devotion in prayer, and bringing peace between people. But the study of Torah is equal to them all.<sup>5</sup>

The Rosh notes that the mitzvos for which one enjoys the fruits in this world while the principal remains in the world to come are mitzvos between man and his fellow: "For the Holy One, blessed be He, has greater desire for mitzvos by which one also pleases other people than for mitzvos between man and his Maker."<sup>6</sup>

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4. *The Right and the Good* (Aronson, 1999) p. 140.

5. Translation adapted from R. Jonathan Sacks, *The Koren Siddur* (Koren, 2009), p. 10.

6. Commentary to *Pei'ah* 1:1. Translation adapted from R. Binyamin Zimmerman, "*Bein Adam Le-Chavero: Ethics of Interpersonal Conduct (Shiur #1)*," *Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash* (January 17, 2016).

Unfortunately, as a community, we have not always lived up to this standard. In fact, common laxity in the ethical and business realms was already recognized in the Talmud.<sup>7</sup> The frequent negligence in *bein adam lachaveiro* relative to strict observance *bein adam lamakom* has been bemoaned by many Torah leaders throughout the generations.<sup>8</sup>

Compounding the difficulty in adhering to the rules of *bein adam lachaveiro* are the challenges and complexities involved in rectifying *aveiros bein adam lachaveiro*. Although there are some heinous sins *bein adam lamakom* for which *teshuvah* alone is insufficient,<sup>9</sup> these are the exceptions to the rule. Generally, as long as one properly repents, Hashem, in His kindness, forgives us

However, it can be more complicated in the interpersonal realm.

In his thorough analysis of *lashon hara* (evil speech) in contemporary society, R. Daniel Z. Feldman relates an old Jewish folktale about a man who came to his rabbi to seek advice on how he can repent for the offense of speaking *lashon hara*:

The rabbi advised him that it is indeed possible, albeit complicated. He instructed him to take a pillow – the old-fashioned kind, with feathers inside – and to cut a hole in it and then walk around his town, allowing the feathers to escape from the pillow. Having done that, he returned to the rabbi and asked him for the next instruction. The second step was significantly harder than the first: "now pick up all the feathers."<sup>10</sup>

7. See *Bava Basra* 165a, where Rav states that "Most [are guilty of] theft."

8. I have personally heard this critique from R. Hershel Schachter on a number of occasions. It is well known that R. Yisrael Salanter believed the improvement of the moral character of the Jewish community, especially in the interpersonal realm, to be vital. See R. Hillel Goldberg, *Israel Salanter: Text, Structure, Idea* (Ktav, 1981), pp. 78-79 and Shaul Stampfer, *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Lindsey Taylor-Guthartz (Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2014), pp. 261-264.

9. For example, the Gemara (*Yoma* 86a) states that for one who has caused a *chillul hashem* (a desecration of Hashem's name), repentance alone cannot prevent punishment. For more, see R. Shimon Schwab, "Chilul Hashem," in *Selected Writings* (C.I.S., 1988), pp. 213-216.

10. R. Daniel Z. Feldman, *False Facts and True Rumors: Lashon HaRa in Contemporary Culture* (Maggid, 2016), p. 231.

It is extremely difficult to repair relationships once they have been damaged. *Lashon hara* is particularly challenging to rectify, as the story above highlights. Picking up all of the feathers blowing in the winds is nearly impossible. Unfortunately, the same can be true for the sullied reputations or rumors that have spread as a result of things we have said about others.

Difficulties notwithstanding, this article will attempt to chart a path towards repentance for those who have wronged others. Although it may be complex, Hashem only expects of us what is humanly possible. And although the best policy is prevention, we do not always succeed in that. We must find a path towards forgiveness no matter how difficult. In the words of *Chazal*, "One who comes to be purified is given [Divine] assistance."<sup>11</sup>

As noted above, the Mishnah clearly highlights the imperative to seek forgiveness from someone we have harmed. The Chida cites an interpretation of this Mishnah that is quite frightening. According to this opinion, someone who does not repent from sins against his fellow cannot achieve atonement on Yom Kippur at all - even for sins *bein adam lamakom*.<sup>12</sup> Although the Chida rejects this view, the fact that there is such an opinion reminds us of the paramount importance of doing our utmost to seek forgiveness from those whom we have wronged.

Conversely, granting forgiveness is strongly encouraged. The Mishnah states:

From where is it derived that if the victim does not forgive him that he is [considered] cruel? As it is stated: "And Avraham prayed to Hashem, and Hashem healed Avimelech, his wife, and his maidservants, and they bore children" (*Bereishis* 20:17).<sup>13</sup>

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11. *Menachos* 29b.

12. *Birkei Yosef* O.C. 606:1.

13. *Bava Kama* 92a. Translation adapted from the William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud, with commentary by R. Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz.

Clearly, we are meant to forgive others, especially before Yom Kippur. We are also expected to seek forgiveness from those whom we have wronged. However, it may not be so simple.

## In Search of Forgiveness: The Debate Between R. Yisrael Salanter and the Chafetz Chaim

There is a noteworthy case in which seeking forgiveness from someone who was wronged can be viewed as a halachic impossibility. This case relates to a debate attributed to R. Yisrael Salanter, the founder of the Mussar Movement, and the Chafetz Chaim.

In his biography of the Chafetz Chaim, R. Moshe Meir Yashar records that the Chafetz Chaim sent an early manuscript of his work on *lashon hara* (later titled *Sefer Chafetz Chaim*) to R. Salanter, apparently seeking his approval.<sup>14</sup> After reviewing the work, R. Salanter objected to one ruling in the manuscript. If a person slandered someone without their knowledge, the Chafetz Chaim rules that the offender must seek forgiveness from the victim. Additionally, as is the general rule, the offender is required to specify the details of the offense.<sup>15</sup>

However, in R. Salanter's view, this is incorrect. According to R. Salanter, one cannot achieve atonement at the expense of another person. Because the victim does not know he was defamed, by seeking forgiveness and revealing one's wrongdoing, the offender is bringing the other person pain. R. Salanter asserts that one has no right to attempt to receive Divine atonement by causing anguish to another person.<sup>16</sup>

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14. *HeChafetz Chaim: Chayav Upa'alo*, Vol. 1 (Tel Aviv, 1961), p. 85.

15. *Chafetz Chaim* 1:4:12.

16. This story, in somewhat different forms, is also recorded by R. Eliyahu Lopian, *Leiv Eliyahu, Chochmah Umussar*, p. 140; R. Aharon Soloveichik, *Parach Mateh Aharon, Madda*, pp. 186-189; and R. Hillel Goldberg, *The Fire Within* (ArtScroll Mesorah, 1987), pp. 51-52. See also R. Daniel Z. Feldman, *The Right and the Good*, pp. 149-152.

Interestingly, R. Dov Katz, in his authoritative work on the Mussar Movement, *Tenuas Hamussar* (5 volumes, Tel Aviv, 1955-1963), makes no mention of the debate between the Chafetz Chaim and R. Salanter. In fact, in the 4<sup>th</sup> volume (p. 36), R. Katz writes that R. Salanter

When challenged by R. Salanter's argument, it is reported that the Chafetz Chaim responded that he based his ruling on that of Rabbeinu Yonah.<sup>17</sup> We do not know how R. Salanter responded, but it appears that he was unmoved even by this earlier and authoritative source.<sup>18</sup>

Interestingly, it is possible that even the Chafetz Chaim may have had a change of heart about this ruling. R. Daniel Z. Feldman notes that in his other major work, the *Mishnah Berurah*, which he published after *Sefer Chafetz Chaim*, the Chafetz Chaim appears to favor R. Salanter's approach. In the laws of asking forgiveness prior to Yom Kippur,<sup>19</sup> he approvingly cites the view of the *Magen Avraham*<sup>20</sup> that if a request for forgiveness will cause embarrassment to the victim, the offender should not specify his wrongdoings. This appears to be at odds with his position in the *Sefer Chafetz Chaim* that asking for forgiveness is absolutely necessary. Thus, notwithstanding their debate about the ruling in *Sefer Chafetz Chaim*, in the *Mishnah Berurah*, the Chafetz Chaim appears to favor the view of R. Salanter.<sup>21</sup>

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did give the Chafetz Chaim an approbation for his *Sefer Chafetz Chaim* to encourage him. However, because R. Salanter's practice was not to give approbations to any books, he asked that it not be publicized. The glaring omission of the debate between R. Salanter and R. Kagan from *Tenuas Hamussar* raises questions about the historicity of this story. Yehuda Geberer, a researcher of Jewish history, believes it is doubtful that R. Salanter ever gave the Chafetz Chaim an approbation (personal email correspondence, November 23-25, 2020).

17. *Sha'arei Teshuvah* 3:207.

18. R. Hillel Goldberg records that almost a century later, the question was put to R. Aaron Kotler, the founding Lakewood Rosh Yeshiva, "Who was right, R. Yisrael or the Chafetz Chaim?" R. Kotler thought a moment, then replied, "R. Yisrael *tanna hu upalig*" - R. Yisrael is like a Talmudic sage whose scholarship was so impeccable and whose personal stature so close to earlier generations that he had the right to disagree with a sage from earlier generations (referring to the Rabbeinu Yonah). See *The Fire Within*, p. 52.

19. O.C. 606:3. R. Feldman cites a number of possible solutions to this contradiction, though he finds little basis for any of them in the original sources. One solution he cites is that the *Mishnah Berurah* writes merely that one need not go into detail if doing so would cause embarrassment to the victim; one must still ask for forgiveness in general terms. (This appears to be the understanding of the *Machatzis Hashekel* on the *Magen Avraham* ad loc.) The ruling in *Sefer Chafetz Chaim* requiring the perpetrator to ask for forgiveness is consistent with this.

20. O.C. 606:1.

21. R. Binyamin Yehoshua Zilber (*Teshuvos Az Nidberu* 7:66) argues, based on his analysis of the *Mishnah Berurah*'s ruling, that in reality, there is no debate between him and R. Salanter.

According to R. Salanter, in this particular situation, what should the repentant person wishing to achieve atonement do? One way of interpreting R. Salanter's position in this case is that there is no way for this person to atone for their sin. According to R. Daniel Z. Feldman, "[According to R. Salanter] the need for reconciliation and forgiveness for damages inflicted is still present."<sup>22</sup> However, since for R. Salanter, it is unthinkable to ask forgiveness from the victim in this situation because that would create more pain and heartache, this individual has no recourse and cannot achieve atonement.

However, there is a different approach. R. Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler is cited as saying in the name of R. Yisrael Salanter (his great-grandfather) that in this situation, it is best for the person to ask the victim for forgiveness on *erev yom kippur*, when everyone else is asking forgiveness from each other. In this way, he can avoid raising any suspicions and does not hurt the victim by delineating the details of his offense.<sup>23</sup>

R. Moshe Shternbuch suggests that this can answer our original question. Why do we as a community wait until *erev yom kippur* to ask forgiveness from others? Perhaps it is because this gives many people who do not want to divulge what they did the ability to ask others whom they have wronged for forgiveness. Therefore, *erev yom kippur* was designated as a time when everyone asks each other for forgiveness.<sup>24</sup>

In support of this latter approach, R. Mordechai Willig pointed to the *tefillah zakah* prayer composed by R. Avraham Danzig (the *Chayei Adam*). It has become customary in many communities to recite *tefillah zakah* on *erev yom kippur* right before *kol nidrei*. In this prayer, we recite a general formula of forgiveness meant to forgive anyone who has wronged us:

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22. *False Facts and True Rumors*, p. 239.

23. R. Binyamin Yehoshua Zilber (*Teshuvos Az Nidberu* 7:66) and R. Moshe Shternbuch (*Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 5:397).

24. R. Moshe Shternbuch, *Moadim Uzmanim* 1:54.

I hereby completely forgive anyone who may have sinned against me... and for all the sins that one person committed against another... and let no man be punished for my sake. And just as I forgive every other person, so make me gracious in the eyes of everyone so that they all forgive me completely.<sup>25</sup>

Clearly, according to R. Danzig, even without knowing the details of what was done to us by others, we can still forgive them as well as hope for people whom we have harmed to see us in a good light and forgive us as well.<sup>26</sup> This perspective fits well with the lenient understanding of R. Salanter's position argued for above. Accordingly, although one may not reveal the specifics of their misdeeds to those whom they wrong if that will cause pain, they still may ask for a generic forgiveness from them.

## Not In the Place of G-d: R. Asher Weiss's Approach

In a public lecture in Bet Shemesh, R. Asher Weiss raised some vexing halachic problems that could arise when seeking someone's forgiveness in addition to the case above.<sup>27</sup> What if the person who was wronged is no longer living and did not forgive the offender during his lifetime? The Gemara<sup>28</sup> instructs the person seeking forgiveness to go to the person's grave along with ten people to ask forgiveness. But, making matters more complicated, what if the person who wronged his fellow passed away before asking for forgiveness? *Chazal* do not have a recommendation for this individual. Is he stuck with his sin, or can the person who was wronged grant him forgiveness? R. Weiss expressed surprise that the *Minchas Chinuch* writes that even if the victim forgives this

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25. Translation adapted from R. Jonathan Sacks, *The Koren Yom Kippur Mahzor* (Koren, 2006) pp. 54-56.

26. This point was noted by R. Mordechai Willig, "Question and Answer Session and *Shiur on Hilchos Yom Kippur*" (September 17, 2018). All citations of R. Willig are from this lecture and subsequent conversations with him.

27. Available at <https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/933907/rabbi-asher-weiss/teshuva-bein-adam-l-chaveiro/>.

28. *Yoma* 87a.



person wholeheartedly, the perpetrator is still stuck with his sin, because “One cannot achieve atonement after death.”<sup>29</sup>

R. Weiss cited another case in which someone would be barred from atonement. It is said in the name of the *Chazon Ish* that if A hurt B and then asks sincerely for forgiveness, and B begrudgingly grants forgiveness to A but in his heart does not forgive him, A does not receive atonement. The rationale for this, attributed to the *Chazon Ish*, is that forgiveness is always something that must come from the heart.<sup>30</sup> If it lacks this element, it is not valid forgiveness. But because A does not know what is in B’s heart, he will not ask for forgiveness again, leaving him lacking a vital ingredient for achieving atonement.

In a similar vein, R. Weiss noted more situations in which seeking forgiveness is seen by some *poskim* as impossible. R. Weiss reported that it is said in the name of R. Yosef Shalom Elyashiv that one cannot receive atonement for offending a minor. After all, the Gemara<sup>31</sup> states that a minor is halachically incapable of granting forgiveness.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, R. Weiss stated that he saw another ruling in the name of R. Elyashiv that if one harms someone who later becomes mentally impaired, such that he cannot grant forgiveness, the perpetrator cannot obtain forgiveness.

In his *Minchas Asher*, R. Weiss develops a thesis which he utilized in this lecture to argue for the ability to achieve forgiveness and atonement in all of these cases, contrary to the above rulings. In the case of an unaware victim of slander, R. Weiss writes:

That which our Sages say that one does not atone for sins between man and his fellow until he appeases his friend is not because it is within the individual’s

29. *Parshas Naso*, Mitzvah 364.

30. For more on this question, see R. Uri Tieger’s *L’dofkei B’tshuvah* (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:175), who cites varying opinions and the arguments in favor of each.

31. *Bava Metz’ia* 22b.

32. In support of this view, R. Yisrael Yaakov Kanievsky (the Steipler Gaon) is recorded as seeking the forgiveness of a boy at his bar mitzvah for something he said to the boy when he was seven years old. (Even though he did ask the boy for forgiveness when he was seven, the Steipler apparently did not see the minor as halachically capable of granting forgiveness.) See R. Tzvi Nakar, *Bar Mitzvah and Tefillin* (Tfutzta, 2021), pp. 83-84.

power to grant or prevent atonement. For is he in the place of G-d?! [Furthermore,] do we not see that once a person asks forgiveness another three times and he is not forgiven, he need not seek forgiveness any further, and he [nonetheless] achieves atonement?<sup>33</sup> Rather, [the act of asking for forgiveness] is part of the process of repentance. If one harmed another person, it is appropriate that he should seek reconciliation. Therefore, it is logical that if asking forgiveness will cause more pain, one is not obligated to do so. And since reconciliation is not essential [in this process of repentance], this person can achieve atonement [even without reconciliation].<sup>34</sup>

Unlike R. Feldman, who argues that this halacha underscores that forgiveness can be placed in the hands of human beings,<sup>35</sup> in R. Weiss's view, only G-d can be the true source of atonement. Based on this premise, he argues that in all of the above cases, if it is impossible for the individual to seek forgiveness from his fellow, whether because it would be offensive to the victim, because he is no longer living, or because the victim is a minor, atonement is still possible. R. Feldman's stance regarding atonement is a "human-centered" position, while R. Weiss's approach can be termed "G-d-centered."

In the most extreme reading of R. Weiss, one may not even need to ask forgiveness from the person he harmed. The Mishnah in Yoma cited above emphasizes the hypocrisy of asking G-d to forgive one's sins without asking for forgiveness from those whom he has wronged. Fundamentally, though, asking for forgiveness is not integral to the *teshuvah* process. Therefore, when it would cause the other person pain, it is best not to ask them for forgiveness. Even if we do not assume this reading of R. Weiss's position, it is clear that he believes that if one takes the necessary steps that are within his ability, such as by asking for a general forgiveness on

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33. A reference to *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 606:1.

34. *Minchas Asher, Parshas Kedoshim*, 41:5, p. 269.

35. *The Right and the Good*, p. 140.

*erev yom kippur* from someone he wronged, there is nothing lacking in his *teshuvah*. R. Weiss notes the language used in the Mishnah:

Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between a person and G-d, [but] for transgressions between a person and another, Yom Kippur does not atone until he appeases the other person.

The Mishnah says, “until he appeases his friend,” not, “until his friend is appeased.” In other words, Yom Kippur will not atone for sins as long as a person does not do whatever is reasonably within his ability to appease those whom he has wronged. However, once that effort has been made, Yom Kippur, as well the *teshuvah* process between man and G-d, can achieve atonement.<sup>36</sup>

### **Beat Them To It: R. Mordechai Willig’s Position**

In his treatment of this issue, R. Mordechai Willig concurred with R. Weiss’ approach. R. Willig added that whenever anyone asks him for forgiveness, he always “beats them to it.” He makes a point of forgiving them immediately - even before they have a chance to tell him what they did. R. Willig noted that if one takes the position of the Chafetz Chaim, it appears that in order for there to be a valid reconciliation, the offended party needs to know how he was wronged and only then grant forgiveness. Therefore, unlike the approach of the Chafetz Chaim, in practice, R. Willig rules like the position of R. Weiss and R. Dessler’s version of R. Salanter’s ruling. This appears to be the view of most contemporary *poskim*.

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36. Interestingly, R. Weiss felt that since the views expressed in the names of the *Chazon Ish* and R. Elyashiv were inconsistent with this approach to atonement, they should be dismissed as unreliable. “When there are very unreasonable things quoted in the name of *gedolim*,” he said, “I prefer to say that one should simply not believe the quote, because I want to uphold my utmost admiration for those *gedolim*. If I feel accepting what is quoted in their name would diminish my admiration for them, then I prefer to say I do not believe what is quoted in their name. And since I don’t believe it anyway, I prefer not saying who quotes [them].” Obviously, one needs to be a person of great Torah stature to judge what is “very unreasonable.”

R. Willig marshaled multiple rulings of the *Shulchan Aruch* in support of his position. First, like R. Weiss, R. Willig pointed to the practice of asking a maximum of three times for forgiveness.<sup>37</sup> According to R. Willig, this halacha shows that forgiveness in some cases is not fundamental as long as a concerted effort towards reconciliation was made. Second, as we noted earlier, the *Shulchan Aruch* instructs going to the grave of someone from whom he needs to ask forgiveness.<sup>38</sup> Seemingly, the victim in this case cannot forgive anymore, and yet one is instructed to make a trip to the grave. Again, we see that a person is required to do as much as he can to seek reconciliation; perhaps the point of going to the gravesite is to demonstrate the sincerity of his yearning for forgiveness. However, fundamentally, atonement must come from G-d.<sup>39</sup>

It appears from R. Weiss, R. Willig, and the consensus of *poskim* that although *mitzvos bein adam lachaveiro* are of prime importance, *teshuvah* is a process between man and G-d. It is inappropriate for someone to ask forgiveness from G-d when he has wronged someone and not sought forgiveness. However, when he has done all he can, and asking forgiveness is not possible, Hashem will grant atonement. In the words of *Chazal*, "The Torah was not given to angels."<sup>40</sup>

In sum, according to the strict reading of R. Salanter's position, argued for by R. Daniel Feldman, there are scenarios in which a person can be barred from atonement. This was also the view of other *Acharonim* (e.g. the *Minchas Chinuch* and R. Elyashiv). In the realm of *bein adam lachaveiro*, according to this view, it is not

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37. *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 606:1.

38. *Ibid.* 606:2.

39. In conversation with R. Aviyam Levinson, R. Willig admitted that this proof is inconclusive. The purpose of requesting forgiveness from the deceased may be to demonstrate contrition or sincerity, even in the absence of actually procuring forgiveness. If so, it does not indicate one way or another if that forgiveness is *sine qua non* for atonement. Alternatively, perhaps, in some esoteric sense, the deceased can indeed grant forgiveness. This would explain the position of the *Yam Shel Shlomo* (cited by the *Magen Avraham* 606:7) that if necessary, one may send an agent to the departed's grave instead of going himself. There seems to be little or no contrition or sincerity expressed when requesting forgiveness by proxy from the deceased. The only logical possibility is that the deceased can indeed grant some form of forgiveness. This question requires further study.

40. *Yoma* 30a.

G-d alone who atones for man's sins; man, too atones by granting forgiveness. Therefore, if, for some reason, human forgiveness is not attainable, atonement also remains unattainable. However, R. Asher Weiss argues for a "G-d-centered" approach to atonement. In the most ambitious reading of his position, R. Weiss argues that when it will cause pain to the victim, one need not ask for forgiveness. This is because for R. Weiss, ultimately, it is always G-d who grants atonement, even in the realm of *bein adam lachaveiro*. We find somewhat of a middle ground in the position of R. Mordechai Willig and other *poskim* who advocate asking for generic forgiveness that allows the victim to forgive without causing him pain.

Yom Kippur is a gift. By giving us this day of *teshuvah*, Hashem gives us an opportunity every year to restore life and vitality to our relationship with Him. We are also called upon to rectify our relationships with others. But, as we have seen, this is not always so simple. Human beings and their interactions are complex. As long as we put in effort, do *teshuvah*, and do as much as we can to sensitively ask forgiveness from others, Hashem will grant us a full *kapparah*. With Hashem's help, may we all merit to achieve a true and genuine atonement this year.