

Rodef Shalom School Program

Transforming School Conflict Through Rabbinic Text

Yom Kippur Unit: Teacher's Guide



Revised: June 2015



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מעל ארבעה עשר ימים לא יאמר אדם שיש לו חטא



Yom Kippur: Asking Forgiveness

Opening note to teacher:

The links for the havruta handout and the source sheet that accompany this lesson can be found below.

Lesson Goals:

Students will...

- Gain a better understanding of the concept of atonement according to Jewish tradition and how it connects to the values of Rodef Shalom.
- Learn a few practical ways that might help them make amends with their friends and family members.

Today's Question/s (recommended for the board):

- How do the concepts of *teshuva*, atonement and peace connect to one another?
- What could/should we do to get forgiveness from our friends and family?

Optional Starter Activity:

- Ask students to look for little words within the word 'atonement' (the word *atonement* originated from three parts: at – one – ment). Ask students: *What idea about Yom Kippur can we learn from the origin of the word 'atonement'?* We learn that we should try to get to a point where we feel "at one" with our fellow human beings and ourselves. This sense of completeness, of wholeness, is also reflected in the root of *shalom*, which is *shalem*—complete.

Students engage in text study:

At this point students can engage with the provided texts (see the havruta handout and/or the source sheet) in whatever way (or combination of ways) that the teacher deems most appropriate based on the timing of the lesson, level of the students and nature of the content. Students can study: independently, in pairs, small groups, or as a class (the teacher might consider giving the students a choice of their preferred method). The teacher can break up the text study by inserting questions or activities of his/her own design throughout.

Big ideas that should emerge from students' text study:

While the texts included in this lesson are rich and can be interpreted and utilized in a variety of ways, here are some of the big ideas/answers that we hope would emerge from students' study and discussion (in addition, of course, to other ideas that you and your students might generate):

- God cannot forgive someone for a wrongdoing that they did against another person. Only the wronged person can offer forgiveness. We must actively try to amend for the wrongdoings we committed against other people.



- The Rambam's notion of needing to discuss a wrongdoing is interesting; payment of money or a one sided apology is not enough. Both the Hebrew צריך לרצות and the loose English translation 'discuss' imply that the wrongdoer actually has to understand the position of the person he/she hurt and is responsible for making sure that they actually feel appeased.

Suggested Activities and/or Assessments for the close of the lesson:

- *The Forgiveness Letter:* Our rabbis tell us that there are four steps to seeking forgiveness. First, we must feel bad for what we have done. Second, we must admit the wrong thing. Third, we reconcile by asking forgiveness and making up for the wrong thing that was done. And fourth, we commit to not doing the wrong behavior again. Have students write a letter to someone they wronged during the year—a close friend, a relative, a teacher, or another student. The letter should contain the four steps. It should begin by saying the wrong thing that was done, admitting it was wrong and expressing remorse. Next, the letter should ask for forgiveness and might offer other forms of compensation. Finally, the letter should include a commitment not to do this wrong thing again. While e-mail or other digital methods are certainly effective, this activity might be more meaningful if done using traditional letter writing. The school could supply envelopes and stamps and a central "mail box" could be set up outside the school office as a way of encouraging participation.
- *Make a "Kabalah" Bulletin Board:* In this case, 'kabalah' does not refer to Jewish mysticism but rather it is the name of the fourth step of the *teshuvah* process—resolving not to repeat one's misbehavior. Have students work in groups of two or three and make lists of misbehaviors typical in middle school. Then, for each item on the list, have students think of some proactive step they could take to prevent students from repeating the misbehavior. For example, students might write: *when someone starts to get on your nerves, excuse yourself so that you don't say anything harmful*. Each group should write their suggestions in marker and post on a "Kabalah" bulletin board in the main hallway.
- Ask students whether they think that truly forgiving others is more difficult than asking others for forgiveness, less difficult, about the same, or they are not sure. Have students indicate which of the four options they most agree with by raising 1,2,3, or 4 fingers and break the students up into homogeneous groups based on their positions. Give them a few minutes to discuss why they chose to be there. After a few minutes switch the groups to heterogeneous groupings so students can hear the positions of students who feel differently.

Dear Mia,

We used to be best friends, but since our fight last January, I have been doing everything I can to make you feel miserable. I have talked about you behind your back and insulted you to your face. And worst, I made sure you felt left out. This was really wrong, and I deeply regret what I have done. I know it will be hard to undo the damage I have done, but I am hoping that you will find it in your heart to forgive me. I am going to be sure to tell everyone what a great person you are and that I was the stupid one. I promise to never do these things ever again. Do you forgive me? Can we be friends again?

Your friend,
Sophie

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Yom Kippur Unit: Student Havruta Handout



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כַּעֲלֵמֵי אֵשׁ וְכַעֲלֵמֵי מַיִם



Yom Kippur: Asking Forgiveness

The texts and questions below are provided to help you think more about the possible connections between being a pursuer of peace and Yom Kippur.

<p><u>A. Mishnah Yoma chapter 8</u> [3rd century, Land of Israel] Transgressions that are between a person and G-d, Yom Kippur atones for them. Transgressions that are between a person and one's fellow person Yom Kippur does not atone for, until s/he reconciles with his/her fellow.</p>	<p><u>משנה יומא ח'</u> עבירות שבין אדם למקום, יום הכפורים מכפר. עבירות שבין אדם לחבירו, אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה את חברו.</p>
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- 1) What two kinds of transgressions does this *mishnah* distinguish between? Why do you think this is the case?
- 2) How does one atone (or repent) for each of these two different kinds of transgressions?

<p><u>B. Rambam, Laws of Repentance 2:9</u> [12th century, Spain and Land of Israel] Repentance and the Day of Atonement atone only for [certain] sins committed against God...Sins such as injuring, cursing, stealing, etc., which are committed against one's fellow man are never atoned for until one has paid any necessary fines to the person against whom one sinned, and discussed it with him. Even though one may have paid back any money due, one still has to discuss the sin with him and ask for forgiveness. Even if one teased someone else just verbally one has to appease him and make up for it, in order that he will be forgiven.</p>	<p><u>רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ב':ט'</u> אין התשובה ולא יום הכפורים מכפרין אלא על עבירות שבין אדם למקום אבל 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. אע"פ שהחזיר לו ממון שהוא חייב לו צריך לרצותו ולשאל ממנו שימחול לו, אפילו לא הקניט את חבירו אלא בדברים צריך לפייסו ולפגע בו עד שימחול לו.</p>
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- 3) The Rambam mentions different ways that one must try to atone for a wrongdoing against a fellow person. What are they?
- 4) Do you think that these are appropriate ways of atoning? Would you add anything or change anything to what the Rambam mentions?



C. Aruch HaShulchan, Orach Chaim 606:6

[19th century, Lithuania]

And it is a custom of some people on the eve of Yom Kippur, that each person asks his friend for forgiveness even if one did not insult the other one at all, but possibly hurt the honor of the other.

ערוך השולחן, אורח חיים,

תרו"ד

ונהגו בערב יום הכפורים כמה אנשים לבקש אחד מחבירו מחילה אף שלא חירפו זה לזה כלל אלא שמא פגעו בכבוד זה לזה.

- 5) Can you explain why this custom might have developed? Is this a custom you might adopt? Why or why not?

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Yom Kippur Unit: Source Sheet



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מעלה אשכולות



Yom Kippur: Asking Forgiveness

Mishnah Yoma chapter 8

[3rd century, Land of Israel]

Transgressions that are between a person and G-d, Yom Kippur atones for them.

Transgressions that are between a person and one's fellow person Yom Kippur does not atone for, until s/he reconciles with his/her fellow.

משנה יומא ח'

עבירות שבין אדם למקום, יום הכפורים מכפר. עבירות שבין אדם לחבירו, אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה את חברו.

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רמב"ם הלכות תשובה פרק ב':ט'

אין התשובה ולא יום הכפורים מכפרין אלא על עבירות שבין אדם למקום אבל 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. אע"פ שהחזיר לו ממון שהוא חייב לו צריך לרצותו ולשאל ממנו שימחול לו, אפילו לא הקניט את חבירו אלא בדברים צריך לפייסו ולפגע בו עד שימחול לו.

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[Additional Source]

Yom Kippur Machzor, Tefilat Zakkah

I extend complete forgiveness to everyone who has gossiped about me or even slandered me. So, too, to anyone who has injured me, whether physically or financially,...[and for any human sins between a person and their neighbor – except for money that I wish to claim and that I can recover by law, and except for someone who sins against me and says "I will sin against them and he will forgive me" – except for these I grant complete forgiveness; and may no person be punished on my account. And just as I forgive everyone, so may You grant me favor in every person's eyes, so that they will grant me complete forgiveness.

מחזור יום כיפור (תפילה זכה)

והנני מוחל במחילה גמורה לכל מי שחטא נגדי, בין בגופו ובין בממונו, או שדבר עלי לשון הרע ואפלו הוצאת שם רע, וכן לכל מי שהזיק לי בגופי או בממוני, ולכל חטאת האדם אשר בין אדם לחברו, חוץ מממון אשר אני [רוצה לתבעם ו]אוכל להוציא על פי דין, וחוץ מי שחוטא כנגדי ואומר אחטא לו והוא ימחל לי, וחוץ מאלו אני מוחל במחילה גמורה ולא יענש שום אדם בסבתי. וכשי שאני מוחל לכל אדם, כן תתן את חני בעיני כל אדם שימחלו לי במחילה גמורה.