

An Angel's Teshuvah

An angel once disobeyed God. When she was brought before the throne of judgment, she begged for forgiveness. "Give me a chance to do *teshuvah*," she pleaded. "Your *teshuvah*," the Holy One announced, "will be to return to earth to find the most precious thing in the world and then bring it back to Me."

For three years, the angel patiently roamed the earth. Finally, on a battlefield, she heard a dying soldier call out for water. Then she saw his wounded friend crawl to him to give him a drink from his canteen. When the last drop of water touched his parched lips, the angel seized the canteen and brought it to the Holy One.

God said to the angel, "This is very precious but it is not the most precious thing in the world."

The angel returned to earth and roamed the world for another three years until she came to a hospital where a doctor lay dying of a disease she had gotten caring for a patient. The angel caught her last breath and brought it to the Holy One.

Again God said to the angel, "This is very precious but it is not the most precious thing in the world."

The angel returned to earth to continue the search. Suddenly, she saw a mean-looking man holding a sword. He was walking to the house of his enemy to kill him. A light was on in the house so the man peered inside. He saw his enemy's wife putting her little son to sleep. She was teaching him to say the bedtime prayers. As he watched them, the man's heart melted. He remembered how his own mother had cared for him and taught him these same prayers. When a tear fell from his eyes, the angel caught it and flew directly to the Holy One.

God smiled and spoke. "Indeed, this is the most precious thing in the world. *Teshuvah* opens the gates of heaven."

The Rabbis teach: "Who is truly mighty? The one who makes an enemy a friend."

עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֲנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּכַחַשׁ וּבְכָזָב,
וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֲנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּלִצּוֹן.
עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֲנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּשִׂיחַ שְׁפִתוֹתֵינוּ,
וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֲנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּעֵינַיִם רְמוֹת.
עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֲנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּקִלּוֹת רֹאשׁ,
וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאֲנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּרִיצַת רַגְלַיִם לְהָרַע.
וְעַל כָּלֵם אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת, סִלַּח לָנוּ, מְחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֵּר-לָנוּ.

V'al kulam Eloha s'lihot, s'lah lanu, m'hal lanu, kaper lanu.

The Hebrew word *het* is usually translated as "sin." A more correct translation is "missing the mark." Think of a target. Plan to hit more "bulls'-eyes" next year.

May it be Your will, *Adonai*, the God of our ancestors, to forgive our sins and grant us a new beginning, for we have missed the mark.

For the sin we have sinned against You...

- by acting selfishly.
- by hurting others.
- by not respecting parents and teachers.
- by lying.
- by being greedy.
- by gossiping.
- by acting irresponsibly.
- by cheating.
- by rushing to do evil.

Add your own words here...

For all these sins, God of forgiveness, forgive us, pardon us, and grant us a new beginning.

We are seated.