

Elul 2022

Week 3 Primary Source Text

Tomer Devorah ch. 1

הג' - ועובר על פשע - זו מדה גדולה שְהָרִי אֵין הַמְחִילָה עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ אֱלֹא עַל יְדוֹ מִמַּשׁ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּדֹכְתִיב (תהלים קל, ד) כִּי עִמָּךְ הַסְּלִיחָה וְגו' וְיִמָּה הִיא הַסְּלִיחָה שֶׁהוּא רוּחַץ הָעוֹן כְּדֹכְתִיב (ישעיה ד, ד) אִם רַחֵץ אֶדְנִי אֶת צִאת בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן וְגו' וְכֵן כְּתִיב (יחזקאל לו, כה) וְזָרַקְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם מִיַּם טְהוֹרִים וְגו' וְהִינוּ וְעוֹבְרֵי עַל פְּשַׁע שׁוֹלְחִים מִיָּמֵי רַחֲצָה וְעוֹבְרֵי וְרוּחַץ הַפְּשַׁע.

וְהִנֵּה מִמַּשׁ כְּדַמּוֹת זֶה צָרִיךְ לִהְיוֹת הָאָדָם שֶׁלֹּא יֹאמֵר וְכִי אֲנִי מְתַקֵּן מֵה שֶׁפְּלוֹגֵי חֲטָא אוֹ הַשְּׁחִית, לֹא יֹאמֵר כֶּךָ שְׁהָרִי הָאָדָם חֲטָא וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּעֶצְמוֹ שֶׁלֹּא עַל יְדֵי שְׁלִיחַ מְתַקֵּן אֶת מַעֲוֹת וְרוּחַץ צִאת עוֹנוֹ.

וּמִכָּאן יִתְבַּיֵּשׁ הָאָדָם לְשׁוּב לְחֲטָא שְׁהָרִי הַמְּלָךְ בְּעֶצְמוֹ רוּחַץ לְכֻלּוֹ בְּגָדָיו.

The third: "And passes over transgression" - this is a great trait, for the forgiveness is not through an emissary but rather through the hand of the Holy Blessed One, as it is written (Psalms 130:4), "For with You is forgiveness, etc." And what is that forgiveness? That God washes away the transgression, as it is written (Isaiah 4:4), "When the Lord will have washed away the stain of the [sin of the] daughters of Zion, etc." And so [too,] it is written (Ezekiel 36:25), "I will sprinkle upon you purifying waters, etc." And this is [the meaning of] "and passes over transgression" - God sends forth cleansing waters, passes over and washes [away] the transgression.

Behold, a person should [behave] in this likeness [to God] – one should not say, "Shall I fix what this person has sinned or destroyed?" One should not say this; for behold, a person sins and the Holy Blessed One – Godself [*b'Atzmo*], and not through an emissary - fixes the crookedness/sin, and washes away the stain of the transgression.

And from here (i.e., a further lesson to draw), a person should be ashamed to sin again; for behold, the Sovereign, Godself, washes the dirt of the sinners' clothing.

Elul 5782

Tzelem Elokim - The Likeness of God

Study Questions:

1. Why do you think the text emphasizes the fact that the forgiveness comes directly from God (not from an intermediary)? What might this mean for your own *teshuva* practice?
2. The author seems to anticipate that, when we've been harmed, we may be tempted to say, "Shall I fix what this person has sinned or destroyed?" - that is, Why should I forgive before the other has done their own *teshuva*? Do you recognize this question? What makes this hard to work with?
3. The text makes numerous references to "washing away" the stain of transgression. How can you "wash away" the stain of another's sin? What might this mean in your own experience?
4. How can these lessons inform your Elul and your preparation for the High Holidays?