



Vidui

Attah Notein Yad
and
Attah Hivdalta

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Pardes
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The Model of Confession on Yom Kippur Bavli, Yoma 87b

ת"ר מצות וידוי ערב יוה"כ עם חשכה אבל אמרו חכמים יתודה קודם שיאכל וישתה שמא תטרף דעתו
בסעודה ואע"פ שהתודה קודם שאכל ושתה מתודה לאחר שיאכל וישתה שמא אירע דבר קלקלה
בסעודה ואף על פי שהתודה ערבית יתודה שחרית שחרית יתודה במוסף במוסף יתודה במנחה במנחה
יתודה בנעילה

The Rabbis taught in a *baraita*: The obligation of confession [takes effect] on Erev Yom Kippur eve when darkness falls.

But the Sages said: We should confess [on Yom Kippur eve] before eating and drinking in case we become confused at the meal. And although we confessed before eating and drinking, we confess again after eating and drinking, in case something untoward happened during the meal itself.

And although we confessed during *arvit*, we confess again during *shacharit*; although we confessed during *shacharit*, we confess during *musaf*; although we confessed during *musaf*, we confess during *mincha*; although we confessed during *mincha*, we confess during *ne'ilah*.

והיכן אומרו יחיד אחר תפלתו ושלח צבור אומרו באמצע

Where [in the liturgy] do we say confession? An individual says it after his *Amidah*, and the Sh'liach Tzibbur says it in the middle.

מאי אמר אמר רב אתה יודע רזי עולם ושמואל אמר ממעמקי הלב ולוי אמר ובתורתך כתוב לאמר ר'
יוחנן אמר רבון העולמים

ר' יהודה אמר כי עונותינו רבו מלמנות וחטאתינו עצמו מספר רב המנונא אמר אלהי עד שלא נוצרתי
איני כדאי עכשיו שנוצרתי כאילו לא נוצרתי עפר אני בחיי ק"ו במיתתי הרי אני לפניך ככלי מלא בושה
וכלימה יהי רצון מלפניך שלא אחטא ומה שחטאתי מרוק ברחמיך אבל לא ע"י יסורין והיינו וידויא
דרבא כולה שתא ודרב המנונא זוטא ביומא דכפורי

What does one say?

Rav said: You know the secrets of the universe.

Shmuel said: From the depths of the heart.

Levi said: And in your Torah it is written, saying [followed by 'For on this day, God will atone for you, to cleanse you...']

Rabbi Yochanan said: Master of the Universe [*lo al tzidkotteinu...*]

Rabbi Yehuda said: For our iniquities are too many to count and our sins are too great to number.

Rav Hamnuna said: My God, before I was formed I was unworthy [of being created]. Now that I have been formed, it is as if I had not been formed. I am dust while alive, how much more so when I am dead. See, I am before You like a vessel filled with shame and disgrace. May it be Your will that I may sin no more, and as for those which I have committed before You, erase them in Your compassion, and not by suffering.

This was the confession that Rava used all year round; and that Rav Hamnuna Zuta said on Yom Kippur.

אמר מר זוטרא לא אמרן אלא דלא אמר אבל אנחנו חטאנו אבל אמר אבל אנחנו חטאנו תו לא צריך
דאמר בר המדודי הוה קאימנא קמיה דשמואל והוה יתיב וכי מטא שליחא דצבורא ואמר אבל אנחנו
חטאנו קם מימם אמר שמע מינה עיקר וידוי האי הוא

Mar Zutra said: These [versions of *vidui*] are said only if we have not said: But we have sinned.

If we said, 'But we have sinned', it is not necessary to say anything else.

For bar Hamdudei said: I was standing before Shmuel and he was sitting. When the Sh'liach Tzibbur reached came to 'But we have sinned', Shmuel stood. Learn from this that this is the essence of confession.

As it became in the liturgy

Two set confessions, both Geonic in origin, both in the plural – on behalf of all Israel/each other.

1. Vidui Zuta - Ashamnu

First found in Seder Rav Amram (9th Century CE), though probably earlier and contains echoes of Daniel. Recited in each service of Yom Kippur, and classically also said at Mincha before Yom Kippur.

Also said at the death bed, by a couple before their wedding.

Alphabetic Acrostic with two extra confessions for the letter tav

Recited standing, slightly bent over, beating the heart

Midrash Rabbah on Kohelet 7:2

אמר רבי מנא והחי יתן אל לבו אלו הצדיקים שנותנין מיתתן כנגד לבן
ולמה כותשין על הלב מימר דכלה תמן

Rabbi Mana said: THE LIVING SHALL TAKE IT TO HEART (Kohelet 7:2): These are the righteous who set their death against their heart; and why do they beat their heart? To say, "All comes from there."

Preceded by introductory paragraph beginning 'Tavo L'fanecha'

This includes the Talmudic phrase 'Aval anachnu chatanu' (as identified as key by Mar Zutra and in the story of Shmuel)

Followed by a series of short paragraphs beginning with 'Sarnu mi'mitzvotcha'

Following liturgy includes the beginning of the vidui of Sh'muel 'Atah yodea razei olam'

2. Vidui Rabbah – Al Chet

Recited in each of the services of Yom Kippur except for Ne'ilah (and, traditionally, by bride and groom on their wedding day).

Developed over time – began as a statement of categories of sin (still found included as part of the text) then further specific 'offences' were added.

Achai Gaon (8th Century) – eight

Amram Gaon (9th Century) – twelve

Maimonides (12-13th Century) – twenty-four

Simchah ben Shmuel of Vitry (11th-12th Century) – thirty-six

Current Ashkenazi – forty-four (alphabetic acrostic with two per letter)

Current Sephardi – forty-four (alphabetic acrostic then reverse alphabetic acrostic)

Reform machzor – thirty six

Divided (in Ashkenazi tradition) by a one-line petition for forgiveness (V'al Kulam)

Followed in Orthodox machzorim by 'V'al chata'im' (and for the sins deserving the four types of death penalty).

Bavli, Yoma 87b continued...

מאי נעילת שערים רב אמר צלותא יתירתא ושמואל אמר מה אנו מה חיינו

What is *ne'ilat sh'arim* - the closing of the gates?

Rav said: It is an extra *tefillah*.

Shmuel said: It is 'What are we, what are our lives?'

מיתיבי אור יוה"כ מתפלל שבע ומתודה בשחרית מתפלל שבע ומתודה במוסף מתפלל שבע ומתודה
במנחה מתפלל שבע ומתודה בנעילה מתפלל שבע ומתודה וחזרתם בידוי דברי ר"מ
וחכמים אומרים מתפלל שבע ואם רצה לחתום בידוי חזרתם תיובתא דשמואל תיובתא

The gemara raises an objection from a *baraita*:

On the night of Yom Kippur, we pray seven [blessings in the *Amidah*] and confess;

during shacharit, we pray seven and confess;

during musaf, we pray seven and confess;

during mincha, we pray seven and confess;

and during *ne'ilah*, we pray seven and confess and end with the confession; this is the view of Rabbi Meir.

And the Rabbis say: We pray seven and if we wish to end with confession, we end this way.

This is a refutation of Shmuel? It is a refutation.

עולא בר רב נחית קמיה דרבא פתח באתה בחרתנו וסיים במה אנו מה חיינו ושבחיה
רב הונא בריה דרב נתן אמר ויחיד אומרה אחר תפלתו

Ulla bar Rav went down to lead the *ne'ilah* prayer before Rava.

He opened with: You have chosen us, and concluded with: What are we, what are our lives?

And Rava praised him.

Rav Huna, son of Rav Natan, said: An individual says it after his *Amidah*.

As it became in the liturgy Ashamnu *then* Attah Notein Yad and Attah Hivdalta

אַתָּה נוֹתֵן יָד לְפֹשְׁעִים, וְיְמִינְךָ פְּשׁוּטָה לְקַבֵּל שׁוֹבִים.
וְתִלְמַדְנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְהַתְּנוּת לְפָנֶיךָ עַל כָּל
עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ, לְמַעַן נִחְדָּל מֵעֲשֹׂק יָדֵינוּ, וְתִקַּבְּלֵנוּ
בְּתִשׁוּבָה שְׁלֵמָה לְפָנֶיךָ כְּאֲשֵׁים וְכַנִּיחוּתִים
לְמַעַן דְּבָרֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתָּ: אֵין קֶץ לְאֲשֵׁי חֹבוֹתֵינוּ,
וְאֵין מִסְפָּר לְנִיחוּתֵי אֲשַׁמְתָּנוּ.

You reach out Your hand to transgressors, and Your right hand is open to receive those who return.

You have taught us, Adonai, our God, to admit before You all of our sins so that we refrain from the injustice of our hands; so that You will accept us in perfect return before You, like fire-offerings and the sweet odour [of sacrifice].

For the sake of Your word which You spoke. There is no end to the offerings required [to atone] for our faults, and there is no number for the sweet smelling offerings [needed to atone] for our guilt.

God wants to help us by reaching out at this moment

No amount of sacrifice would be enough, but even still, God cares

וְאַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ שְׂאֲחֲרִיתָנוּ רָמָה וְתוֹלָעָה, לְפִיכָךְ הִרְבִּיתָ סְלִיחוֹתֵינוּ.

But You know that our end is the worm and decay, therefore You have increased the ways to our forgiveness.

We are merely mortals

מָה אָנוּ. מָה חַיֵּינוּ. מָה חֲסִדָּנוּ. מָה צְדָקָנוּ. מָה
יְשׁוּעָתָנוּ. מָה כֹּחַנוּ. מָה גְבוּרָתָנוּ. מָה נְאֻמָּר לְפָנֶיךָ
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

What are we? What is our life? What is our loving-kindness? What is our justice? What is our deliverance? What is our strength? What is our power? What can we say before You, Adonai, our God, and God of our ancestors?

הֲלֹא כָּל הַגְּבוּרִים כְּאֵין לְפָנֶיךָ. וְאֲנָשֵׁי הַשָּׁם כְּלֹא הָיוּ.
וְחֲכָמִים כְּבִלִי מִדַּע. וְנְבוֹנִים כְּבִלִי הַשֹּׁפֵל. כִּי רֹב
מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם תִּהְיוּ. וַיְמִי חַיֵּיהֶם הֶבֶל לְפָנֶיךָ. וּמוֹתָר הָאָדָם
מִן הַבְּהֵמָה אֵין. כִּי הַכֹּל הֶבֶל

For before You are not the powerful as nothing, the famous as if they had never existed, the learned as if without knowledge, and the intelligent as if without insight? To You most of their actions are pointless and the days of their life shallow. Even the superiority of humans over the animals is nothing. For everything is trivial.

And are insignificant before God

אַתָּה הַבְּדִלְתָּ אֲנוֹשׁ מֵרֹאשׁ, וַתְּפִירָהוּ לַעֲמֹד לְפָנַי.
 כִּי מִי יֹאמֶר לְךָ מָה תַּפְעֵל,
 וְאִם יֵצֵדֶק מִה יִתֵּן לְךָ:
 וַתִּתֵּן לָנוּ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּאַהֲבָה אֶת יוֹם הַפְּכָרִים הַזֶּה,
 קֶץ וּמַחִילָה וּסְלִיחָה עַל כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ
 לְמַעַן נִחְדֹּל מֵעֲשֹׂק יָדֵנוּ, וְנָשׁוּב אֵלֶיךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת חֲסִידִי
 רְצוֹנְךָ בְּלִבְבָּ שְׁלָם:

**Yet, You have set people apart from the beginning
 and recognized them to stand before You.**

For who could say to You what You should do, and even the righteous, what do they give to You? Yet You, Adonai, our God, gave us with love, this Day of Atonement to be the end [of sin], for forgiveness, and pardon for all our iniquities. So that we may refrain from the injustice of our hands, and return to You, to fulfil Your will with a perfect heart.

And yet we matter to God enough to deserve this day.

וְאַתָּה בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים רַחֵם עָלֵינוּ, כִּי לֹא תַחֲפוֹץ
 בְּהַשְׁחָתַת עוֹלָם.
 שְׁנֹאֲמַר

דְּרָשׁוּ יְהוָה בְּהַמָּצְאוֹ, קִרְאָהוּ בְּהִיוֹתוֹ קְרוֹב:
 וְנֹאֲמַר

יַעֲזֹב רָשָׁע דְּרָכּוֹ, וְאִישׁ אֶזְנוֹ מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ, וַיָּשָׁב אֶל יְהוָה
 וִירַחֲמֵהוּ, וְאֵל אֱלֹהֵינוּ כִּי יִרְבֶּה לְסִלּוֹחַ:

**And You in Your abundant mercy, have compassion
 on us, for You do not desire the destruction of the
 world.**

As it is stated

SEEK THE ETERNAL WHILE GOD MAY BE FOUND, CALL TO GOD WHILE GOD IS NEAR (Isaiah 55:6)

And it is said

LET THE WICKED ABANDON THEIR WAYS, THE SINFUL THEIR PLANS. AND LET THEM RETURN TO GOD, FOR GOD WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON THEM. TO OUR GOD, WHO IS ABUNDANT IN FORGIVENESS (Isaiah 55:7)

God wants us to make
 Teshuvah for the sake of
 the world

וְאַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת תַּנּוּן וְרַחוּם, אֶרְךָ אַפִּים וְרַב חֶסֶד
 וְאַמֶּת, וּמִרְבָּה לְהִיטִיב.

For You are a God of pardon, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth, and abundant in goodness.

וְרוּצָה אֶתָּה בְּתְשׁוּבַת רָשָׁעִים וְאֵין אֶתָּה חֹפֵץ
בְּמִיתָתָם.
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר
אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם חִי אֲנִי נְאֻם אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה, אִם אֲחַפֵּץ בְּמוֹת
הָרָשָׁע כִּי אִם בְּשׁוּב רָשָׁע מִדֶּרֶכוֹ וְחָיָה.
וְנֶאֱמַר
שׁוּבוּ שׁוּבוּ מִדֶּרֶכֵיכֶם הָרָעִים וְלִמָּה תָמוּתוּ בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

You want the repentance of the wicked, and do not desire their death.

As it is said:

SAY TO THEM: AS I LIVE — DECLARES THE ETERNAL GOD, I HAVE NO DESIRE FOR THE DEATH OF THE WICKED, BUT ONLY THAT THE WICKED TURN FROM THEIR WAYS AND LIVE (Ezekiel 33:11)

And it is said,

RETURN, RETURN, FROM YOUR EVIL WAYS, THAT YOU MAY NOT DIE, HOUSE OF ISRAEL?"(ibid)

God wants us to make Teshuvah for the sake of our own lives.

וְנֶאֱמַר
הֲחַפֵּץ אֲחַפֵּץ מוֹת רָשָׁע נְאֻם אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה, הֲלֹא בְשׁוּבוֹ
מִדֶּרֶכֵּי וְחָיָה:
וְנֶאֱמַר
כִּי לֹא אֲחַפֵּץ בְּמוֹת הַמֵּת נְאֻם אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה. וְהָשִׁיבוּ
וְחָיו:

And it is said,

IS IT MY DESIRE THAT A WICKED PERSON SHALL DIE?

DECLARES THE ETERNAL GOD. IT IS RATHER THAT THEY SHALL TURN BACK FROM THEIR WAYS AND LIVE (Ezekiel 18:23)

And it is said:

FOR IT IS NOT MY DESIRE THAT ANYONE SHALL DIE, DECLARES THE ETERNAL GOD. REPENT, AND LIVE! (Ezekiel 18:32)

Here are some proof texts

כִּי אַתָּה סֹלֶחַ לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וּמַחֲלֵן לְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל דּוֹר
וְדוֹר וּמִבְּלָעֲדִיד אֵין לָנוּ מֶלֶךְ מוֹחֵל וְסוֹלֵחַ
אֶלָּא אַתָּה:

For You are the One who pardons Israel, the One who forgives the Tribes of Yeshurun in every generation. And besides You we have no Sovereign Who forgives and pardons. Only You.

God forgives Israel