

BS"D. Yiskor sermon, Yom Kippur 5777

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WHY SO MUCH CONFESSING?! ARE WE THAT BAD?!

Why so much confessional during the service?

Our G-d is not a G-d of vengeance but a loving father ...

So why the constant repetition of confessions during Yom Kippur, 10 times throughout the day!

It's not what Jews do...

Joke on airplane there's bad turbulence, captain announces things aren't looking too good, is there any person of faith on the flight. Man raises his hand, I'm a rabbi. Good, do something religious. Rabbi gets up and takes up a collection.

That's a Jewish thing...

Or whip out a good meal of gefilte fish and some brisket...

But confession... what are we - goyim or something?...

Besides, Jews aren't very good about confession...

Joke about the guy who came to confess and when the priest asked him if he is Jewish he said how do you know. The priest answered "**You're the first person to come into the confessional with his lawyer**"

Joke about Rabbi who took over the priest in the confessional booth. Priest first showed him how it works, a few men come by saying they were unfaithful 3x, priest say put \$10 in the basket and say 3 heil mary's... Rabbi says he's got the idea. Next Sunday, man comes by, says he was unfaithful once... rabbi is stumped... says: **OK, go back... today it's 3 for \$10...**

Some say it's for exercise... because Jews don't really do much exercise...

Jew to friend: Yeah I tried the weights thing... but it was heavy...

Jew to friend: I use my treadmill every day, I hang my shirt on it...

So we go to shul and klop... and stand up, sit down, fall to the floor, noch ah klop...

So Jews aren't good at this confession thing... so why so much of it on Yom Kippur...

BTW I'll let you in on a secret in case you don't know: We do this confession thing every day during our prayers! We're always klapping... not just once a year...

Is G-d so vengeful that we better confess to stay on His good side?

And are we so bad that we need to keep on confessing?

It seems so negative and depressing...

Judaism is a relationship, with G-d

In a relationship there are 3 components:

You who is having the relationship

The other party in your relationship

And the quality of the relationship... how deep it is...

All 3 – will illustrate why in this relationship there's constant introspection, and self-betterment

And it's not negative and depressing; it's actually uplifting and empowering

1 – Who is the other party in this relationship – G-d!

Not just another Joe.... Obviously we're expected to look our best, to polish up...

Most people polish their shoes once every couple weeks, some important people every week, the president's secret service every day...

Take hotels for example:

2 Star hotel they dust the furniture and polish the brass once a month...

4 star maybe once a week

5 Star – every day!

A little crazy but what do you think?

It's the FOUR SEASONS.... It's gotta be perfect!

In an ordinary small business we don't check ourselves so often. In a Fortune 500 company we're constantly working on ways to improve the product line...

In a relationship with G-d... it's no wonder we keep polishing ourselves... it's not to put us down, but to make us realize who we're involved with here...

Which brings me to point 2 –

If G-d chose to be in a relationship with you, you must be someone special, you must have HUGE potential! So more is expected of you...

The constant confession is meant to remind us we're expected to be better...

Everyone knows I love baseball metaphors...

What does the coach say to the little leaguer during batting practice: You're doing great... keep it up

What does the coach say to the major leaguer batting practice: You gotta stop doing that... you could be hitting much harder... you should be able to place the ball where you want it... come on, you're better than this...

When I read the prayers and the constant berating... what it's saying to us is:

C'mon YID, you're a big leaguer, don't just coast along in life,

Don't just live through life trying to make a living, pay your bills and put your kids through college

So they can in turn pay their bills and put their kids through college

So that the next generation can continue the same unending chain of meaningless pursuit...

I mean- making a living and putting our kids through college is a good thing... but that can't be the meaning of life...

You're a human being created in the image of G-d. Plus you're a Jew, a child of Abraham and Sarah, the people of the Bible, the people of eternity, G-d's chosen people to bring the world to its purpose...

C'mon YID, you're a big leaguer! Step up to the plate and do your job...

You're a big leaguer... get up there and hit hard... swing for the fences...

Make this the year when you live every day with love and a sense of inner peace and joy, appreciating the day for the gift that it truly is...

Make this the year when you break out of habits that are unhealthy for body, mind and soul...

When you do away with negative thought processes that stifle your growth and don't allow to be all you can be and celebrate each day!

Live each day with a real, ever deepening relationship with your spouse... and you're your children...

Keep reminding yourself and your children that we're not just here to survive the duration, that each of us matters, each of us was created with a purpose, to make a difference

So make each day count, by filling it with acts of goodness and kindness...

Inspire yourself and your family to identify deeply with our people,

To take responsibility to continue the golden chain of Jewish observance,

To stand with Israel and to support Israel, our eternal homeland, in every way, especially during these times of the reemergence of the Big Lie that Hitler made popular 70 years ago and is now very much in vogue once again...

Make it the year when you'll celebrate Shabbat and holidays, a little more than last year...

Lighting the Shabbat Candles with the eyes covered, holding a brimming cup of wine for Kiddush...

Maybe even be at shul for the FAMILY FIRST monthly Shabbat

Have your family observe the one Shabbos with hundreds of thousands the world over

Maybe more learning with JLI or other torah classes...

And... perhaps most importantly - have at least one conversation with G-d... every day... wrapped in the Tallis and Tefillin...

So confessional prayers? Introspection? Not because we're bad... but because we can be so much more!

And finally – the third point – how deep is the relationship!

Judaism describes our relationship with G-d as an intimate relationship between husband and wife

And a essential bond between children and their Father in Heaven...

So how close is this relationship? It's VERY CLOSE!

And in a close relationship even small things matter

Don't say good morning to a stranger, nothing happened. To your spouse, hurtful...

Forget your friend's birthday, not nice but ok... forget your wife's birthday... capital offense...

Say or do something slightly dismissive, or hang up the phone abruptly

... to a stranger, it's meaningless

... to a friend it doesn't feel great

... to your child... you'll be thinking about it all day...

So the confession is Hashem's way or reminding us how close He is to us

He's our Father in Heaven...

Everything matters...

He gets bent out of shape when do the wrong thing...

My Tzivya at age 2 decided to ignore me... it crushed me...

I come home, I'm the rabbi, involved with so many people throughout the day and so many important things... so a 2 year old ignored me, big deal...

Really?! Trust me, I was crushed!

So I decided I'm gonna play her game... she ignores me, I'll ignore her...

It worked like magic!

Sometimes G-d does the same thing with us... we wonder why He isn't answering our prayers...

Because we've been ignoring Him, and He wants to get our attention...

Because no matter how big He is and how small we are, He's our daddy, we're His kinderlach, He cares deeply about our every action...

Because He cares deeply about our happiness

Story Meir in middle of the night

He's hungry, make him "broitie" (Yiddish for bread or toast) with butter, I'm exhausted, it's 4am, I got a big day ahead of me... he's sitting calmly, taking his time, bite by bite...

It's as if I'm not there... it's like I'm household staff...

Finishes one, "more broitie"... I make him another...

I sit down next to him, I'm enjoying just sitting and watching this little thing...

I thought I'd engage him:

"Meir ken tattie hobin a shtikel broitie" – "Could Totty (dad) have a piece of your toast?"

My thought was to engage him, plus to teach him to share...

Looks at me from the corner of his eye... he wasn't happy...

I ask again... slowly, ever so slowly, tears off but I mean the tiniest piece of the corner of the bread, and very softly pushes it in my direction...

I started to laugh... I almost woke up the whole house... c'mon kid... don't be so cheap... I gave you the whole thing... and if you want more you know all you gotta do is ask.. but no, he's not giving so fast...

Friends, at that moment I realized the whole G-d relationship...

We're the kids, little tiny kids, he's the TOTTY...

He wants certain thing of us...

a portion of our earnings to charity,

to celebrate one day a week with Him,

to talk to Him once in a while in prayer...

We complain: What do you want from me... c'mon...

But it's not that He needs it from us, it's all His...

He gave us everything we have, life, health, wisdom to be successful, opportunities, it's all His!

He gave us the "broitie" ... all He's asking for is a little piece of what He gave us...

Hashem wants us to enjoy all of life's blessings. He wants us to sit at the table of life enjoying our "broitie" - He wants us to have every blessing imaginable, health, happiness, prosperity, you name it!

All He wants in return is to be able to sit with us at the table and not be ignored... He doesn't want to feel like staff... He doesn't want to be thought of only when something's gone wrong and we issue our complaint... He wants to engage us. He wants to be involved in our lives...

So confession in Judaism is not about vengeance... it's about love!

On all three levels of the relationship – to recap

There's YOU, the other party, and the quality of the relationship.

On all three accounts, confession and introspection are not negative and depressing, but uplifting and empowering!

The other party – is G-D – the Creator of the Universe... it's ok to polish up, it makes sense to constantly improve the product... its Five Star, it's Fortune 500!

YOURSELF – you're His chosen one... You're a Major Leaguer... It makes sense we expect more from ourselves...

And the quality of the relationship – it's intimate, it's deep, it's a Father and His children, it behooves us to be more careful with our actions...

That's why we SING these prayers...

Sing: Ashamnu... Veal Kulam...

It's not sad or depressing... it's uplifting to realize the Creator of the universe actually cares deeply about everything I do or don't do...

It's G-d saying to each of us: You mean the world to me...

C'mon, mein kind... you could do better than that...

SHANA TOVA!