

וידוי

Vidui · Confession

וידוי זוטא
Vidui Zutaוידוי רבה
Vidui Rabbah

Vidui Zuta — The Short Confession

*Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu v'imoteinu,
tavo l'fanecha t'filateinu;
v'al titalam mit'chinateinu.*

*Anachnu azei fanim ukshei oref
lomar l'fanecha,*

*Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu
v'imoteinu:*

Tzadikim anachnu, v'lo chatanu.

Aval anachnu chatanu.

אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ,
תָּבֹא לְפָנֶיךָ תְּפִלַּתֵנוּ,
וְאַל תִּתַּעַלֵּם מִתְחַנְתָּנוּ.
אֲנַחְנוּ עֲזֵי פָנִים וְקִשֵׁי עֶרֶף
לוֹמַר לְפָנֶיךָ,
יְי אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ:
צַדִּיקִים אֲנַחְנוּ וְלֹא חָטָאנוּ.
אָבֵל אֲנַחְנוּ חָטָאנוּ.

Our God and God of all generations, may our prayers reach Your presence.

And when we turn to You, do not be indifferent.

Adonai, we are arrogant and stubborn, claiming to be blameless and free of sin.

In truth, we have stumbled and strayed. We have done wrong.

Ashamnu, bagadnu, gazalnu, dibarnu dofi.

He-evinu, v'hirshanu, zadnu, chamasnu,

tafalnu sheker. Yaatznu ra, kizavnu,

latznu, maradnu, niatznu, sararnu, avinu,

pashanu, tzararnu, kishinu oref. Rashanu,

shichatnu, tiavnu, ta-inu, titanu.

אֲשָׁמְנוּ, בָּגַדְנוּ, גָּזַלְנוּ, דִּבַּרְנוּ דֹּפִי.
הֵעֵוִינוּ, וְהִרְשַׁעְנוּ, זָדְנוּ, חָמַסְנוּ,
טָפַלְנוּ שֶׁקֶר. יַעֲצֵנוּ רָע, כִּזְבְּנוּ,
לָצְנוּ, מָרַדְנוּ, נִאֲצְנוּ, סָרַרְנוּ, עֵוִינוּ,
פָּשַׁעְנוּ, צָרַרְנוּ, קִשִּׁינוּ עֶרֶף. רָשַׁעְנוּ,
שִׁחַתְנוּ, תִּיַּעַבְנוּ, תִּעֵיבנוּ, תִּעַתְעַבְנוּ.

Of these wrongs we are guilty:

We betray. We steal. We scorn. We act perversely.

We are cruel. We scheme. We are violent. We slander.

We devise evil. We lie. We ridicule. We disobey.

We abuse. We defy. We corrupt. We commit crimes.

We are hostile. We are stubborn. We are immoral. We kill.

We spoil. We go astray. We lead others astray.

Short Confession

Long Confession

ASHAMNU

When I was young
 And learned the alphabet,
 Life was open to me
 “A” was full of aspiration
 “B” was for beauty; “C” for confidence
 And “D” for dreams
 And so on through the list—no fewer than twenty-six
 opportunities, twenty-six possibilities.
 And yet I fear that with the passage of time,
 I’ve squandered them, creating instead
 “A”s of apathy, “B”s of brusqueness, and “C”s of coarseness.
 Help me, then, to return to that innocence.
 Let the letters be letters once again,
 And let them rise to the heavens
 And form into the words
 That You know I wish to say.

OF THESE WRONGS WE ARE GUILTY (*facing page*). Why do we confess to wrongs we have not personally committed? The 16th-century mystic Rabbi Isaac Luria teaches that the people of Israel may be likened to a body of which every Jew is a living part. The vitality of the whole depends upon the health of every organ and limb. That is how deeply we are connected to one another. Therefore, each individual sin inflicts damage on the whole organism, and all of us share responsibility for healing the body of Israel.

ASHAMNU. By Rabbi Alan Cook (b. 1970).

AND LEARNED THE ALPHABET. The confessions that are structured as alphabetical acrostics are intended to express, through their A to Z completeness, the totality of the congregation’s sins. They do not replace our own personal confessions; rather, they remind us to expand upon them, as we aim for a complete recollection of our wrongful acts—an effort that Rabbi Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) calls praiseworthy (*Hilchot T’shuvah* 1.1).

*Sarnu mimitzvotecha umimishpatecha
hatovim, v'lo shavah-lanu.*

V'atah tzadik al kol haba aleinu,

ki emet asita, vaanachnu hirshanu.

Mah nomar l'fanecha, yosheiv marom?

Umah n'sapeir l'fanecha, shochein sh'chakim?

Halo kol hanistarot v'haniglot

atah yodei-a.

Our turning away from Your mitzvot and laws of goodness is a hollow pursuit.
You are just, concerning all that happens in our lives.
Your way is the way of truth, while ours leads to error.
What can we say to You whose existence is beyond time and space?
What words of ours can reach Your realm
beyond the clouds, beyond heaven itself?
Every hidden mystery, every revelation — surely, You know them all.

Atah yodei-a razei olam;

v'taalumot sitrei kol chai.

Atah chofeis kol-chadrei-vaten;

uvochein k'layot valev.

Ein davar ne-elam mimeka;

v'ein nistar mineged einecha.

Uvchein y'hi ratzon mil'fanecha,

Adonai Eloheinu v'Elohei avoteinu

v'imoteinu:

shetislach lanu al kol chatoteinu,

v'timchal lanu al kol avonoteinu,

ut-chapeir lanu al kol p'sha-einu.

You know the secrets of the universe and the secrets of the human heart.
You know and understand us, for You examine our inner lives.
Nothing is concealed from You, nothing hidden from Your sight.
Eternal One, our God and God of our ancestors,
we pray that this be Your will: forgive all our wrongs,
pardon us for every act of injustice, help us atone for all our moral failures.

סָרְנוּ מִמִּצְוֹתֶיךָ וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ
הַטּוֹבִים, וְלֹא שָׁוָה לָנוּ.
וְאַתָּה צַדִּיק עַל כָּל הַבָּא עֲלֵינוּ,
כִּי אֱמֶת עָשִׂיתָ, וְאַנְחָנוּ הִרְשַׁעְנוּ.
מִה נֹאמֵר לְפָנֶיךָ, יוֹשֵׁב מְרוֹם,
וּמִה נִסְפֵּר לְפָנֶיךָ, שׁוֹכֵן שְׁחָקִים.
הֲלֹא כָּל הַנִּסְתָּרוֹת וְהַנִּגְלוֹת
אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ.

וידוי זוטא
Vidui Zuta

וידוי רבה
Vidui Rabbah

אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ רְזֵי עוֹלָם,
וְתַעֲלוּמוֹת סִתְּרֵי כָּל חַי.
אַתָּה חוֹפֵשׁ כָּל-חַדְרֵי-בֶטֶן,
וּבוֹחַן כְּלִיּוֹת וְלֵב.
אֵין דָּבָר נֶעְלָם מִמֶּךָ,
וְאֵין גִּסְתָּר מִגִּגְד עֵינֶיךָ.
וּבְכֵן יְהִי רְצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ,
יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
וְאִמּוֹתֵינוּ:
שְׁתַּסְּלַח לָנוּ עַל כָּל חַטֹּאתֵינוּ,
וְתִמְחַל לָנוּ עַל כָּל עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ,
וְתִכְפֹּר לָנוּ עַל כָּל פְּשָׁעֵינוּ.

Short Confession

Long Confession

Study Text on T'shuvah

Resh Lakish said: "Great is repentance, for it transforms one's deliberate sins into merits" (Talmud, *Yoma* 86b). In general, we think of repentance as a way of achieving expiation for the wrongs we have done. But Resh Lakish's teaching points us in a new and surprising direction. . . . The focus is not on changing the past, but on defining a new direction for the future. For *t'shuvah*, after all, is ultimately about changing ourselves, not only clearing our record of past deeds that we are now ashamed of. Through the process of *t'shuvah* we evolve morally, becoming the sort of people who can no longer conceive of falling back into the old patterns of misconduct that characterized our past. But how did this transformation occur if not through the examination of that very misconduct? Transgressions can become the springboard for tremendous moral growth, if only we do the hard work of *t'shuvah* that enables us to learn from our mistakes.

In this way, repentance enables us to turn our moral liabilities into assets. Rabbi Soloveitchik captures the spiritual dynamic of this process:

The years of sin are transformed into powerful impulsive forces which propel the sinner toward God. Sin is not to be forgotten, blotted out or cast into the depths of the sea. On the contrary, sin has to be remembered. It is the memory of sin that releases the power within the inner depths of the soul of the penitent to do greater things than ever before. The energy of sin can be used to bring one to new heights.

It would be preposterous if an accountant suggested that a debit was really a credit. But what is impossible on a financial balance sheet is eminently doable in the context of soul reckoning. Indeed the very goal of *t'shuvah* is to transform the sins of the past into the roots of a new life. In a profound sense, repentance does turn our vices into virtues.

—Louis Newman (b. 1956)

RESH LAKISH SAID. This Talmudic teaching, as interpreted by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (1903–1993), shows us the possibility of elevating past misconduct into the inspiration for a new and better life. The process of *t'shuvah* helps us understand the roots of our wrongdoing, perceive the damage we have done, and address the character flaws that led us to sin, thus freeing us to pursue goodness with renewed vigor. Soloveitchik argues, in effect, that those who have genuinely engaged in *t'shuvah* will live with more integrity and moral strength than they did before the sin.

Vidui Rabbah — The Long Confession

וידוי זוטא
Vidui Zuta

וידוי רבה
Vidui Rabbah

For these sins, our God, we ask forgiveness:

<i>Al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha</i>	עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
<i>b'zadon uvishgagah;</i>	בְּזָדוֹן וּבִשְׂגָגָה,
<i>v'al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha</i>	וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
<i>b'dibur peh.</i>	בְּדַבּוּר פֶּה.

The ways we have wronged You deliberately and by mistake;
and harm we have caused in Your world through the words of
our mouths.

<i>Al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha</i>	עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
<i>b'imutz halev;</i>	בְּאִמּוּץ הַלֵּב,
<i>v'al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha</i>	וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
<i>b'tifshut peh.</i>	בְּטִפְשׁוֹת פֶּה.

The ways we have wronged You by hardening our hearts;
and harm we have caused in Your world through careless speech.

<i>Al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha</i>	עַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
<i>b'chachash uvchazav;</i>	בְּכַחַשׁ וּבְכַזָּב,
<i>v'al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha</i>	וְעַל חַטָּא שְׁחַטְאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
<i>birchilut.</i>	בְּרַכִּילוּת.

The ways we have wronged You through lies and deceit;
and harm we have caused in Your world through gossip and
rumor.

FOR THESE SINS. As each harmful act is mentioned, both here and in the Short Confession (*Ashamnu*, page 82), some worshipers gently strike their hearts with the right hand. The Midrash identifies this not as an act of self-punishment but as a way of identifying the heart (that is, desire and impulse) as the source of sin, taking personal responsibility, and showing remorse (*Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 7.9). Rabbi Israel Meir Kagan (1838–1933), known as the Chofetz Chayim, taught: “God does not forgive us when we strike our hearts; rather, we are forgiven when our heart strikes us — that is, when we feel the pangs of conscience for our wrongdoing.”

Short Confession

*Al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha*עַל הַטָּא שְׁחַטָּאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
בְּפִלְלוֹת,

Long Confession

*biflilut;**v'al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha*וְעַל הַטָּא שְׁחַטָּאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
בְּזִלְזוּל הַוָּרִים וּמְוָרִים.*b'zilzul horim umorim.*

The ways we have wronged You by judging others unfairly;
and harm we have caused in Your world through disrespect to
parents and teachers.

*Al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha*עַל הַטָּא שְׁחַטָּאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
בְּוִדּוּי פֶּה,*b'vidui peh;**v'al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha*וְעַל הַטָּא שְׁחַטָּאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
בְּהוֹנָאת רֵעַ.*b'honaat rei-a.*

The ways we have wronged You through insincere apologies;
and harm we have caused in Your world by mistreating a friend or
neighbor.

*Al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha*עַל הַטָּא שְׁחַטָּאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
בְּחֹזֶק יָד,*b'chozek yad,**v'al cheit shechatanu l'fanecha*וְעַל הַטָּא שְׁחַטָּאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ
בְּמִשְׁאֵא וּבְמַתָּן.*b'masa uvmatan.*

The ways we have wronged You through violence and abuse;
and harm we have caused in Your world through dishonesty in
business.

*V'al kulam, Elo-ah s'lichot,*וְעַל כָּלֶם, אֱלֹהֵי סְלִיחוֹת,
סַלַח לָנוּ, מַחַל לָנוּ, כַּפֵּר-לָנוּ.*s'lach lanu, m'chal lanu, kaper-lanu.*

For all these failures of judgment and will, God of forgiveness —
forgive us, pardon us, lead us to atonement.

THROUGH VIOLENCE AND ABUSE בְּחֹזֶק יָד. Such acts need not involve bodily harm. “Force may also be used in the market and with regard to people’s money or property. Withholding by force that which belongs to another or withholding wages due, misusing trust funds or clients’ investment monies, abusing charitable funds — all these are considered to be forms of violence.” (Meir Tamari, b. 1927; adapted)