

Ani le-Dodi ve-Dodi Li:

The Relationship Between Hashem and the Jewish People

The *gemara* cites R. Elazar's comment that whenever a *zivug rishon* (first marriage) ends in divorce, the Temple altar sheds tears:

אמר ר' אלעזר כל המגרש אשתו ראשונה
אפילו מזבח מוריד עליו דמעות.

R. Elazar says: *Anyone who divorces his first wife, even the altar sheds tears over him.*¹

What is the connection between a first marriage and the altar that accounts for this emotional response?

Maharsha offers a very technical explanation:

הוא משל כאלו המזבח בוכה עליו שהמגרש
אשתו אשת נעורים ממעט אכילת זבחים

דאשת הנעורים מצויה שמביאה קיני זיבה
ולידה למזבח.

*It is as if the altar itself cries, because one who divorces the wife of his youth (eshet ne'urim) diminishes the amount of sacrificial offerings, as it is common for the wife of one's youth to bring childbirth and zavah offerings on the altar.*²

A first marriage is more likely to produce children; a divorce thus likely reduces the quantity of childbirth and *zavah* offerings. In this respect, the altar is "upset," as its activity is diminished when a first marriage concludes in divorce.

While technically sound, this is obviously not a particularly inspirational interpretation. Elsewhere, Maharsha provides a more edifying



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explanation.³ The *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* often invoke the relationship between a husband and wife as a metaphor for the relationship between Hashem and *Kenesset Yisrael*, the Jewish People. Maharsha explains that *zivug rishon* and *zivug sheni* (a second marriage) parallel the First and Second Temples. The degree of sanctity and quantity of sacrificial activity in the First Temple far surpassed that of the Second Temple. This decline, which is emblematic of the very quality of this lofty relationship, prompts the altar to "weep."

In parallel fashion, it can be suggested that the altar bemoans the tragedy of the *egel ha-zahav*, the golden calf, which marred the initial idealistic bond between the Jewish People and God. At Sinai, the Jewish People accepted the Torah, and the building of the *Mishkan* was intended to be the marital *huppah* and their shared dwelling place. In the midst of the wedding itself, the Jewish People sullied the fledgling relationship and desecrated that exclusive bond by constructing the golden calf.⁴ In this metaphor, the distinction between *zivug rishon* and *zivug sheni* is a consequence of the sin of betrayal at the golden calf.

The Broken Relationship

The idea that discord between a husband and wife is symbolic of a disconnect – even a rupture – in the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish People resonates throughout Jewish theology. The poignant metaphor of a wayward wife repentantly returning “*le-ishah ha-rishon*,” to her first husband – symbolically casting *Klal Yisrael* as the wife who has betrayed Hashem, her faithful husband – is quite prominent throughout *Tanakh*.⁵

The marital bond paradigm of Hashem’s relationship with the Jewish People is, of course, the dominant metaphor of *Shir ha-Shirim*.⁶ It is therefore unsurprising that this *megillah* is also perceived as a source that calls for introspection and *teshuvah*, centering on the demands and opportunities of that relationship. In this context, we encounter a passionate declaration and articulation of devotion:

אני לדודי ודודי לי.

I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.
(*Shir ha-Shirim* 6:3)

Avudraham’s insight, which was popularly cited by subsequent halakhic

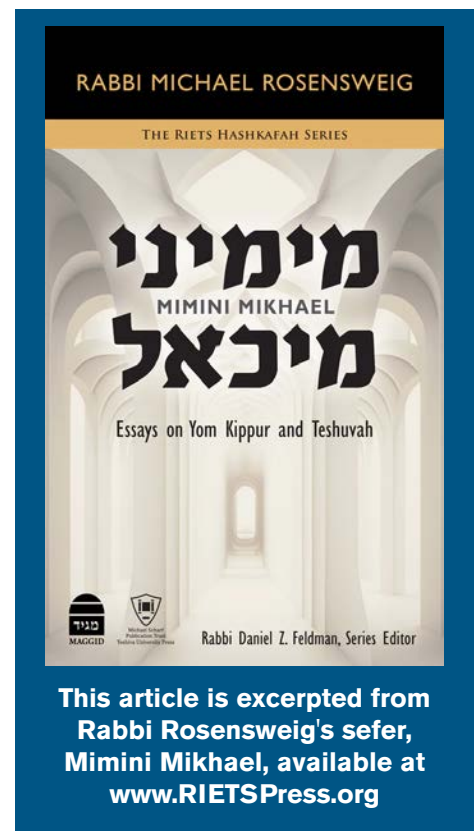
thinkers, is that the first letters of each word in this phrase form an acronym for לולא, the period that initiates intense reassessment of this special bond, thereby reinforcing this theme.⁷

Furthermore, the conceptual basis for the halakhic construct of *teshuvah mei-ahavah* (repentance motivated by love) is patterned after this seminal theme of *Shir ha-Shirim*.⁸ Rambam explains that *ahavat Hashem*, love of God, is the highest level of religiosity that one can attain. This ideal is depicted dramatically as an all-encompassing, even (constructively) obsessive relationship between a husband and wife, whose mutual devotion is absolute. That intensely single-minded admiration, devotion, and longing models how *Kenesset Yisrael* are to cultivate their feelings toward God.⁹ Indeed, *Bah* cites the verse “*Ani le-dodi ve-dodi li*” as reflecting the *teshuvah mei-ahavah* performed during Elul.¹⁰

Thus, the casting of the relationship between *het* and *teshuvah*, sin and repentance, in terms of returning to one’s first husband is a notion that deserves further attention and examination.

The Marital Relationship Between the Jewish People and Hashem

Let us begin by examining in greater depth the nature of this marital relationship. Following the pattern reflected by the numerous verses of *Tanakh*, metaphors describing this kind of marital relationship between the Jewish People and God abound in *Hazal*. *Hazal* understood the relationship between God and the Jewish People as a marriage in which the Torah serves as the marriage contract. Thus, for example, the *mishnah*



explains that “*be-yom simhat libo* – the day of his heart’s rejoicing” (*Shir ha-Shirim* 3:11) refers to the giving of the Torah,¹¹ and the *gemara* conflates the term “*morashah*” in the verse “*morashah kehillat Yaakov* – the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov” (*Devarim* 33:4) with the term “*me’orasah*,” connoting betrothal.¹²

The verses in *Hoshe’a* 2:21–22 also relate to this theme:

וארשתוך לי לעולם וארשתוך לי בצדק
ובמשפט ובחסד וברחמים. וארשתוך לי לעולם
וידעת את ה’.

*And I will betroth you forever; I will
betroth you with righteousness and justice,
and with goodness and mercy. And I will
betroth you with faithfulness; then you
shall know God.*

These verses, recited daily in the final phase of donning *tefillin* and constituting the denouement of *Sefer Hoshe’a*, further confirm the betrothal

motif. This is the foundation for the Jewish People's commitment to the Torah; sin constitutes betrayal of this commitment. The altar itself shedding tears reflects the lost potential of the unrealized ideal, an ideal and a commitment characteristic of a fully realized marital relationship.

However, the metaphor of "*Eilkhah na el ishi ha-rishon* – I will return to my first husband" (*Hoshe'a* 2:9) demands closer scrutiny. While the marital paradigm is suggestive, its application here, when assessed by normative Halakhah, seems problematic. After all, betrayal of the marital bond, as in the instance of *sotah* (marital infidelity), precludes resumption of the marriage. Furthermore, there is an equally important and related distinction between the relationship of God and the Jewish People and even the most idyllic bond between a husband and wife: There is no capacity for *gerushin* (divorce) between *Klal Yisrael* and God, but notwithstanding the tears of the altar, divorce is at times a necessary option in the human domain.

R. Soloveitchik expounded on this important discrepancy and suggested two explanations.¹³ First, although the partners in a human marriage aspire to become one entity (per *Bereishit* 2:24), the most personal dimensions of man's existential being cannot be fully shared with others.¹⁴ The unbridgeable gap that remains provides the philosophical justification or basis for divorce. Even the most ideal marriage does not provide complete unity, and an imperfect union can therefore be dissolved. This restriction does not exist in man's relationship with God, as there is no distance between Creator and creation that cannot be spanned through service of God. Although philosophically the chasm is greater

and the gulf more unbridgeable, Torah study and observance are the divinely ordained guide and mechanism to bridge this gap.

We perceive the Torah as a divine gift "*le-zakkot et Yisrael* – to give merit to Israel."¹⁵ Man's *devekut ba-Hashem* (cleaving to God) will by metaphysical and philosophical necessity always be circumscribed, but this gap is not a function of man's inability to share, but rather a fundamental theological reality of God's transcendence and infinitude. This is one distinction between human relationships and the relationship with God that precludes termination or divorce in the latter context.

The Rav advanced a second reason that the divine relationship is irrevocable. A meaningful physical human relationship is contingent upon sanctity, which is subject to desecration and destruction. For example, the Halakhah addresses the specific parameters of *ervat davar*, the grounds for divorce that constitute desecration in a framework of a marriage.¹⁶ However, when it comes to God's relationship with the Jewish People, that bond is suffused with sanctity to such an extent that it withstands any abuse or challenge that taints or compromises it. This singular bond is hypersensitive to impropriety, dysfunction, and desecration, but simultaneously invulnerable to permanent breach or irrevocable disrepair. This relationship is more easily damaged and disappointed, but it can never be absolutely profaned or irrevocably tarnished.

Rashi explains this phenomenon in his commentary on *Shir ha-Shirim*, where he explains that the impression of darkness is sometimes only superficial. The sanctity that is the basis of the relationship between God and the Jewish People is permanent, and there

therefore can be no *gerushin* between them.¹⁷ This idea is expressed by *Yeshayahu* (50:1) when he remonstrates with the nation, reminding them that God never divorced them; it was their improper behavior that alienated them from Him.

This relationship endures even in a time of destruction, when Jerusalem and *Klal Yisrael* are referred to figuratively as "*ke-almanah* – like a widow" (*Eikhah* 1:1), but never as a *gerushah*, a divorcee.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Jewish People is only compared to a widow: "*ke-almanah*"; they are not really widowed. Rashi, quoting the interpretation of the *midrash* based on a careful reading of this verse, explains that it is possible for the Jewish People to return to God precisely because the nation's situation also differs from the actual *almanah* analogy.¹⁹ In any case, irrespective of the transgression/desecration, there is certainly no equation to divorce. Indeed, even as the prophet *Hoshe'a* invokes the imagery of the marital paradigm of *erusin*, he declares unequivocally the divine promise that this particular betrothal is permanent: "*Ve-erastikh li le-olam* – And I shall betroth you to Me forever" (*Hoshe'a* 2:21).

In light of these explanations, the atypical elements and departures from classical marriage do not detract from the metaphor; they merely reflect an even more intense marital relationship. The discrepancies magnify further the characteristics associated with a marriage here.

Preserving the Relationship for the Long Term

There are consequences to the fact that the relationship between God and the Jewish People cannot be broken.

On the one hand, the permanence of God's relationship with the Jewish People means that there is always the possibility of return; the door is always open. That is, of course, a very good thing. But this positive consideration also heightens the expectations and raises the stakes of this bond, magnifying even minor grievances within this treasured exclusive relationship. If two people share a lesser, casual relationship, neither will be particularly sensitive to a petty offense; damage to the relationship would require a more grave or acute transgression. Such relationships are typically conducive to a wider latitude of perceived insults that likely inflict less pain. In contrast, longer-term, higher-stakes relationships require far greater existential investment and effort. They demand a greater appreciation of context, and they necessitate some compromise or, at minimum, coping mechanisms to overcome or integrate differences. Absent the luxury to simply withdraw and abandon the relationship, a long-term perspective must be cultivated, especially since the capacity to inflict pain and exacerbate conflict is heightened.

This is one way to interpret the verse in *Amos* (3:2):

רק אתכם יעדתי מכל משפחות האדמה על כן
 אפקד עליכם את כל עונותיכם.
*You alone have I singled out of all the
 families of the earth; that is why I will call
 you to account for all your iniquities.*²⁰

There are several levels of meaning to

this *pasuk*. First, as *Hazal* frequently explain, the stakes are not as high for the other nations of the world as they are for the Jewish People, because God does not supervise or scrutinize the conduct of other nations as extensively.²¹ As such, there is rarely an intermediate level of palliative or corrective punishment. Particularly egregious or degenerative transgressions typically engender severe punishment or even destruction, while relatively minor infractions are ignored or treated benignly. In sharp contrast, God scrutinizes *Klal Yisrael's* conduct and holds them extensively accountable. *Hazal* perceive this as an extraordinary kindness reflecting the depth of the bond, even as high expectations concomitantly may also imperil the relationship.²² Indeed, the constant supervision constitutes a further kindness in that it enables the neutralization of lesser offenses before they cascade into unmanageable, unforgivable offenses. Ultimately, this approach secures the Jewish People's future by providing a defusing mechanism and a safety net to protect the precious relationship.

It is common wisdom that the key to a successful marriage is to stay on top of petty misunderstandings, differences, or offenses, preventing them from festering. If one tarries too long in addressing minor but vexing issues, divisions and distances eventually grow and become unbridgeable and irreparable. The verse in *Amos* accentuates our good fortune by

telling us, “*Rak etkhem yadati mi-kol mishpehot ha-adamah.*” We alone, *Klal Yisrael*, have this special relationship with God. Therefore, “*efkod aleikhem et kol avonoteikhem*” – God is going to supervise us more closely.

An additional motif accentuated in this verse articulates the delicacy and high spiritual stakes of the relationship as a factor in dictating ubiquitous scrutiny. This scrutiny enables constructive accountability, which determines that even relatively peripheral violations of trust may constitute an act of *begidah* (betrayal).

The marital paradigm reflects this perspective acutely. This theme is conveyed by the Talmud's discussion of “*hikdiah tavshilo*” (she burned his food) and “*matza islah na'ah heimenah*” (he found a more beautiful woman than her) as stimuli for divorce. The *zivug rishon* should be preserved at almost all costs. One method of accomplishing this is to make sure that small matters are neutralized and are not conflated with larger issues.²³ At the same time, apparently minor infractions, and even petty annoyances like *hikdiah tavshilo* or superficial distractions like *matza islah na'ah heimenah*, may be valid grounds for divorce precisely because the standards defining this ideal relationship are lofty indeed. The fact that trivial factors and mercurial considerations sufficiently exacerbate what should be an existential, loyal, and substantive bond is inconsistent with these standards of sanctity. It reflects that the relationship is already deficient and has deteriorated.

Another implication of this verse from *Amos* is that strict halakhic accountability and the concrete threat of punishment for halakhic dereliction are actually advantageous for the Jewish People, as they encourage the critical



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process of *teshuvah* and repairing one's deeds. This is more important for the Jewish People's relationship with God than it is for the bond between God and the gentile nations. While repentance also applies to non-Jewish violations, its central role in Judaism defies comparison. *Teshuvah* for Jews is not merely the neutralization of outstanding sin; it is an indispensable process of *avodat Hashem* that entails broader introspection and enables a transgressor to redefine and elevate his relationship with God.²⁴

The bond with the Jewish People is marked by a history of disruption and reconnection, and it is, by definition, one that is irrevocable, no matter how intolerable present circumstances are.

This unique relationship between God and the Jewish People is further highlighted by Mabit's controversial assertion that notwithstanding the story of Yonah's mission to Nineveh, the obligation and parameters of *teshuvah* are unique to *Klal Yisrael*.²⁵ Mabit explains that Yonah does not actually call upon the people of Nineveh to repent; he simply informs them of the consequences of their transgressions. They take the initiative on their own to do *teshuvah* when they declare, "*Yashuvu ish midarko ha-ra'ah* – Let every man

repent from his evil ways" (*Yonah* 3:8). Yonah hesitated to go to Nineveh because he thought *teshuvah* would be ineffective, since the comprehensive concept of *teshuvah* is restricted to *Klal Yisrael*. Of course, this assumption about the effectiveness of *teshuvah* for non-Jews was an error. Nevertheless, it is conceivable that the obligation to repent and the scope and centrality of *teshuvah* derives from the singular bond with the Jewish People. Certainly the category of *teshuvah mei-ahavah* – which has the capacity to transform willful transgressions into merits²⁶ – is a special prerogative for the Jewish People alone.²⁷

The restriction of *teshuvah mei-ahavah* to the Jewish People stems from the dialectical nature of *teshuvah mei-ahavah*. The transformational power of *teshuvah mei-ahavah* appears to be a very surprising and even mystical idea. How could willful transgressions ever turn into merits? Upon further consideration, however, it reflects an intense and profound relationship that transcends particular moments and actions. The bond with the Jewish People spans thousands of years and includes inspiring highs, spiritual attainments, abysmal failures, and cataclysmic setbacks. It is marked by a history of disruption and reconnection, and it is, by definition, one that is irrevocable, no matter how intolerable present circumstances are.

Again, the marital paradigm is instructive. An acute sense of alienation that stems from and accentuates distance and separation can also serve as a powerful catalyst for greater appreciation of one's absent partner, which can facilitate the urgency to strengthen the bond. The crisis of impending profound loss can turn willful transgressions into merits,

particularly when there is a long and intense history that reinforces the absolute conviction of a future joint destiny. For this reason, a marital bond that is irrevocable, which survives even betrayal and precludes any kind of termination, certainly exemplifies this motif even more forcefully.

Understanding Teshuvah

The significance of the long-term underlying relationship also pertains to the components of *teshuvah*: *haratah* (regret), *bushah* (shame), and even *kabbalah al ha-atid* (commitment for the future). Although we become acquainted with these components of *teshuvah* at a formative age, reflecting upon them reveals that they are challenging to implement, contemplate, and even to comprehend.

True regret, for example, differs from a mere expression of "sorry." It requires profound, tortured regret and authentic humiliation, even mortification.

The goal is not simply to assuage one's guilt and move forward, but to powerfully experience the magnitude of one's transgression, stimulating an existential crisis. The *teshuvah* process entails a core assessment of purpose and meaning that is completely incompatible with a superficial disavowal of transgressions that retains a trace of ambivalence regarding the sinful experience. Ideal *teshuvah* requires *haratah* – an unequivocal rejection of past experience as well as a clear future commitment. The sense of profound regret relates not only to one's self-perception, but also to one's image and reputation in the eyes of those who command one's love and respect, stimulating *bushah*. Even more so, the sinner can hardly tolerate the fact that there is no refuge from divine omniscience.

Authentic agonizing over the implications of an aberrant past, coming to grips with one's capacity for egregious conduct, constitutes not only a vehicle to neutralize past infractions, as repentance is typically understood, but also a transformative cathartic act of *avodat Hashem* that elevates the true penitent.

Kabbalah al ha-atid similarly goes beyond even a sincere resolution about the future. It requires that the penitent thoroughly reinvent his persona and reorder his values so that his present status will conform to his enlightened new reality and his commitment will preclude any predictable future lapse. One might question how *kabbalah al haatid* can be required for *teshuvah*, inasmuch as it entails a commitment absent knowledge of what tomorrow will bring and what influences will come to bear. Indeed, even if one can make a *kabbalah la-hoveh*, a commitment for the present, can one really sincerely undertake a *kabbalah al ha-atid*? While *kabbalah al ha-atid* can be understood narrowly as a sincere commitment for the future, it too can encompass much more.

The rigorous *teshuvah* program, comprised of these steps, is significantly facilitated by a national relationship with God that is very intense and complex, that is deeply rooted in the past and that will confidently stretch forever into the future. The Rav spoke extensively about Halakhah's dynamic view of time. Time in Halakhah is not static,²⁸ and the boundaries of the past and the future are rather blurry. Halakhic time consciousness defines how we relate to our national history as well as to pivotal halakhic institutions. This is true of the catastrophic events of destruction and mourning, and is equally applicable to the foundational

experiences of Jewish life, such as the revelation at Sinai, which is referred to in the Torah in the present tense, and the exodus from Egypt, whose memory is ubiquitous.

This is further reflected in Moshe Rabbeinu's introduction of God to *Klal Yisrael* as the God who transcends time, as reflected in the Tetragrammaton (*Shemot* 6:6). For God, in a metaphysical sense, the past, present, and future converge; they are all one reality. His name connotes omnipresence in time – that He always was, is, and will be. The precise nuances of this concept are inherently beyond our cognitive grasp, but the Jewish People's relationship with God partakes of this permanence and timelessness. For this reason, the institution of *teshuvah* can redeem the past and even elevate it. The very notion of *kabbalah al ha-atid* would be more tenuous if the bond between God and the Jewish People could be terminated. However, this relationship is governed by the promise of “*ve-erastikh li le-olam* – I will betroth you to Me forever.” Because of the irrevocability of the relationship, which determines that at worst we will be *ke-almanah* and no more, because the relationship is enduring and timeless, it can withstand our limited knowledge and control of the future, enabling *kabbalah al ha-atid* to become a rigorous and integral part of *teshuvah*.

The Opportunity of Elul

The eternal nature of the relationship between God and the Jewish People has profound implications for the special *teshuvah* opportunity of the month of Elul. Avudraham's acronym explaining the name of the month has much more significance than is commonly thought; it reflects not only reciprocity, but also and especially the marital relationship

described in *Shir ha-Shirim*. It thereby reflects the breadth and depth of *teshuvah* as a process of *avodat Hashem* that stems from that special relationship. Bah's claim that *teshuvah mei-ahavah* is specifically connected to the *teshuvah* of Elul and precisely the theme of “*ani le-dodi ve-dodi li*” reinforces this motif.

This should motivate us to seize the opportunity of Elul. This period is dedicated not only to the narrow pursuit of merits that secure our physical survival, but is even more an opportunity to focus on this special bond that undergirds the purpose of existence and the concept of *teshuvah*.

Endnotes

1. *Gittin* 90b; *Sanhedrin* 22a.
2. *Hiddushei Aggadot*, *Sanhedrin* 22a.
3. *Hiddushei Aggadot*, *Gittin* 90b.
4. For an exploration of the significance of the *het ha-egel*, see my “*Chet ha-Eigel: A Catastrophic Theological and Ideological Lapse*,” available at torahweb.org.
5. See, for example, *Hoshe'a* 2:9: “*Eilkhah ve-ashuvah el ishi ha-rishon* – I will go and return to my first husband.”
6. See Rambam, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 10:3.
7. Avudraham, *Seder Tefillot Rosh ha-Shanah*, 260.
8. *Yoma* 86a.
9. *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 10:2.
10. Bah, *Orah Hayim* 581:2.
11. *Ta'anit* 4:8.
12. *Pesahim* 49b; *Sanhedrin* 59a.
13. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *Family Redeemed: Essays on Family Relationships* (NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 2000), 63.
14. In the history of creation, Havah was created from Adam (*Bereishit* 2:21). The *gemara* (*Ketubot* 8a) debates the details of this process, including whether man was created “*du partzufin*” or “*partzuf ehad*,” with two

faces or one. Ra'avad (introduction to *Ba'alei ha-Nefesh*) and Ramban (commentary on *Bereishit*) identify these factors as relevant to the respective capacities to facilitate an existential bond and forge a united identity with a spousal partner. This important conclusion is not incompatible with the Rav's insight that, in the final analysis, human beings cannot completely bridge this gap. Indeed, this manifestation of existential loneliness as part of the human condition is a prominent theme in the Rav's writings.

15. *Makkot* 3:16. Presumably, this merit transcends the means for reward and establishes the system of Halakhah as a Torah value system and as a methodology for bonding with God.

16. See *Gittin* 90a and *Family Redeemed*, 63–65, for the Rav's discussion of legitimate halakhic grounds for divorce. I hope to address elsewhere the relationship between the definition of *ervah* grounds for divorce and Halakhah's singular approach to the sanctity of marriage.

17. Rashi, *Shir ha-Shirim* 1:6, s.v. *she-shezafatni ha-shamesh*.

18. Note also Rambam's view in *Hilkhot Beit ha-Behirah* 6:15–16 that the sanctity of the *Mikdash* and Yerushalayim always remains because it is the sanctity of the *Shekhinah*.

19. Rashi, *Eikhah* 1:1, s.v. *haitah ke-almanah*. For the original *midrash*, see *Midrash Eikhah* 1:1:3.

20. The word “*yadati*” here has not only an intellectual connotation, but also an intimate connotation, consistent with its use throughout *Tanakh*. Interestingly, Rashi and *Metzudat David* interpret *yadati* as “*ahavti*,” “I have loved.”

21. This less ambitious spiritual expectation is, of course, also reflected in the differences between the seven-mitzvah and the six-hundred-thirteen-mitzvah system. It can be demonstrated that the discrepancy is qualitative and fundamental. Noahides are obligated to observe only a very basic and broad system of human religious values, while Halakhah is comprehensive and is intended to elevate all dimensions of Jewish life. Moreover, precisely when the two systems address the same broad obligation, the different spiritual orientations and

agendas are acutely evident; for example, see *Sanhedrin* 56b. I hope to address this topic more extensively elsewhere.

22. See *Yevamot* 121b and *Bava Kama* 50a: “*Ha-Kadosh Barukh Hu medakdek im sevivav ke-hut ha-se'arah* – God is scrupulous with those around him even to the extent of a hairsbreadth.” On the one hand, this reflects a higher expectation that triggers greater disappointment and disillusionment, but it also and especially reflects appreciation, generosity, and reward.

23. To be sure, a case could be made that if one has a closer relationship, one will be more forgiving with one's partner. Certainly this dialectic characterizes any intense, defining, authentic relationship. In one respect, greater flexibility is warranted, as one is loath to discard or abandon a precious and primary relationship that is rooted in the past and inspired by a vision of a common future. However, this is also offset by greater expectations and the increased sting of perceived disloyalty and betrayal. A long-term relationship, and even more so a permanent bond, requires a strict code of conduct and core rules of engagement to safeguard and nurture the relationship for the long term. See Rashi, *Devarim* 29:12: “Because He has promised it unto you and has sworn unto your fathers not to exchange their descendants for another nation, for this reason He binds you by these oaths not to provoke Him to anger since He, on His part, cannot dissociate Himself from you.” Rashi accentuates the need for meticulous boundaries to ensure the continuity and evolution of the bond. See also Radak, *Amos* 3:2, who emphasizes that the closer bond establishes that transgressions constitute a greater crime and that they engender greater pain given expectations and the emotional and historical investment that links the parties.

24. For a more extensive discussion of this topic, see the chapter “*Teshuvah and Viduy: The Ambitious Method of Coming Closer to Hashem*,” in *Mimini Mikhael*.

25. *Beit Elokim, Sha'ar ha-Teshuvah*, 13. While Mabit's approach is somewhat innovative, the existence of qualitative differences and distinctions between Jewish and non-Jewish repentance is a more mainstream notion that is acutely reflected in the Midrash and

other sources. See, for example, *Midrash Tanhuma, Devarim* 32:4. Mabit also presents the interesting suggestion that because of *Klal Yisrael's* added obligation of 613 *mitzvot*, they need the obligation of *teshuvah*, as they are bound to sin. Mabit discusses other distinctions between the repentance of Jews and that of non-Jews as well (*ibid.* 14), noting that for Jews, *teshuvah* is effective both in this world and the next, whereas for the rest of the nations, it merely wards off punishment in this world. Mabit further argues that for the Jewish People, a mass *teshuvah* by the public (partially) atones even for individuals who do not participate in that *teshuvah*, whereas for other nations, *teshuvah* benefits only those who actually perform it.

26. *Yoma* 86b.

27. This is explicit in Mabit. See also the chapter “*Teshuvah and Viduy*,” in *Mimini Mikhael*.

28. See R. Soloveitchik's discussion of time consciousness and Henri Bergson's notion of time in his essay “Sacred and Profane,” in *Shiurei ha-Rav*, ed. Joseph Epstein (New Jersey: Ktav, 1994), 14–25. Also see the many sources cited in Jeffrey Woolf, “Time Awareness as a Source of Spirituality in the Thought of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik,” *Modern Judaism* 32:1 (February 2012), 54–75.

29. For many, this concept is also the foundation for free choice, as it neutralizes the dilemma of divine foreknowledge. Free choice is the centerpiece of *teshuvah*, as reflected by Rambam's devotion of a chapter to it in the middle of *Hilkhot Teshuvah* (chapter 5). It should be noted that this is not Rambam's own solution to the quandary of divine foreknowledge.

