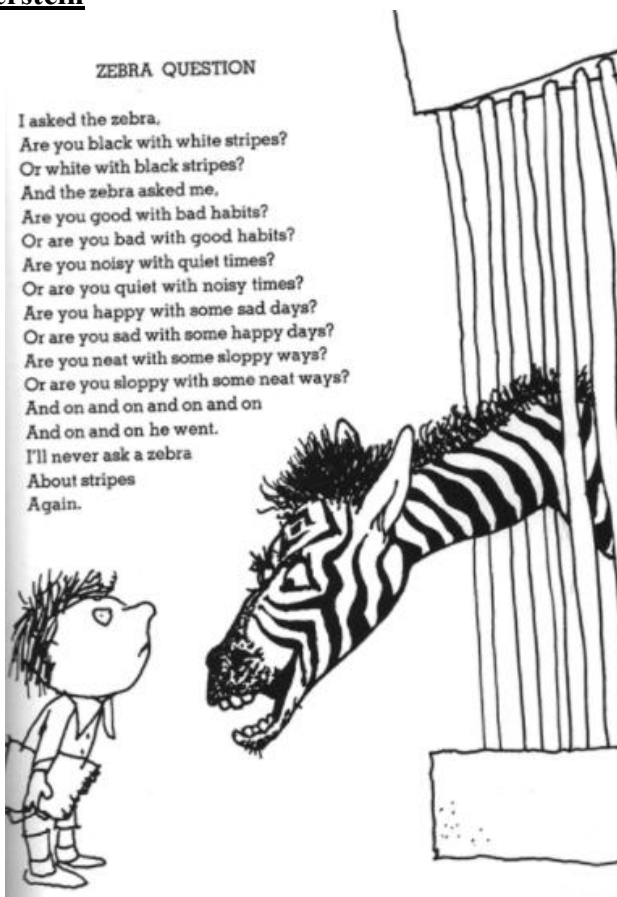


## **Fill Your Own Cup 5786**

### ***High Holiday Series – Session One – Can Repentance Change the Past?***

#### **1) Zebra Question – Shel Silverstein**



#### **ZEBRA QUESTION**

I asked the zebra,  
Are you black with white stripes?  
Or white with black stripes?  
And the zebra asked me,  
Are you good with bad habits?  
Or are you bad with good habits?  
Are you noisy with quiet times?  
Or are you quiet with noisy times?  
Are you happy with some sad days?  
Or are you sad with some happy days?  
Are you neat with some sloppy ways?  
Or are you sloppy with some neat ways?  
And on and on and on and on  
And on and on he went.  
I'll never ask a zebra  
About stripes  
Again.

#### **2) Rabbi David Wolpe, Jewels of Elul 2015, August 13, 2015**

<https://ritualwell.org/blog/jewels-elul-2015/>

We think of self-examination during the month of Elul as a path to repentance. But it is more fundamental than a step toward something else: We examine ourselves to know who we are. Our darkness and our sins are part of us, stitched into our soul. Without coming to grips with what you have done wrong, you can never understand your own soul.

Our character is reflected in our actions and our relationships. But neither is the whole story. Some revelations call for introspection. Who am I? Have I become the person I was meant to be or am I betraying or trivializing my destiny?

Look at a picture of your childhood self. Would that child be proud of the adult you have become? No one else on earth can answer that for you. Elul calls us to be deep sea divers into our souls...This is a time of year for repentance—acknowledgment, reparations, healing.

Equally it is a time for discovery. Only by apprehending who we are can we shape real hopes about who we might become. Forge ahead without fear into the mystery of your own soul and emerge wiser this year, and kinder.

### 3) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Yoma 86b

Reish Lakish said: **Great is repentance, as one's intentional transgressions are counted for them as mistaken transgressions**, as it is stated: *"Return, Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled in your iniquity"* (Hosea 14:2).

But, doesn't "iniquity" mean an intentional sin? Yet the prophet calls it stumbling!

**Is that so?**

Didn't Reish Lakish say: **Great is repentance, as one's intentional transgressions are counted for them as merits**, as it is stated: *"And when the wicked turns from his wickedness, and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live!"* (Ezekiel 33:19),

**This is not difficult: Here, when one repents out of love, their sins become like merits; there, when one repents out of fear, their sins are counted as mistaken transgressions.**

### תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא פו:

אמר ריש לקיש: גדולה תשובה  
שדונות נעשות לו כשגגות, שנאמר:  
"שובה ישראל עד ה' אלהיך כי כשלתי  
בעונך",  
הא "עון" — מזיד הוא, וקא קרי ליה  
מכשול.  
איני?!

והאמר ריש לקיש: גדולה תשובה  
שדונות נעשות לו כזכיות, שנאמר:  
"ובשוב רשע מרשעתו ועשה משפט  
וצדקה עליהם יחיה!"  
לא קשיא: כאן מאהבה, כאן מיראה.

### 4) Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik: On Repentance - Blotting Out or Elevating Sin

What does a sinner do when he comes to repent of the wrongdoings he committed in the past? There is a repentance which does allow for continuity and which accords recognition to the past, and there is also repentance whose goal is the utter annihilation of the evil in the soul of man... Sometimes one will "erase" certain years of a lifetime... But when one blots out a part of his past he also severs part of his being; his past shrinks and his personality is dwarfed. An "operation" of this sort is not easily carried out... I have seen penitents do just that - and the consequences? They become different and estranged from their families and friends, who appeared to them to belong to another eon, a different world...

All feeling and experiences connected with that period were dead to them. This is the first way of repentance, but there is another way - not by annihilating evil but by rectifying and elevating it. This repentance does not entail making a clean break with the past of obliterating memories. It allows man... to continue to identify with the past and still return to G-d in repentance... This way of repentance does not transform the penitent into "another". Here, there is no clean break between "this person" of yesterday and the "he/she" of today. It is not necessary to blot out and erase the past. The future can be built upon the foundations of the past. How so? **By elevating and exalting (sin). The tears of sin are transformed into powerful impulsive forces which propel the sinner towards God...** The penitent who does not wipe out the past nor tear the pages of sin from his memory but rather makes a point to use the memory of his sins to enhance his longings for holiness... such a person achieves the quality of repentance which elevates evil to a state of goodness.

### 5) Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook: Orot HaTeshuva

**6:2** - Teshuvah always resides in the heart; even at the moment of sin, the impulse for teshuvah is hidden in the soul, radiating influence which will be revealed later, with the arrival of the regret that calls for teshuvah. Teshuvah resides in the depths of existential life, for it preceded the universe, and before sin arrives its teshuvah is already prepared. Therefore, nothing in this universe is as certain as teshuvah, and, ultimately, all will be repaired.

**5:6** - A person's life is perfected by developing his inherent character. And since one's still-undeveloped character lacks insight, sin is guaranteed along this path of development. "There is no righteous person in the land who will commit good and not sin." [Kohelet 7:20] On the other hand, eliminating one's natural character in order to prevent sin is itself the greatest sin, [regarding which the Torah says of the nazir in Bamidbar 6:11,] "He shall atone for his sin against life." Therefore, Teshuvah repairs the damage [caused by sin and trying to be someone you are not] and restores the world and this person's life to its root, precisely by helping the inherent character to develop.