

'To Err is Human, to Forgive Divine': Really? Considering Divine Forgiveness in Philosophical and Jewish Perspective

Forgiveness & Atonement in Jewish Tradition: Philological & Philosophical Perspectives, Part III

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Divine Forgiveness in Jewish Tradition

1. ספר ויקרא פרק ד פסוק כ

וְעָשָׂה לְפָרִי פֶּאֶשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְפָרִי הַחֲטָאת כִּן יַעֲשֶׂה-לָּו וְכִפֵּר עֲלֵהֶם הַכֹּהֵן וְנִסְלַח לָהֶם:

1. Leviticus 4:20

He shall treat this bull as he treated the [first] bull of the purification offering; he shall treat it the same way. Thus the priest shall effect purgation for them that they may be forgiven.

2. במדבר פרק יד

(יז) וְעִתָּהּ יִגְדַל-נָא פֶּחַ אֲדֹנָי פֶּאֶשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לְאֹמְרֵי:

(יח) יִקְרָא אֲרָרָה אֶפְלִים וְרַב-חֲסִיד נִשְׂא עֵזוֹ וְנִשְׁע וְנִקְהָה לֹא יִנְקָה פֶלֶד עֵזוֹן אָבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵים עַל-שְׁלִשִׁים וְעַל-רִבְעִים:

(יט) סִלַּח-נָא לְעַזְנוֹ הָעַם הַזֶּה כַּגְדֹּל חֲסִידָךָ וְכִפֵּר נִשְׂאָתָהּ לָעַם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד-הַנְּהַ:

(כ) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקִיָּם סִלַּחְתִּי כִּדְבָרְךָ:

2. Numbers 14:17-20

Therefore, I pray, let my Lord's forbearance be great, as You have declared, saying, 'The LORD! slow to anger and abounding in kindness; forgiving iniquity and transgression; yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of fathers upon children, upon the third and fourth generations.'

Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt."

And the LORD said, "I pardon, as you have asked.

3. סדר רב עמרם גאון (הרפנס) סדר תפילה

סלח לנו אבינו וכו' כי פשענו כי טוב וסלח אתה. ברוך אתה ה' חנון המרבה לסלוח.

3. Seder Rav Amram Gaon, Daily Prayer

"Forgive us father, for we have sinned... for you are well-forgiving... Blessed are you Lord, gracious one who forgives greatly,"

4. סדר רב עמרם גאון (הרפנס) תפילת ערבית של ליל יום הכיפורים

כי אתה סולחן לישראל ומוחלן לשבטי ישורון ודברך אמת וקים לעד, ומבלעדיך אין לנו מלך מוחל וסולח אלא אתה. בא"י מלך מוחל וסולח לעוונותינו ולעונות עמו בית ישראל ומעביר אשמותינו בכל שנה ושנה, מלך על כל הארץ מקדש ישראל ויום הכפורים

4. Siddur Rav Amram Gaon (9th century), Evening Prayer for Yom Kippur

For you are a forgiver to Israel and a forgoer for the tribes of Jeshurun, and your word is truth and everlasting, and without You we have no forgoing and forgiving king, only You. Blessed are you, O Lord, a King forgoing and forgiving our sins and the sins of His nation the House of Israel, who passes on our guilt every year, king of the whole earth, sanctifier of Israel and the day of atonement.

Can God Forgive? The Fundamental Philosophical Problem

5. Douglas Drabkin, "The Nature of God's Love and Forgiveness," *Religious Studies* 29:2 (1993), 231-238, at p. 234

There are, according to Minas, three kinds of forgiveness : (i) forgiveness involving the reversal of a moral judgement, (2) forgiveness involving the remitting of an assigned punishment, and (3) forgiveness involving the giving up of a resentment. God does not reverse judgements, for his judgements are never wrong. Likewise, God never remits an assigned punishment, for he would never have assigned the punishment unless it were the right thing to do. ('In his omniscience,' she points out, 'God would be able to foreknow the repentance of the agent; therefore he need not make, and could not have made, a judgment about the agent's character which did not take this act of repentance into account. '10) As for God giving up a resentment, this is also impossible, for it is impossible for God to harbour a resentment ('... taking an injury personally, as opposed to having a general sense of its wrongness, is a distinctly human failing, an imperfection.') Minas concludes that God is incapable of forgiving.

Six Models of Divine Atonement

1. Emotion

6. Brandon Warmke, "Divine forgiveness I: Emotion and punishment-forbearance theories," *Philosophy Compass* 2017:12, pp. 1-8

p. 3

According to an emotion theory of divine forgiveness, then, God's forgiveness involves some sort of emotional change. When we do wrong, God feels a certain kind of negative emotion towards us because of our sin. God forgives us by eliminating or expunging that negative emotion and perhaps also taking up a positive emotional stance towards us...

One need not think that God gives up resentment, however, to adopt an emotion theory of divine forgiveness. As in the human version of the emotion theory discussed above, God might instead give up sadness, disappointment, or hurt feelings. There may be other options, too.

p. 4

Emotion views of divine forgiveness, however, encounter difficulties. First, let us consider two objections that Anne Minas has raised against the view that God forgives by eliminating resentment. The first objection can be put in terms of a dilemma. If God forgives by eliminating resentment, then this elimination will happen in one of two ways: it will (a) fade away or (2) cease immediately.... God can attend consciously to various aspects of creation and so respond emotionally to them, even if God knows dispositionally all that there is to know. God's experience of a fading or transitioning in emotions is simply due to God's shift in attention. This shift makes God's forgiveness possible...

There is another serious problem: resentment is not an attitude that God could possess in the first place. Resentment arises only when one is the victim of injury that one takes personally: "to forgive is just to cease to have any personal interest in the injury. It is to regard it as if it had happened to someone else in whom we have no special interest, other than the general interest we have in all human beings. So the father might forgive his prodigal son by ceasing to take the son's prodigality personally" (145)

p. 5

There are at least three lines of reply open to an emotion theorist. The first concedes that God cannot have feelings of personal injury but rejects that this is any part of God's resentment.

Indeed, there is no agreement in the forgiveness literature as to resentment's specific cognitive, affective, and cognitive profile...

A second line of reply rejects Minas's assumption that resentment, understood as involving a feeling of personal injury, is unbefitting of God... One could claim that taking injuries personally is not, as such, a moral failing for any kind of being, human or divine. Or one could argue that even if taking wrongs personally is a failing for humans, this does not mean that it is necessarily a failure for God...

A third line of reply denies that God forgives by eliminating resentment. Yes, God's forgiveness is an emotional change but not one having to do with resentment. Recall Drabkin's suggestion that God forgives by pivoting from suffering in response to our wrongdoing to rejoicing in response to our repentance...

There are other problems with emotion theories of divine forgiveness. First, there is the issue of God's impassibility. The doctrine of divine impassibility is the teaching that God—in God's own being—is unable to suffer or have reactive emotions...

Some philosophers have thought that in forgiving, one forswears attitudes like vindictiveness, hatred, bitterness, and rancor. Presumably, though, a perfect moral being would have no reason to forswear morally objectionable attitudes (if those attitudes are indeed morally objectionable) because that being could not have them in the first place...

Finally, emotion theories of forgiveness fail to capture the thought that divine forgiveness affects us. We might care that God is no longer angry (or sad, or disappointed, or suffering) because of our wrongdoing, but is this all there is to God's forgiving us: a change in God's feelings about us? Rather, it seems natural to think of God's forgiveness as effecting a change in our status or standing in our relationship to God. It is difficult to see how emotion theories fully capture this change in the standing or status of our relationship with God

7. דברים פרק כט

- (יז) פִּוֹרֵיגֶשׁ בְּכֶם אִישׁ אוֹ-אִשָּׁה אוֹ מִשְׁפָּחָה אוֹ-שֶׁבֶט אֲשֶׁר לְבָבוֹ פָּגַה הַיּוֹם מֵעַם יִקְנֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְלַכֵּת לַעֲבֹד אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי הַגּוֹיִם הַהֵם פּוֹרֵיגֶשׁ בְּכֶם שָׂרֵשׁ פְּרָה רֹאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה:
(יח) וְהָיָה בְשִׁמְעוֹ אֶת-דְּבָרֵי הָאֱלֹהִים הַזֵּאת וְהִתְבַּרַּךְ בְּלִבּוֹ לֵאמֹר שְׁלֹום יְהִי־לִי כִּי בִשְׂרָרוֹת לִבִּי אֶלְךָ לִמְעַן סְפוֹת הַרְוָה אֶת-הַצְּמָאָה:
(יט) לֹא-יֵאבֶדָה יְקֻנְךָ סֵלֶךְ לֹא כִּי אֲזַי יַעֲשֶׂן אַרְי־יִקְנֶה וְקִנְיָתוֹ בְּאִישׁ הַהוּא וְרִבְצָה בּוֹ כָּל-הָאֱלֹהִים הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר הַגֵּזֶה וּמִתְּהָ יִקְנֶה אֶת-שְׂמוֹ מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם:
(כ) וְהִבְדִּילוּ יְקֻנְךָ לַרְעָה מִכָּל שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כָּל־אֲלוֹת הַבְּרִית הַכְּתוּבָה בְּסֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה:

7. Deuteronomy 29

Perchance there is among you some man or woman, or some clan or tribe, whose heart is even now turning away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations— perchance there is among you a stock sprouting poison weed and wormwood.

When such a one hears the words of these sanctions, he may fancy himself immune, thinking, “I shall be safe, though I follow my own willful heart”—to the utter ruin of moist and dry alike.

The LORD will never forgive him; rather will the LORD’s anger and passion rage against that man, till every sanction recorded in this book comes down upon him, and the LORD blots out his name from under heaven.

The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for misfortune, in accordance with all the sanctions of the covenant recorded in this book of Teaching.

2. Forbearing Punishment

Warmke, "Divine forgiveness I," p. 6

Another contemporary philosophical approach to divine forgiveness says that God forgives by forbearing punishment... Whereas emotion theories of divine forgiveness claim that God forgives by undergoing an emotional change, punishment-forbearance theories claim that God forgives by remitting or forbearing deserved punishments..

We should first distinguish two claims about the relationship between divine forgiveness and punishment. One claim is a normative one: God's forgiving us makes it morally inappropriate for God subsequently to punish us (see Swinburne, 1989, p. 87, fn. 8). Such a claim says little or nothing about the nature of God's forgiveness itself. It simply says that if God forgives us for something (whatever that forgiving amounts to), then it would be wrong for God to punish us for it. A distinct claim is a conceptual or metaphysical one: God forgives by forbearing punishment. Forbearing punishment is how God accomplishes forgiveness. This is the view I want to consider...

On this view, our wrongs condemn us to God's just punishment. But when God forgives, God commutes the sentence. God forgives us by forbearing a deserved punishment. When I speak of God's "forbearing" punishment, I have at least two things in mind. First, for God to forbear punishing a wrongdoer is for God to do something like decide not to punish her. Forbearance is taken to be an exercise of agency. Second, by forbearing punishment, God also actually abstains from punishing...

Punishment-forbearance theories of divine forgiveness raise a host of questions. Could a perfectly just God forbear a deserved punishment?...

In some ways, punishment-forbearance theories look preferable to emotion theories. Emotion theories fail to account for how divine forgiveness effects a change for us vis a vis our relationship with God. But on the present view, forgiveness serves to pardon wrongdoers from punishment. This is clearly a change that affects our relationship with God: We can be confident God will no longer punish us. A punishment-forbearance theory also perhaps explains why so many people find great comfort in God's forgiveness. To whatever extent people take comfort in the thought that God no longer resents them (or is sad, disappointed, or offended, etc.), they will be more likely to take comfort (or take more comfort) in the thought that God is no longer going to punish them for their misdeeds.

p. 7

Consider the case of a parent who punishes a child for breaking the House Rules ("Do not talk back to mom") and yet interpersonally forgives her. It appears that forbearing punishment is not a necessary condition on forgiveness... Nor does it appear sufficient: one could forbear punishment for a wrong and yet still retain all manner of vindictive or retaliatory attitudes over the event in question...

Here is another potential worry about punishment-forbearance theories: They may mistakenly conflate forgiveness with acts of mercy or pardon. Forgiveness is typically thought to be something that, barring exceptional circumstances, only the victim can do (recall the standing question). This is not true of acts of mercy or pardon...

8. במדבר פרק יד

(יג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוָה וְשָׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם כִּי־הִעֲלִיתָ בְּכַתְּמֵךְ אֶת־הָעָם הַזֶּה מִקֶּרְבִּי:
(יד) וְאָמְרוּ אֶל־יְהוָה הַזֶּה הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת שָׁמְעוּ כִּי־אָתָּה יְהוָה בְּקֶרֶב הָעָם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר־עִיֹן בְּעֵינֵי נְרָאָהוּ אֶתָּה יְהוָה וְעַנְנְךָ עָלֵהֶם וּבַעֲמִד עֲנֵן אֶתָּה הַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם וּבַעֲמוּד אֵשׁ לַלַּיְלָה:

(ט) וְהִמַּתָּה אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד וְאָמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁמְעוּ אֶת-שִׁמְעוֹהָ לֵאמֹר:
 (יז) מִבְּלֹאֵי יָקֻלַּת יִקְנֹךָ לְהֵבִיא אֶת-הָעָם הַזֶּה אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם וַיִּשְׁחָטֵם בַּמִּדְבָּר:
 (יח) וְעַתָּה יִגְדַל-נָא כֹחַ אֱדֹנָי כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ לֵאמֹר:
 (יח) יִקְנֹךָ אָרֶץ אֲפִים וְרַב-חֹסֶד נִשְׂא עֲוֹן וַפִּשַׁע וְנִקְהָ לֹא יִנְקָה פֶלֶאד עֲוֹן אָבוֹת עַל-בְּנֵי עַל-שְׁלֹשִׁים וְעַל-רַבְעִים:
 (יט) סִלְחֵ-נָא לְעֲוֹן הָעָם הַזֶּה כִּגְדֹל חֶסְדְּךָ וְכְאֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאָתָה לְעָם הַזֶּה מִמִּצְרַיִם וְעַד-הַנְּהָ:
 (כ) וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֶךָ סִלְחֵתִי כְדָבָרְךָ:

8. Numbers 14

But Moses said to the LORD, “When the Egyptians, from whose midst You brought up this people in Your might, hear the news, they will tell it to the inhabitants of that land. Now they have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people; that You, O LORD, appear in plain sight when Your cloud rests over them and when You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. If then You slay this people to a man, the nations who have heard Your fame will say, ‘It must be because the LORD was powerless to bring that people into the land He had promised them on oath that He slaughtered them in the wilderness.’ Therefore, I pray, let my Lord’s forbearance be great, as You have declared, saying, ‘The LORD! slow to anger and abounding in kindness; forgiving iniquity and transgression; yet not remitting all punishment, but visiting the iniquity of parents upon children, upon the third and fourth generations.’ Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to Your great kindness, as You have forgiven this people ever since Egypt.” And the LORD said, “I pardon, as you have asked.

3. *Reconciliation*

9. Brandon Warmke, “Divine forgiveness II: Reconciliation and debt-cancellation theories,” *Philosophy Compass* 2017:12, pp. 1-8.

p. 1

I considered two approaches to the nature of divine forgiveness: the view that God forgives by undergoing a certain emotional change (like eliminating resentment) and the view that God forgives by forbearing punishment. One worry about each of these theories is that they do not (at least in any straightforward way) account for the essentially relational nature of forgiveness as something that occurs between a victim and wrongdoer...

How can an account of God's forgiving us capture the second-personal relational involvement that God has with us? One story might go like this. When we wrong someone, we harm our relationship with her. In human relationships, this usually means that trust is lost, friendly relations are withdrawn, and alienation occurs. Something like this also happens with our relationship with God. When we live wrongly, this causes deterioration in our relationship with God. We become alienated and separated from God. God forgives us by restoring this relationship. Therefore, God's forgiveness is God's prerogative (only God can restore God's relationship with us). This is also why God's forgiveness has a direct consequence for our relationship with God: God's forgiveness is what restores that relationship.

p. 2

One way of developing a reconciliation theory is to say that God forgives by reconciling with the wrongdoer after the wrongdoer apologizes, repents, asks for forgiveness, etc. Because God

would not (and perhaps could not) force this repaired relationship upon significantly free creatures, God waits until we make a move...

Some might balk at the claim that God's forgiveness is conditional in this way. First, it is not universally thought that for a human victim to forgive a human wrongdoer that the wrongdoer must desire and seek reconciliation. You might forgive me for punching you in the face even if I never want to see you or your punched face ever again. And so, if divine forgiveness (but not human forgiveness) requires that wrongdoers desire reconciliation, then this would be a significant difference between divine and human forgiveness: Human forgiveness can be unilateral, divine forgiveness cannot.

p. 3

What can be said about the general claim that God forgives by reconciling with us (or by being open to reconciliation with us)? It should be noted that many philosophers of forgiveness sharply distinguish forgiveness from reconciliation. Briefly, here are two reasons why. First, you might think that one can be open to reconciliation with a wrongdoer (say for pragmatic reasons) without forgiving the wrongdoer for her deed. (Though it may be responded that full reconciliation—whatever that means—between two persons after a wrongdoing cannot occur without forgiveness. But then again, does forgiveness require “full” reconciliation?) Second, you might think that one can forgive a wrongdoer without reconciling with her. An example often used to illustrate the point is that of a battered spouse who decides to forgive her partner for his abusive behavior, but does so without thereby agreeing to continue the relationship on better footing...

10. תוספתא מסכת שקלים (ליברמן) פרק א הלכה ו

אמ' הקדוש ברוך הוא משכנו ישראל על שקליהן כדי שיהו קרבנות הצבור קריבין מהן מפני שקרבנות הצבור מרצין ומכפרין בין ישראל לאביהן שבשמים

10. Tosefta Shekalim, 1:6

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: “Seize the assets of Israel for [in order to enforce their contribution of] their Shekels, in order that the communal offerings may be brought, because the communal offerings reconcile and atone between Israel and their Father in Heaven.

4. Forgiving Debt

Warmke, “Divine forgiveness II,” p. 3

It is not uncommon to find the claim that forgiveness involves the cancellation of a kind of debt. P. Twambley (1976) claims that by “offending you, a man, as it were, incurs a debt (hence we talk of owing recompense, reparation, and apology ... In forgiving him, you readjust your relationship to one of equality” (p. 89). Julie Exline and Roy Baumeister (2000) write, “When one person harms or transgresses another, this action effectively creates an interpersonal debt. Forgiveness involves the cancellation of the debt by the person who has been hurt or wronged” (p. 133).

p. 4

Comparisons between forgiveness and canceling a debt are also common in theological contexts. Perhaps, then, divine forgiveness could fruitfully be understood as a kind of debt-cancellation. To do so, however, is to introduce a metaphor. Since the kind of debt-forgiving that God is doing is a nonmonetary, moral kind, how should we understand a “moral debt”? And what does it mean for moral forgiveness to be understood as a cancellation of this moral debt?...

11. Brandon Warmke, "The Economic Model of Forgiveness," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 97 (2016), 570-589.

pp. 571-573

The basic contention of the EMF is that we can better understand the practice of moral forgiveness by comparing it to the practice of economic debt-cancellation. To see how, consider the following two cases:

□ **VASE:**

□ While at a dinner party at Sue's house, Ted accidentally trips, falls, and knocks over and smashes Sue's vase. Sue, realizing that Ted now owes her for the vase, tells him, 'You don't have to pay me for the vase, Ted, don't worry about it.'

□ **DECEPTION:**

□ Julia deceives Otto, thereby causing him to fail to pick up his daughter at school. Otto realizes that Julia has wronged him but tells her, 'Julia, I forgive you for deceiving me.'...

The practice of economic debt-cancellation has the following kind of structure:

- E1. The economic debt-incurring event (e.g. Ted's vase-breaking).
- E2. The state of being economically obligated (e.g. Ted's now being in economic debt to Sue).
- E3. The economic debt-forgiving event (e.g. Sue's releasing Ted from an obligation to repay her, and Sue's giving up her right to make economic demands, ask for repayment, etc.).

And the structure of moral forgiveness looks something like this:

- M1. The moral debt-incurring event (e.g. Julia's deceiving Otto).
- M2. The state of being morally obligated (e.g. Julia's now being in moral debt to Otto).
- M3. The moral debt-forgiving event (e.g. Otto's releasing Julia from an obligation to apologize and make reparations, and Otto's giving up his right to censure, make moral demands, ask for apologies, etc.).

According to the EMF, economic forgiveness (call it E-forgiveness) and moral forgiveness (call it M-forgiveness) share this *basic tripartite structure*.

p. 574

What is it that one *does* when one forgives a wrongdoer by forgiving her debt? Let me suggest two things that happen when one forgives a moral debt. First, consider what happens in the case of VASE wherein Ted incurs certain kinds of obligations to Sue by breaking her vase. In forgiving him his debt to her, she can release him from certain kinds of obligations to her. That is, she can release him from certain kinds of financial obligations to her that he incurred by breaking the vase. Switching to the case of moral debt forgiveness, then, one thing that a forgiver can do by forgiving a moral debt is to *release the wrongdoer from certain kinds of personal obligations*. Recently, Dana Nelkin (2013) has suggested that forgiveness is like cancelling a debt for this very reason: forgiveness can involve a release from a special kind of obligation that the wrongdoer has to her victim. On her view, what the wrongdoer owes the victim is something like apology, sincere remorse, or penance. By forgiving, Nelkin claims, the victim can release the wrongdoer from these special kinds of personal obligation.

Warmke, "Divine forgiveness II," p. 4

Richard Swinburne offered one kind of debt-forgiveness model... when we do wrong, we acquire guilt and subsequently have an obligation to do what we can to remove this guilt (1989:

73, 81). This, he says, is “somewhat like the legal situation of a debtor who owes money. The wrong needs righting. There is an obligation to do something like repaying” (p. 74). For the “total” removal of guilt, two things must occur: (a) the wrongdoer must atone for his wrong act and (b) the victim must forgive him (p. 81). This first step of guilt removal is the offering of atonement: As wrongdoers, we do what we can to distance ourselves from our past action and to remove its harmful consequences through some appropriate mix of repentance, apology, reparation, and penance. We thereby offer to our victim something like a payment for the debt we incurred by doing wrong. In the case of divine forgiveness, our payment will involve something done on our behalf...

The second step in the guilt-removal process falls to the victim. When the wrongdoer makes atonement, she offers something to the victim. The victim forgives the wrongdoer by accepting her apology, reparation, and penance. In this act of acceptance, the victim undertakes that in the future, she will not treat the wrongdoer as “the originator of the act” by which she was wronged (p. 85). So understood, forgiveness is a performative act, “achieved perhaps by solemnly saying ‘I forgive you’, or perhaps by saying ‘That’s all right’, or maybe just a smile” (p. 85). Upon forgiving, the victim removes the wrongdoer’s guilt and therefore eliminates their debt. In the divine case, this will involve God accepting our repentance... Swinburne’s forgiveness therefore has a dual nature: it eliminates the wrongdoer’s guilt, and it commits the forgiver to treat the wrongdoer in certain ways going forward...

Eleonore Stump argues that Swinburne’s account commits him to two mistaken theses. First, she claims that it is mistaken to think that forgiveness requires the wrongdoer to make amends if forgiveness is to be morally appropriate... Second, contra Swinburne, Stump claims that in many cases, repentance, reparation, and penance and subsequent forgiveness are not sufficient for the removal of guilt. At least in the case of serious wrongdoing, guilt can remain.

pp. 4-5

Furthermore, as noticed by Stump, it may be a mistake to think of forgiveness as being tied to guilt in the first place. Consider the fact that it is often permissible for persons other than a victim to blame a wrongdoer or at least judge her blameworthy. This remains the case even if the victim has forgiven the wrongdoer. Plausibly, what makes potential third-party blame appropriate going forward is a certain fact about the wrongdoer: that she is guilty and responsible for what she did. If so, then forgiveness does not remove guilt, for that one is guilty of something could continue to justify future punishment or third-party blaming...

Whatever we make of Swinburne’s view, I do believe that there is something illuminating about modeling forgiveness—both human and divine—on the practice of debt-cancellation. To see it, consider what typically happens when we forgive someone a financial debt. We give up the right to treat them in certain ways (e.g., demanding payment), and we release them from certain obligations (e.g., to pay us). In effect, cancelling a debt alters the operative norms governing how the relevant parties are obligated or permitted to regard and treat one another. Something very similar occurs in the case of moral forgiveness...

I suggest that we can fruitfully think of divine forgiveness as way for God to alter the normative landscape between sinner and God. The challenge is to say exactly what this alteration of the norms is supposed to be. What are the operative norms that are altered when God forgives? I offer a brief proposal. I suggested above that in the paradigmatic cases of human forgiveness, we relinquish rights to blame and release wrongdoers from certain personal obligations. Can something similar be said in the case of divine forgiveness? Perhaps so... When God forgives us, God does so by giving up this “divine blaming” stance. God moves on and no longer holds this

wrong against us. But we are to move on too. Upon being forgiven, we are no longer obligated to keep on apologizing, repenting, offering penance, etc. We are not required to wallow in our failure and defeat.

12. תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף פו עמוד ב

תנו רבנן: עבירות שהתודה עליהן יום הכפורים זה - לא יתודה עליהן יום הכפורים אחר, ואם שנה בהן - צריך להתודות יום הכפורים אחר, ואם לא שנה בהן וחזר והתודה עליהן - עליו הכתוב אומר ככלב שב על קאו כסיל שונה באולתו. רבי אליעזר בן יעקב אומר: כל שכן שהוא משובח, שנאמר כי פשעי אני אדע וחטאתי נגדי תמיד. אלא מה אני מקיים ככלב שב על קאו וגו' - כדרב הונא, דאמר רב הונא: כיון שעבר אדם עבירה ושנה בה - הותרה לו. - הותרה לו סלקא דעתך? אלא אימא: נעשית לו כהיתר.

12. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma 86b

The Sages taught: With regard to transgressions that one confessed on this Yom Kippur, he should not confess them on another Yom Kippur. But if he repeated those same transgressions during the year, he must confess them again on another Yom Kippur. And if he did not repeat them but did confess them again, about him the verse states: “As a dog that returns to its vomit, so is a fool who repeats his folly” (Proverbs 26:11). Rabbi Eliezer ben Ya’akov says: [If one confesses in subsequent years,] all the more so is he praiseworthy, as it is stated: “For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me” (Psalms 51:5). But how do I establish the meaning of the verse: “Like a dog that returns to its vomit”? It may be established in accordance with the opinion of Rav Huna, as Rav Huna said: When a person commits a transgression and repeats it, it is permitted to him. [The Gemara is surprised at this:] Can it enter your mind that it is permitted to him because he has sinned twice? Rather, say it becomes to him as if it were permitted.

13. ישעיהו פרק מ

(א) נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלהיכם:

(ב) דברו עלי-לב ירושלים וקראו אליה כי מלאה צבאה כי נרצה עונה כי לקחה מינד יקנה פסלים בכלי-חטאתיה:

13. Isaiah 40:1-2

Comfort, oh comfort My people, Says your God.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and declare to her that her term of service is over, That her iniquity is expiated; For she has received at the hand of the Lord double for all her sins.

14. Gary Anderson, Sin: A History, p. 8-9

As Baruch Schwartz has noted in rabbinic texts, “The sinner is called *h'ayyab*, or ‘obligated,’ because he must repay his debt [*h'ob*]. The one who owes [*h'ayyab*] a sin-offering or a reparation offering must pay with the respective form of sacrifice; the one who owes a beating must pay with a lashing of his body; the one who owes death must pay with his life; and the one who owes the penalty of extirpation [*karet*] must pay after his death.”...

Once it becomes a commonplace to think of sin as debt, the idea that virtuous activity generates a credit appears. The very idiom of rabbinic Hebrew supports this, because the antonym for the term *h'ob* (debt) is *zekut* (credit).

15. Gary Anderson, Sin: A History, p. 27-8

In Aramaic the word for a debt that one owes a lender, *h'oba*, is the standard term for denoting sin. This term comes into Second Temple Hebrew and has the same double meaning. The idea of sin as a weight is rarely found in rabbinic Hebrew, having been replaced by the idea of sin as a debt. One can clearly see this transformation by examining how the various Aramaic translations

of the biblical text (Targums) treat the phrase *nas'a a'won*. In almost every instance where *nas'a a'won* means “to bear the weight of a sin,” we find the Aramaic idiom *qabbel h'oba*, “to assume a debt.”

16. תלמוד בבלי מסכת תענית דף ז עמוד ב

אמר רבי תנחום בר חנילאי: אין הגשמים יורדים אלא אם כן נמחלו עונותיהן של ישראל, שנאמר רצית ה' ארצך שבת שבות יעקב נשאת עון עמך כסית כל חטאתם סלה.

16. Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Taanit, 7b

“R. Tanhum b. Hanilai said: ‘No rain shall fall unless the sins of Israel are forgiven for scripture says, O Lord, You have favored Your land, restored Jacob’s fortune; You have borne away Your people’s iniquity, and covered all their sins; You have withdrawn all your anger, and turned away from your rage’” (Ps 85:2–4).

5. Erasing the Past

17. Samuel Lebens and Tyron Goldschmidt, “The Promise of a New Past,” *Philosopher’s Imprint* 17:18 (2017), pp. 1-25

p. 1

On some ways of working them out, God will one day change the past by eliminating evil from it. This makes for a new kind of response to the problem of evil: the *Divine Proofreader Theory*. On other ways of working the traditions out, the past evil isn’t eliminated, but personal responsibility for certain sins is removed from the sinner. This makes for a new theory of atonement: the *Agent Substitution Theory*.

18. ר' צדוק הכהן מלובלין - צדקת הצדיק אות צט

סימן לתשובה גמורה כשאנו זוכר כלל החטא כמו שאמרו (בבא מציעא נ"ה ב) שלא יאמר לבעל תשובה זכור וכו' וכן השם יתברך אין מזכיר לבעל תשובה הגמור וממילא אינו זוכר. כי כל כוחות האדם מהשם יתברך מי שם פה וגו' (שמות ד' י"א) וכן כוחות המחשבה והזכירה ואם אין השם יתברך שופע לו ומזכיר לו אינו זוכר. ובתנא דבי אליהו רבה (פרק א') שעתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא לומר איני זוכר עוונותיו ואין עולין על לבי, וכבר אמרו ז"ל (שיר השירים רבה ה' ב') הקדוש ברוך הוא לבן של ישראל שנאמר (תהלים ע"ג כ"ו) צור לבבי וגו' ממילא גם על לבו של אדם אינו עולה וזהו מעין עולם הבא וכל זמן שלא הגיע אדם לעומק התשובה כזה שהוא תכלית שלמות הכפרה אינו בנייהא, ועל זה אמר דוד המלך עליו השלום (תהלים נ"א ד') הרב כבסני וגו' כי פשעי אני אדע והאדם מצידו צריך להיות חטאתו נגדו תמיד:

18. R. Tzadok ha-Kohen of Lublin, *Tzidkat ha-Tzaddik*, section 99 (translation by Lebens-Goldschmidt)

A sign of complete repentance is when [the sinner] no longer remembers his sin at all, as it is stated (B. Met. 58b), that you should not tell a penitent person, “Remember [your past deeds]”. And similarly, God, may He be blessed, doesn’t remind the completely penitent, and automatically [the sinner] does not remember, since all of man’s powers are from God, may He be blessed — ‘Who made man’s mouth?’ [Exodus 4:11] — and similarly [with regard to the powers of] intellect and memory; if God, may He be blessed, doesn’t emanate unto him, and remind him, he does not remember.

In [the Midrash] Tanna D’bei Eliyahu Rabbah (91) [we learn] that in the future the Holy One Blessed be He will say, “I don’t remember his sins, and they don’t arise in my heart.” And the sages already say [in the Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah 5:2] that the Holy One Blessed be He is the heart of Israel. As it says, “[God] is the rock of my heart” [Psalms 73:26]. Automatically,

[the sin] also doesn't arise in the heart of the person. And this is a taste of the world to come. All the while that a person hasn't arrived to this depth of repentance, which is the goal of the perfection of atonement, he isn't at ease. And about this, King David, peace be upon him, said, "Wash me thoroughly [from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin]. For my transgressions I know," and a person from his own perspective needs to be such that his "sins are constantly before" him [Psalms* 51:4-5].

Lebens and Goldschmidt, "The Promise of a New Past, p. 10

God will be able to erase evil events without leaving a trace of evil. The event will leave some mark, but not an evil one. The deleted events will be gone forever. What will remain will be the instantiation in the hyper-present of a hyperbackward-looking property that describes (de dicto) a non-existent event that hyper-used to be. To return to R. Leiner's metaphor: that property, and not any actual evil event, is the garlic peel that's left behind.

p. 11

Question 1. God still forgets sins and other evils in the sense that he knew about them at an earlier time but does not know about them at a later time. Since God is essentially omniscient, God knows everything at every time, and so cannot forget anything. Even if you argue that omniscience is a doctrine that arrives on the scene in medieval thought and never becomes an essential component of Jewish Orthodoxy, the Bible explicitly presents God as not forgetting sins (Amos 8:7)... Reply. God can forget things at a later time only if those things actually existed at some prior time. God cannot forget about something that never existed.

p. 11

Classical Jewish theology seems to value God's mercy over his justice. The Midrash suggests that God was able to create the world only by allowing his mercy to overpower (so to speak) his justice (Bereishit Rabbah 8: 4-5).

p. 13

We distinguish between two versions of UF. First, God could erase past sins, eliminating entire scenes from history, destroying the parts of spacetime where they take place — leaving some sort of gap in their place. This is Ultimate Forgiveness - Deletion (UF-D). Alternatively, God could leave the sins in place — keeping scenes of history looking much as they do, as it were, from the outside — but making it such that the sins are no longer performed by the sinner. The sin and the relevant temporal part of the sinner are still there, but they no longer belong to the sinner, who is thus no longer a sinner at all. The sinful temporal part would have been amputated from the "sinner". On this view, history is left without any gaps, but people can be left with temporal gaps in their histories. This is Ultimate Forgiveness - Amputation (UF-A)... The amputation can occur in two ways. First, the sin and the relevant temporal part could remain in place while no longer belonging to anyone — the temporal part is actually no part of anything at all. Alternatively, if sins and temporal parts could not float freely, the sin and relevant temporal part could come to be possessed by someone or something else.

p. 14

Perhaps God shouldn't allow temporal parts to float freely. Imagine Gittel sins for five minutes starting at 2pm, January 1, 2016. Sometime later, Gittel repents. In virtue of her repentance (or perhaps in virtue of the coming of the Messiah, even without her repentance), God makes it such that Gittel wasn't the agent who sinned. He doesn't remove the sin from time. He doesn't change history, physically, but changes it metaphysically. Accordingly, Gittel simply has a gap in her history for five minutes. Who then was doing the sin? Some Gittel-like thing that hyper-was a

temporal part of Gittel, but which isn't a temporal part of her hyperanymore. It looks just like Gittel. It thinks it is Gittel. But it isn't. What is this detached temporal part, and why do we say that God really shouldn't allow it to float freely.

pp. 14-15

There are at least three candidates the temporal part of Gittel could become a part of: (a) God, (b) an evil person or (c) an entity that isn't a person — on option (c), even though it's a person-like part being attached to a non-person, that part won't become a person in its own right, because it goes from being merely a person-like part of a person to being a person-like part of a non-person.

19. רמב"ן ויקרא פרק א פסוק ט

ויותר ראוי לשמוע הטעם שאומרים בהם, כי בעבור שמעשי בני אדם נגמרים במחשבה ובדבור ובמעשה, צוה השם כי כאשר יחטא יביא קרבן, יסמוך ידיו עליו כנגד המעשה, ויתודה בפיו כנגד הדבור, וישרוף באש הקרב והכליות שהם כלי המחשבה והתאוה, והכרעים כנגד ידיו ורגליו של אדם העושים כל מלאכתו, ויזרוק הדם על המזבח כנגד דמו בנפשו, כדי שיחשוב אדם בעשותו כל אלה כי חטא לאלהיו בגופו ובנפשו, וראוי לו שישפך דמו וישרף גופו לולא חסד הבורא שלקח ממנו תמורה וכפר הקרבן הזה שיהא דמו תחת דמו, נפש תחת נפש, וראשי אברי הקרבן כנגד ראשי אבריו, והמנות להחיות בהן מורי התורה שיתפללו עליו. וקרבן התמיד, בעבור שלא ינצלו הרבים מחטוא תמיד. ואלה דברים מתקבלים מושכים את הלב כדברי אגדה:

19. Nahmanides to Leviticus 1:9 (translation by Lebens-Goldschmidt)

[S]ince the deeds of man are completed in thought, word and action, God commanded that when they sin they should bring a sacrifice, place their hands upon it — [an action] in place of the action — verbally confess in place of the [sinful] word, and burn in fire the intestines and the kidneys, which are the seat of thought and desire, and its legs, in place of the hands and legs of a person, that performs all actions, and to sprinkle the blood over the altar, in place of the blood of the person's soul, so that the person should think, in his doing all of this, that he has sinned to his God with his body and his soul, and it would be fitting to spill his [own] blood, and burn his [own] body, were it not for the lovingkindness of the creator, who takes our offerings from us, and the sacrifice atones such that its blood should be in place of the person's blood, its soul in place of the person's soul, and the extremities of the sacrifice in place of the extremities of the person...

20. ויקרא פרק טו

(לא) והזרתם את-בני-ישראל מטמאתם ולא ימתו בטמאתם בטמאם את-משפני אשר בתוכם:

20. Leviticus 15:31

You shall put the Israelites on guard against their uncleanness, lest they die through their uncleanness by defiling My Tabernacle which is among them.

21. ויקרא פרק כ

(ב) ואל-בני ישראל תאמר איש איש מבני ישראל ומן-הגר הגר בישראל אשר נתן מזרעו למלך מות יומת עם הארץ ורגמיהו באבן:

(ג) ואני אתן את-פני באיש ההוא והקרתי אתו מקרב עמו כי מזרעו נתן למלך למען טמא את-מקדשי ולחלל את-שם קדשי:

(ד) ואם העלם ועלימו עם הארץ את-עיניהם מן-האיש ההוא בתתו מזרעו למלך לבלתי המית אתו:

(ה) ושמתי אני את-פני באיש ההוא ובמשפחתו והקרתי אתו ואת כל-הזנים אשריו לזנות אתרי המלך מקרב עמם:

21. Leviticus 20

Say further to the Israelite people:

Anyone among the Israelites, or among the strangers residing in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall be put to death; the people of the land shall pelt him with stones.

And I will set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he gave of his offspring to Molech and so defiled My sanctuary and profaned My holy name. And if the people of the land should shut their eyes to that man when he gives of his offspring to Molech, and should not put him to death, I Myself will set My face against that man and his kin, and will cut off from among their people both him and all who follow him in going astray after Molech.

22. ויקרא פרק ית

- (כג) ובכל־בהמה לא־תתנו שִׁכְבָתָהּ לְטִמְאָה־בָּהּ וְאִשָּׁה לֹא־תַעֲמֹד לְפָנַי בַּהֲמָה לְרִבְעָה תִּבְלֶה הוּא:
- (כד) אֶל־תִּטְמְאוּ בְּכָל־אֵלֶּה כִּי בְּכָל־אֵלֶּה נִטְמְאוּ הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־אָנִי מְשַׁלַּח מִפְּנֵיכֶם:
- (כה) וְתִטְמָא הָאָרֶץ וְאֶפְקֹד עֲוֹנָהּ עָלַיָּה וְתִקְאָה הָאָרֶץ אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל:
- (כו) וְשִׁמְרַתֶּם אֹתָם אֶת־חֻקֹּתַי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ מִכָּל הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה הָאֵלֶּה הָאֵלֶּה וְהִגֵּר הַגֵּר בְּתוֹכְכֶם:
- (כז) כִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵל עָשׂוּ אֲנִשְׁי־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֵיכֶם וְתִטְמָא הָאָרֶץ:
- (כח) וְלֹא־תִקְרֵא הָאָרֶץ אֶתְכֶם בְּטִמְאַתְכֶם אֲתָהּ כִּאֲשֶׁר קָאָה אֶת־הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֵיכֶם:
- (כט) כִּי כָל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה מִכָּל הַתּוֹעֵבֹת הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְרְתוּ הַנְּפֹשׁוֹת הַעֲשׂוֹת מִקְרֹב עִמָּם:

22. Leviticus 18

Do not have carnal relations with any beast and defile yourself thereby; and let no woman lend herself to a beast to mate with it; it is perversion.

Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways, for it is by such that the nations that I am casting out before you defiled themselves.

Thus the land became defiled; and I called it to account for its iniquity, and the land spewed out its inhabitants.

But you must keep My laws and My rules, and you must not do any of those abhorrent things, neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you;

for all those abhorrent things were done by the people who were in the land before you, and the land became defiled.

So let not the land spew you out for defiling it, as it spewed out the nation that came before you.

All who do any of those abhorrent things—such persons shall be cut off from their people.

6. *Removing Tokens of Sin*
a. **Removing Stains**

23. ירמיהו פרק ב

- (כא) וְאֲנֹכִי נִטְעַתִּיךָ שֹׁרֶץ כְּלֵה וְרַע אֲמַת וְאִיךָ נִהַפְכָת לִי סוּרֵי הַגִּפּוֹן נִכְרִיָּה:
- (כב) כִּי אִם־תִּכְבֹּסֵל בְּנֹתָר וְתִרְבִּי־לָךְ בְּרִית נִכְתָּם עֲוֹנֶךָ לְפָנַי נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי יְהוֹקֵן:
- (כג) אִיךָ תֹאמְרֵי לֹא נִטְמַאתִי אַחֲרַי הַבְּעָלִים לֹא הִלַּכְתִּי רָאִי וְרַפְּךָ בְּגִיא דְעֵי מָה עָשִׂית בְּכִרְהָ קִלְהָ מִשְׁרַכַת דְּרִכְיָה:

23. Jeremiah 2:21-23

I planted you with noble vines, All with choicest seed; Alas, I find you changed Into a base, an alien vine!

Though you wash with natron And use much lye, Your guilt is ingrained before Me —declares the Lord God.

How can you say, “I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baalim”? Look at your deeds in the Valley, Consider what you have done! Like a lustful she-camel, Restlessly running about,

24. תהלים פרק נא

- (א) חַגְגֵי אֱלֹהִים כְּחֻסְדָּךָ כָּרֵב רְחֹמֶיךָ מִחֲנֶה פִּשְׁעָי:
- (ד) הַרְבֵּה הָרַב כְּפִסְגֵי מַעֲוֵגֵי וּמִחֻטְאֵתֵי טְהַרְגֵי:

24. Psalms 51:3-4

Have mercy upon me, O God, as befits Your faithfulness; in keeping with Your abundant compassion, blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly of my iniquity, and purify me of my sin;

25. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus*, I.1098

"Atoner" or "expiate" is the customary translation for *kipper*, but in most cases this is incorrect. In biblical poetry its parallel synonym is usually *maha* 'wipe' (Jer 18:23) or *hesir* 'remove' (Isa 27:9), suggesting that *kipper* means "purge." Ritual texts also support this meaning, for they regularly couple *kipper* with *tihar* 'purify' and *hitte* 'decontaminate' (Lev 14:48, 52, 58).

b. Removing Burdens

26. ויקרא פרק יז

(טז) וְכָל-נֶפֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכַל נִבְלָה וְטֶרֶף וּבָאֵזְרָח וּבְגֵר וּכְבֹס בְּגָדָיו וְרִתֵץ בְּמַיִם וְטָמֵא עַד-הָעֶרֶב וְטָהַר:
(טז) וְאִם לֹא יִכְבֹּס וּבִשְׁרוּ לֹא יִרְתֵץ וְנִשְׂא עֲוֹנוֹ:

26. Leviticus 17:15-16

Any person, whether citizen or stranger, who eats what has died or has been torn by beasts shall wash his clothes, bathe in water, and remain unclean until evening; then he shall be clean.

But if he does not wash [his clothes] and bathe his body, he shall bear his sin.

27. שמות פרק כה

(לו) וַעֲשִׂיתָ צִיץ זָהָב טָהוֹר וּפְתִיחַתָּ עָלָיו פְּתִיחַתִּי חֹתָם קֹדֶשׁ לִיקוּם:
(לז) וְשָׂמְתָּ אֹתוֹ עַל-פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת וְהָיָה עַל-הַמִּצְנֶפֶת אֶל-מִוֵּל פְּגִי-הַמִּצְנֶפֶת יְהִיָּה:
(לח) וְהָיָה עַל-מִצַּח אַהֲרֹן וְנִשְׂא אַהֲרֹן אֶת-עֲוֹן הַקֹּדְשִׁים אֲשֶׁר יַקְדִּישׁוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְכָל-מִתְנַת קֹדְשֵׁיהֶם וְהָיָה עַל-מִצְחוֹ תָמִיד לְרָצוֹן לָהֶם לִפְנֵי יְקוּם:

27. Exodus 28:36-38

You shall make a frontlet of pure gold and engrave on it the seal inscription: "Holy to the Lord." Suspend it on a cord of blue, so that it may remain on the headdress; it shall remain on the front of the headdress.

It shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may take away any sin arising from the holy things that the Israelites consecrate, from any of their sacred donations; it shall be on his forehead at all times, to win acceptance for them before the Lord.

28. Gary Anderson, *Sin: A History*, p. 18

In a context of mercy, *nas'a* takes on the extended meaning of "forgive," whereas *a'won* retains its primary meaning of "sin." But in the context of punishment (nos. 1 and 2) the verb retains its original meaning "to bear, carry," whereas the noun *a'won* assumes its secondary meaning of "punishment." The mixture of primary and secondary meanings in each idiom appears arbitrary. It is an odd way to explain the growth of an idiom. Schwartz's solution to these inconcinnities is as brilliant as it is ordinary. In his opinion everything depends on attention to how the verb *nas'a* functions in conventional discourse. A casual inspection of a Hebrew lexicon shows that the verb can mean both [A] "to carry [a burden]" and [B] "to remove [a burden]."

29. ויקרא פרק טז

(כ) וְכָל-הָאֱלֹהִים מִפְּנֵי אֲתֵי-הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְאֲתֵי-הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וְהִקְרִיב אֶת-הַשְּׂעִיר הַקָּטָן:
(כא) וְסָמַד אַהֲרֹן אֶת-שְׂתֵי יָדָיו עַל-רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר הַסֵּחִי וְהִתְנַדָּה עָלָיו אֶת-כָּל-עֲוֹנוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת-כָּל-פִּשְׁעֵיהֶם לְכָל-חַטָּאתָם וְנָתַן אֹתָם עַל-רֹאשׁ הַשְּׂעִיר וְשָׁלַח בְּיַד-אִישׁ עֵתִי הַמִּדְבָּרָה:
(כב) וְנִשְׂא הַשְּׂעִיר עָלָיו אֶת-כָּל-עֲוֹנוֹתָם אֶל-אֶרֶץ גְּזֵרָה וְשָׁלַח אֶת-הַשְּׂעִיר בַּמִּדְבָּר:

29. Leviticus 16:20-22

When he has finished purging the Shrine, the Tent of Meeting, and the altar, the live goat shall be brought forward.

Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their sins, putting them on the head of the goat; and it shall be sent off to the wilderness through a designated man.

Thus the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

c. Burying Sin

30. מיכה פרק ז

(יח) מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹךָ נִשְׂא עוֹן וְעָבַר עַל־פְּשַׁע לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתוֹ לֹא־הִתְחַזֵּיק לְעַד אֲפֹ כִי־חֲפֹץ חֲסֵד הוּא:
(ט) יָשׁוּב יִרְחַמֵּנוּ יִכְבֹּשׂ עֲוֹנוֹתֵינוּ וְתִשְׁלִיךְ בְּמַצְלוֹת יָם כָּל־חַטְאוֹתָם:
(כ) תִּתֵּן אֲמַתְּ לִיעֲלֵב חֲסֵד לְאַבְרָהָם אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְתָּיִנוּ מִיַּמֵי קֹדֶם:

30. Micah 7:18-19

Who is a God like You, Forgiving iniquity And remitting transgression; Who has not maintained His wrath forever Against the remnant of His own people, Because He loves graciousness! He will take us back in love; He will cover up our iniquities, You will hurl all our [lit. their] sins Into the depths of the sea.

Can God Forgive Sins Against Others? The Question of Standing

31. משנה מסכת יומא פרק ח משנה ט

האומר אחטא ואשוב אחטא ואשוב אין מספיקין בידו לעשות תשובה אחטא ויום הכפורים מכפר אין יום הכפורים מכפר עבירות שבין אדם למקום יום הכפורים מכפר עבירות שבין אדם לחבירו אין יום הכפורים מכפר עד שירצה חברו

31. Mishnah, Tractate Yoma, 8:9

One who says ‘I will sin and repent; I will sin and repent,’ we do not allow them to repent. [One who says,] ‘I will sin and the Day of Atonement will atone,’ the Day of Atonement does not atone. Violations between a person and God, the Day of Atonement atones; between a person and their fellow, the Day of Atonement does not atone, until they appease their friend.

32. Brandon Warmke, “God’s Standing to Forgive,” *Faith and Philosophy* 34:4, 381-402 at p. 397

How, then, does a wrong between persons become “your business?” One obvious way is if you are the victim of the wrong. But another way in which a wrong can become your business is if the wrong is done by someone you personally care about and to someone you personally care about. Recall the case in which I treat my mother very rudely, and suppose that my brother personally cares about each of us. Suppose he were eventually to tell me, “It has taken a very long time, but I have finally forgiven you for what he did to her.” Complaining that he lacks standing to forgive me because I did not treat him rudely seems to miss the mark.