



VIDEO OUTLINE

ROSH HASHANAH 5776:
JUST HOW GUILTY SHOULD I FEEL

This guide corresponds to the video:
[The High Holidays: Just How Guilty Should I Feel?](#)

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◀Rosh Hashanah – Just How Guilty Should I Feel – Video Outline▶

The High Holidays should be a time of introspection, but it often feels like we're so overwhelmed by our own guilt, by the idea of coming to terms with ourselves, that we don't know where to start.

I. Introduction

- a. Rosh Hashanah is right around the corner, and I have a little “inside Aleph Beta” secret.
- b. We here at the company – we track our courses.
 - i. We have some idea about what the more popular ones are.
 - ii. As you might expect, courses related to certain holidays tend to garner more attention than courses associated with others.
- c. So, let me play a little guessing game with you: Which do you think are the more popular ones?
 - i. Which of our holiday series tends to be the most watched, as it were?
 - ii. You know, if I had to hazard a guess, I might put High Holiday courses at the top of the list, you know, because, these are the days when most people show up at synagogue, after all.
 1. Everybody celebrates the High Holidays in one form or another.
 2. And look, there's so much on the line: The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are known as the 10 days of repentance, and repentance is an important, restorative thing.
 3. Our lives, as it were, are on the line, you know, it's a day of judgment.
 4. For a believer in Judaism - one would think - figuring out how to approach these days would really be of paramount importance.
 5. If I'm looking for insight as to how to approach any one time of year, it would be this time of year.
 - iii. And yet... Maybe I shouldn't be telling you this, but at Aleph Beta, courses like the one you are watching right now – High Holiday courses – these are among the least watched of all holiday videos that we produce.
 1. Courses we put out on Tisha B'Av, Passover, even Purim or Hanukkah, they all outstrip High Holiday courses in popularity.
 2. Inside the Aleph Beta office, this has actually always been the subject of idle curiosity.
 - a. What accounts for this trend?
 - b. Do we habitually put up worse material for the High Holidays?
 - c. At least on the inside, it doesn't feel that way: I think the Yom Kippur course we did on the Book of Jonah is one of the best we've ever done here at the company.
 - d. It's certainly one of my favorites. But it's also one of the least watched.
- d. So what accounts for this puzzling trend?

II. Anxious Days

- a. So, I suspect it has to do with the fact that the themes of the High Holidays are really pretty weighty.
 - i. Yeah, they're holidays – but they're not so obviously occasions to celebrate.
 1. Purim, we got saved; we dress up, we have a great time.

2. Pesach, we were born as a people; it's our Independence Day – or Independence Week, as it were.
3. But – Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – these are the *yemei hadin*, the days of judgment; these are the *Yamim Noraim*, the Days of Awe.
 - ii. So, it's not like any of us have anything against awe, per se – but look, you do have to admit, the air surrounding these days is less celebratory, more solemn.
- b. And these days seem to demand things of us – things like a sobering self-evaluation, and a look back on our past year; things like repentance.
 - i. So it's so much easier to just approach these holidays almost in a state of semi-willful denial.
 - ii. Just try not to look this time of year in the eye and maybe it won't notice you cowering in the corner over there; maybe this time of year will just pass you by.
 - iii. Sounds crazy, right? But I think there's a little bit of that in all of us, certainly me.

III. Escape from Denial

- a. In this video, I want to offer a solution to this denial-complex.
 - i. It's actually not really an original solution, to tell you the honest truth; it's been around for thousands of years, since the very dawn of the People of Israel.
 - ii. And actually, the solution's embodied, cleverly enough, in the High Holiday prayers themselves.
 - iii. Let me take a few minutes to show you what I mean.
- b. The language of our prayers for the most part is rabbinic in origin.
 - i. But there is a little piece of biblical text that the rabbis made sure to give pride of place to, in the High Holidays prayers.
 - ii. The little biblical text I am referring to has come to be known as the 13 Attributes of Compassion, the *Shlosh Esrei Midot Harachamim*.
- c. And it feels like the rabbinic authors of the prayers engineered things so that we end up going back to these biblical words repeatedly.
 - i. For example: In between each of the *Selichot* poems that we say in the *Yamim Noraim* season, we go back, like a refrain, constantly, to the biblical attributes of compassion.
 - ii. As a matter of fact, we are so intent on repeatedly saying these 13 Attributes of Compassion that certain *Selichot* in the culminating prayer of *Neilah*, as Yom Kippur draws to a close, are actually nothing more than thinly veiled recitations of these *Shlosh Esrei Midot Harachamim*.
 - iii. Why do we keep on coming back to this this short biblical formula? Why is it so important to us?
- d. Let's take a look at this short piece of biblical text, and let's examine its original context in the Torah.

IV. The 13 Attributes

- a. In the Book of Exodus, the Torah records what is undoubtedly the lowest point of the entire Five Books of Moses: The episode of the Golden Calf.
 - i. Just at the moment when the Israelites were supposed to be accepting the Torah at Sinai, just at this crowning moment of glory, the people are instead laughing and dancing around an idol of their own making.

- ii. The sin seems nearly unforgivable.
- iii. God actually contemplates destroying the entire people and starting over with Moses.
- b. In the end, the people are not destroyed.
 - i. But after they are spared, something strange happens: Moses makes an audacious request of God.
 - 1. He requests an encounter with Him.
 - 2. He wants to somehow “know who He is.” It is unclear exactly what he is asking for, but it seems that he wants to somehow experience God’s Essence.
 - ii. So God positions Moses in the cleft of a rock, and Moses has an epiphany – a close encounter with the Divine.
 - 1. In that encounter, God reveals Himself not just experientially to Moses, but He also reveals Himself in words.
 - 2. He tells Moses something about Himself, something about the kind of Being He is – and those words have come to be known as the *Yud Gimmel Midot Harachamim*, the 13 Attributes of Compassion.
- c. Here is how the Torah itself records this: “God passed before [Moses] and proclaimed: “The LORD! the LORD! a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in kindness -- and truth...” (Exodus 34:6)
 - i. So these words, they’re really God’s description of Himself – and they become the centerpiece of the *Selichot* and the *Neilah* service.
 - ii. Why has this short formula been given such centrality in our High Holiday prayers?

V. The Guarantee

- a. The answer, perhaps, has to do with something that the Talmud tells us about these mysterious lines.
 - i. The ancient Sages, in Tractate Rosh Hashanah (17b), suggest that when God spoke these words to Moses, it was as if the Almighty Himself was teaching Moses how to pray to him.
 - ii. The Talmud continues, and suggests that God was, in effect, issuing a guarantee to Moses, and to all future generations.
 - iii. And the guarantee, according to the Gemara, went something like this: “Anytime that Israel, in the future, sins before Me – they should perform this sequence before Me and I will forgive them.”
 - 1. Well, that’s a pretty remarkable guarantee; I mean, the Talmud actually seems to be saying that, you know, you say these words and forgiveness just happens.
 - 2. And the Talmud actually doubles down on the point; it says that God sealed a covenant with the people regarding these Attributes of Compassion.
 - 3. It says that whenever these words are invoked, *einan chozrot reikam*, the Sages of the Talmud say they won’t return empty-handed, these words of Compassion.
 - 4. That is, no matter what terrible thing the people have done, if we say these words, if we invoke these Divine traits of God, that’s somehow going to turn things around. God will forgive us for what we’ve done.

- b. Well, if we take this teaching of the Talmud seriously, it's no wonder that these attributes of compassion become the centerpiece of the High Holidays services. We say them over and over, because we're hoping – it would seem – to invoke that Divine guarantee, to get the promised forgiveness.
- c. But now, dear viewer, I want to take a step back with you and survey this little scene.
 - i. Because on the face of it, it does seem a little strange, shall we say.
 - ii. Pardon me for sounding ever so slightly heretical here, but I want to ask you: I mean, how exactly does this work?
 - 1. Is the recitation of these lines some kind of magical incantation?
 - 2. Is it really the case that all you have to do is say the magic words, and poof! - a cloud of orange smoke, and you're forgiven?
 - 3. All the terrible wrongs you've done, they evaporate and you and God, you're on great terms again?
 - 4. That seems like a very sweet deal.
 - 5. It seems, actually, too good to be true.
 - 6. And you know what they say about things that seem too good to be true? They're usually not, actually, true.
- d. So how should we understand this?
 - i. On the one hand, our tradition – embodied in the structure of the High Holiday prayer services – it seems to take quite seriously this Talmudic teaching about the power of these Divine Attributes.
 - ii. And yet, the Talmudic teaching itself – well, it seems to sound almost vaguely preposterous.
 - iii. I mean, how should we make sense of all of this?

VI. A Closer Examination: Saying and Doing

- a. There are a couple clues, I think, that may well help us understand more deeply what the Talmud tells us about these "*Midot Harachamim*," and why they are in fact so central to our High Holiday prayers.
 - i. The clues actually come in the form of a couple of additional questions that strike you once you begin looking a bit more closely at the texts we've been talking about.
- b. Here's the first clue. Let's go back to that text we just quoted from the Talmud.
 - i. Back in Tractate Rosh Hashanah it had said: "Whenever Israel sins, they should 'perform' this sequence before Me and I will forgive them."
 - 1. The word "perform," there, is a little odd.
 - 2. Does the Talmud mean that we should "say" these words and achieve forgiveness?
 - 3. If that's all it meant, there's an easy way to write that – don't say "*yaasu lefanai*," perform before me, say "*imru lefanai*," recite before me.
 - 4. But the Talmud doesn't phrase it that way.
 - 5. The Talmud's words are: "you should perform this sequence before Me."
 - 6. What exactly does that mean? How do you "perform" words?
 - ii. It's kind of strange.

VII. "HaShem, HaShem..."

- a. And here's another clue.
 - i. It comes from the actual biblical text of the Divine Attributes.
 - ii. This listing of Divine "traits", as it were, begins with two words that aren't really 'traits' at all.
 - iii. It begins with names: *HaShem, HaShem*, (that's God's name), *kel rachum vechanun*... and there are the traits.
 - 1. And that language is a little strange.
 - 2. I mean, if God wants to start off this little section listing his traits of compassion with a mention of his name, then I suppose that's fine, that's His prerogative.
 - 3. But why mention God's name twice? Hashem, Hashem. Are we, like, stuttering here?
- b. What's the meaning of that?

VIII. Truth

- a. Finally, one last question for you.
 - i. Let's play one of my favorite games with this verse we've been looking at, the one that lists these supposed Divine Attributes of Compassion, as they are called.
 - ii. The game is: "Which one of these things is not like the other?"
 - iii. If you read the biblical text, one of these traits seems very different than the rest. It doesn't really seem to 'fit' with the idea of compassion at all.
- b. Let's just go through some of these attributes, as it were, one by one, and you'll see what I mean.
 - i. First there's that double name, *HaShem HaShem*, that we talked about.
 - ii. After that, we get "*Kel Rachum*," which means a merciful God. Well, sure, "merciful" fits – that's certainly an aspect of compassion.
 - iii. Then the next attribute we get is "*chanun*," gracious. I think we would all agree that "gracious" fits, too.
 - iv. Next we have "*erech apayim*" and "*rav chesed*" – patient and full of kindness. All very compassionate, you'd have to say – so these fit, too.
 - v. But now look at the very next word: "*Emet*." Truth. God is a God of Truth.
- c. I don't know, that one seems a little out of place.
 - i. Don't get me wrong.
 - ii. It's not like I have anything against truth, it's a very nice value.
 - 1. Good for courts, wonderful for judges.
 - 2. Truth, justice and the American Way, and all that.
 - iii. But I wouldn't say it's a value that has much to do with compassion, would you?
 - 1. Look at me. I'm a frail, fallible human being.
 - 2. I have committed some sort of wrongdoing, and I'm looking for God to be compassionate to me.
 - 3. I don't want Him to really stick it to me for what I've done.
 - 4. So... Am I in the mood to feel really great about "truth," of all things, now?
 - 5. It's kind of like the last thing I would want God to focus on, right?
 - 6. Truth is almost my enemy right now.
 - 7. After all, if I can sweep truth under the rug, then I can just sweep my wrongdoing under the rug.

- 8. We can all just forget about it and move on.
- iv. So, if anything, wouldn't forgiveness on the part of God actually entail some kind of de-emphasizing of truth? Isn't that more conducive to mercy, compassion, and forgiveness?
- d. Somehow, the 13 Attributes of Compassion seem to tell us otherwise.
 - i. As counterintuitive as it may seem, the verse appears to suggest that truth, strangely, is an integral part of God's compassion.
 - ii. Why should that be so?
 - iii. I think it might have to do with the difficulties a lot of us have, myself included, with issuing apologies.

IX. Apologies Are Simple – But Hard to Say

- a. The High Holiday season is a time for *teshuvah*, for reconciliation between me and other people, and between me and God.
 - i. But reconciliation usually entails some sort of willingness to apologize for a wrong that you've committed.
 - ii. And that is something that is not so easy to do.
- b. It is hard, but not because intellectually it's hard to figure out how to do it.
 - i. No, the formula, at least on paper, is pretty clear.
 - ii. Structurally, an apology is a very simple thing.
 - 1. It's a recognition that Rambam says consists of a remarkably basic formula: *aval anachnu chatanu lifanecha* - "I have wronged you."
 - 2. If you take that sentence apart you'll see that there is a subject, a verb, and an object.
 - 3. And, taken together, these three components hammer home a rather direct message – one that allows for little, if any, evasion.
 - 4. The subject is "I" – I am the one who did this to you, there's no getting around that, no evasion.
 - 5. The verb is: "wronged" – No evasion there, either.
 - a. It's not just that I committed a morally neutral error.
 - b. No; I wronged you.
 - c. And the object of the sentence, the victim of that wrong, is you. I hurt you. You were affected by my action.
 - iii. Real apologies – those that contain an unflinching recognition; those that don't come with a comforting dose of evasion -- they're notoriously hard to say.
 - 1. Just ask Donald, who told Jimmy Kimmel last year that he can't remember ever apologizing.
 - 2. Or Richard Nixon, who is famous for his classic, "non-apology, apology": "Mistakes were made in my administration."
 - a. I mean, look at that sentence: No subject, no verb, no object.
 - b. Who made the mistake? Haven't a clue. Someone in the administration, evidently.
 - c. And whoever did it, it wasn't really a true wrong; it was a mistake, like forgetting to carry a digit when doing long division.
 - d. Everyone makes mistakes, after all.
 - e. And who did it affect? Again, don't really have a clue. Maybe it didn't affect anyone...
- c. Issuing unflinching, real apologies is notoriously hard to do.

- i. But why is it so hard?
- ii. Why do we avoid doing it even in relationships which really seem to matter – or perhaps, especially in relationships that really seem to matter – husband to wife, child to parent, parent to child?
- iii. It almost seems like the more important the relationship, the harder it is to actually apologize.
- iv. I mean, it's strange. You'd think we would be motivated to do what's necessary to save these relationships.

X. My Grandfather's Pocketknife

- a. For what it's worth, I'll give you my explanation for this phenomenon in the form of a story - a story from my own childhood.
- b. I was about eight years old, and my grandfather had given me his very own pocketknife.
 - i. He had made quite a ceremony out of bestowing this gift to me.
 - ii. It was like a rite of passage.
 - iii. I was being given the knife he had owned since he was a boy.
 - iv. I felt like he was passing the baton on to the next generation.
 - 1. I was a man now.
 - 2. At the tender age of eight, I was a man.
 - 3. I had been entrusted by my grandfather with this great symbol of responsibility.
 - 4. I was now the steward of his precious, weathered pocketknife.
 - v. Sounds ridiculous, I know. But that's how I felt.
- c. Anyway, a few months later, I'm playing in the backyard, and suddenly, I check my pocket for that knife - and it's gone.
 - i. I search everywhere.
 - 1. I search for days.
 - 2. I search with tears streaming down my face as my fingers claw through the grass.
 - 3. But the knife is just absolutely nowhere.
 - ii. I begin to realize that I'm probably never going to see this knife again.
 - 1. And I get this terrible pit in my stomach.
 - 2. I think to myself, how am I going to ever be able to face my grandfather?
- d. And the truth is, I never could.
 - i. I would travel back to San Mateo to see him, and I would dread the impending encounter.
 - 1. He's going to ask me how the pocket knife is doing.
 - 2. He's going to want to see it, hold it, show me how to use it.
 - 3. I would finally meet up with him and would find myself averting my eyes from his.
 - 4. I'd find any way to change the topic, to talk about something safely different enough from pocket knives that maybe, maybe, he wouldn't ask me about it.
- e. The sad fact of the matter is I could never bring myself to tell him that I lost it. I just never did.

XI. Why?

- a. Why did I never come clean?
 - i. In retrospect, it seems so easy.
 - ii. Just apologize.
 - iii. What was I so afraid of?
 1. You know, it's easy to take refuge in the banal platitude that it's hard to admit that you're wrong, that no one wants their faults made known to others.
 2. Yes, you know, of course that's true.
 3. But I think it was more than that.
 4. It wasn't run-of-the-mill pride or arrogance that was keeping my little eight-year-old self from apologizing.
 5. No. It was something more primal. It was fear.
- b. Not the plain vanilla variety of fear, by the way.
 - i. It wasn't fear that I would be punished, or sent to my room, or deprived of some privilege. No; it would have actually been a relief if my wrongdoing could have been expurgated so easily.
 - ii. What I was afraid of was something more basic.
 1. I was afraid that, in the face of this loss, my grandfather would feel that I had ceased to really be worthy of being his grandson.
 2. If I could fail him this badly, be so careless as to lose that precious knife, then in some deep way, I could never really be good enough for him anymore.
 3. In my eight-year old head, I feared that if my grandfather came face to face with who I really was – the kid who was capable of losing his knife – he would lose his regard for me.
 - a. Oh sure, he would be nice about it – he would tell me not to worry.
 - b. That it was okay. That it was only a knife; no big deal.
 - c. But in his heart of hearts, I feared it wouldn't be true; there would be nothing I could ever do to win back his admiration.
- c. That, I think, is the deeper reason we don't apologize to those who mean the world to us.
 - i. An apology requires an unflinching admission of a difficult truth - the terrible fact that I let you down in some way.
 - ii. And curled up in every apology is the harrowing possibility that our relationship might not survive the admission of that truth: If I'm your kid, your grandkid - how are you going to be proud of me anymore when I've let you down like this?

XII. The Road to Apology

- a. And that, I believe, is exactly where the 13 attributes of compassion come in.
- b. In the wake of their greatest failing, the construction and worship of a Golden Calf, the people stood before God fearing that their sin was unforgivable.
 - i. That continued closeness with the Master of the Universe was laughable.
 - ii. That if they could have done this, God could never again look at them and be proud of them.
- c. It was this fear, I think, that God was addressing when, right after the Golden Calf, he gathered Moses into the cleft in the rock to experience the essence of the Divine.

- i. It was as if God was saying to Moses: “You want to know who I really am? Fine. I'll tell you...”
 - 1. Here are the most basic things that I can tell you about Me.
 - 2. It starts with My Name, twice. HaShem, HaShem.
- ii. That name, YHVH, as we have talked about in other video series on this site, seems to signify God as Creator, as our Parent in Heaven.
 - 1. What are the implications of that?
 - 2. Being a creator - whether, in the case of God, you have become the parent of all humanity, or in the case of a human parent, you have created a single other human being – it's not just a blind, physical fact.
 - 3. Being a creator entails more than that; it entails a kind of non-rational bias towards the one you've created – a bias we humans call love.
 - 4. Being your Creator means I'm going to love you even when it doesn't seem to make sense anymore.
- d. As it turns out, the Sages of the Talmud back in Tractate Rosh Hashanah (17b) – they comment on the meaning of that doubling of God's name, HaShem, HaShem.
 - i. They say that the Creator-Name of God appears twice here signifying that the same God – the same Heavenly Parent – that existed before you sinned, He exists afterwards, too.
 - ii. God can still love you after sin, can even still be proud of you.
 - 1. The same vibrant relationship you once had with him can be restored and brought back to life.
 - 2. He is your Creator before you sin, and He is still your Creator afterwards.
 - 3. This baseline love is ever-present.

XIII. An Unfolding

- a. I want to suggest that everything that comes next in the 13 Attributes is really just the unfurling of implications that emerge from this one basic truth about God: That His love for us survives sin.
- b. He is *rachum*, compassionate.
 - i. In Hebrew, *lerachem*, “to be compassionate,” appears to be just the verb form of the noun “*rechem*” - “womb”
 - ii. God, the Creator, is womb-like towards us.
 - 1. A womb nurtures the fragile life within it, helps it grow.
 - 2. It doesn't do this because the fetus deserves the help of the womb; the fetus hasn't yet done anything, so it deserves nothing.
 - 3. The womb nurtures the embryo not because of the past but because of the future; because that little embryo has the potential to be more, and as long as it has that potential, the womb is going to help the fetus realize that potential.
 - 4. That's what mothers do.
 - iii. So God is *rachum*, compassionate - but he is *chanun* as well.
 - 1. *Chanun*, from the word *chen*, is sometimes translated as “Grace.”
 - 2. Whereas compassion is a nurturing kind of love, calculated and designed to give you what you need to help you grow - *chen*, grace, is the love that doesn't really have any of these ends in mind.
 - 3. It is a just-because kind of love.

4. Sometimes the parent smiles at the child and there's no calculation there.
 5. It's not like, I smiled because that smile is going to help my child grow.
 6. No. I look at the kid and I can't just help but smile. God loves us that way, too.
- c. The 13 Attributes then continue: The next traits it references are "patience," *Erech apayim*, and full of kindness, *rav chesed*.
 - d. And then, finally, that one we had been puzzled about: Truth.
 - i. In the end, truth is the crucial piece.
 - ii. That's where the magic happens.
 - iii. Until now, everything has been about love – the ever present love of the Creator.
 - iv. But that love actually provides a platform for something else: For truth.
 1. Because through truth, we can win back something just as precious as the Creator's love: His respect and admiration, too.
 2. We do it by rehabilitating and rebalancing our relationship with Him.
 - e. In the face of our wrongdoing, the Creator's love may still exist, but "truth" between us is the one thing that is still missing, and that is the one thing that is necessary to facilitate forgiveness.
 - i. Our instinct is that to reconcile with someone, truth needs to be somehow swept under the rug.
 - ii. That's the instinct that filled me with dread when I lost the pocketknife.
 - iii. But that instinct leads us astray.
 - iv. The fact is that 'truth' is perhaps the most crucial element in the road to forgiveness.
 - v. More than anything else, it is the fulcrum upon which reconciliation turns.
 - f. I think we all intuitively know this to be true.
 - i. And Jewish Law, *halachah*, certainly knows it to be true, as well.
 - ii. A couple years ago, I put together a course on Aleph Beta exploring Rambam's laws of *Teshuvah* - and one of the things we saw there is how central *viduy* is to the repentance process.
 1. *Viduy* is often translated as confession, but what it really means is recognition of wrongdoing.
 2. It is a kind of truth telling.
 3. It is, at bottom, an apology.
 - g. An apology, the Rambam says, is like a mikvah.
 - i. It can cleanse a relationship of baggage.
 - ii. It can restore balance between me and someone else, even between me and God, after that balance had been lost.
 - iii. If I can come clean and express to you an understanding that I've done you wrong, together with the regret and contrition this implies, and you can accept my expression of that – then our relationship somehow becomes rebalanced, rehabilitated.

XIV. A Path to Truth

- a. I want to suggest that what the 13 Attributes really are is a path that leads to truth.
 - i. Not just truth for truth's sake, but for the sake of reconciliation.

- ii. The truth at the heart of an apology can almost magically restore a relationship; but we fear making apologies, so God gives us reassurances.
- b. The Talmud, as we mentioned before, tells us that God issued a guarantee, of sorts, that the 13 Attributes would always yield forgiveness for the people of Israel.
 - i. I don't think this guarantee operates by means of magic.
 - ii. It's not like the 13 Attributes are some sort of incantation that we are to utter with magic wand in hand and presto: Forgiveness comes!
 - iii. No. We are meant to somehow experience these attributes.
 - iv. They are leading us to something we must do: *Viduy*. Apology.
 - v. It's how we reconcile with God.
- c. There is a path here, an experiential path, that perhaps God is laying down for generations.
 - i. Whenever we feel that we have sinned grievously, He is asking us to experience him as a true parent - a parent who is there for us even after we have let him down, a parent who has the capacity to love us even after our greatest failings.
 - 1. He is a parent who is *rachum*, he wants to help us grow, and *chanun*, who loves us just because we belong to Him.
 - 2. He is a parent who is *erech apayim* and *rav chesed*, patient and kind.
 - ii. If we can get in touch with these aspects of God, if we can learn to trust that this is who He is, then that helps gives us the courage we need to bring truth into the relationship.
- d. The 13 Attributes are designed to undercut the painful, primal fear I experienced when I was eight years old; the fear perhaps we all experience when we feel we've let God down.
 - i. How could we ever be admired again after God confronts our flaws for what they are; after God knows the "real" me?
 - 1. It is a particularly tragic fear, because it creates a self-defeating effect.
 - 2. Truth, at the end of the day, is necessary to fully rehabilitate a relationship in the face of a terrible wrong.
 - 3. It is necessary with child and parent.
 - 4. And it is necessary with human being and God.
 - ii. Apologies are hard, and God is patient; but the one thing that can sabotage our relationship with God – or for that matter, with our parents -- is if we don't trust them enough to at some point be honest with them. If we continually avert our eyes, if we perpetually hide, then we slowly drain the life and vibrancy out of our relationship with the One who loves us.
- e. And you know, ask yourself this: What is the thing that can make a parent most proud of a child?
 - i. Yes, one kind of pride exists when a child never lets a parent down.
 - ii. But there is, of course, another kind of pride: The pride that comes to a parent who was let down by his child, but whose child then displays the courage to apologize, to own up to what he did and try to repair his relationship with you.
 - 1. Is that child any less a hero than the child who never failed?
 - 2. How proud are you, as the parent of that child?
 - 3. You are consummately proud.
- f. This *Yamim Noraim* season, keep these things in mind as you say the words of the 13 Attributes over and over again.
 - i. The words aren't magic.

- ii. But the gift they assure us of -- the existence of a Parent in the Sky whose love is ever-present, who values truth, and who wants nothing more than to continue to be proud and admire us – that is truly magical.
- iii. It is a gift that makes a full throated apology, and the reconciliation and forgiveness that comes with it, possible.
- iv. It's a gift that assures us that God can be proud of the real me – and that we need not live forever with the self-imposed shame and fear of the lost pocketknife.