

Question: In the city of Izmir a Jewish man left his religion for another, taking with him his minor son. The people of Izmir were unsure whether they were permitted to pray on his behalf, i.e. pray for G-d to return him to His service and place in his heart the impetus to repent with complete repentance, before knowing whether or not there was any openness to or thought of repentance in his mind.

Answer: We must consider two issues.

- 1) Praying for someone else to repent may be forbidden because it seems like a vain prayer<sup>a</sup>, since "All is in the hand of Heaven other than the fear of Heaven<sup>b</sup>", which G-d gave over to human power-to-choose so that there might be reward and punishment in the universe.
- 2) Whether someone else will repent seems to be one of the "deep secrets of the Torah"<sup>c</sup>. Therefore it seems appropriate for human beings to take the attitude that if it seems appropriate to Him to cause the apostate to return, He will, and if not, not. Since the only purpose for praying in this case is the glory of His Name may It be blessed, whatever seems appropriate to Him, He should do, in accordance with His will.

Let us begin by briefly discussing the power-to-choose given to human beings. This power-to-choose is not absolute to the extent that G-d will never affect the hearts of human beings when He wills to do so in accordance with the depth of His thoughts. Rather, choice is sometimes in human hands, but sometimes G-d "inclines the heart". There are verses that say this explicitly, for example "The hearts of kings are in the hands of G-d<sup>d</sup>" and "therefore I did not allow you to touch her<sup>e</sup>". The whole book of Job speaks forcefully about this type of (limitation on the) power-to-choose, which G-d sometimes effects by using suffering to cause one to turn back from an evil path, and sometimes by directly "inclining the heart", as it is written "and I have hardened his heart<sup>f</sup>". And if G-d does this to cause people to do evil, all the more so He would do it for good, as indeed it is written "and I will remove the stone heart from their flesh<sup>g</sup>", "and I will pour My spirit over them<sup>h</sup>", "for behold like matter in the hands of an artisan<sup>i</sup>".

Do not be astonished at this seeming change in G-d's will, at His willingness to control human decisions after having given them power-to-choose. This is not actually a change in Him, may He be blessed. Indeed, He behaves analogously in giving the world over to be run by the constellations and in accordance with the laws of nature, but at times overruling them via miracles and wonders, as every member of our nation can testify personally, in addition to the famous testimonies of the Torah and prophets - thus "astrologers will speak falsehoods<sup>j</sup>".

No difficulty for this thesis is posed by the Sages' comment<sup>k</sup> on the verse "Who will make it that their hearts be like this to serve and be in awe of Me forever<sup>l</sup>" that Moshe was criticizing the Jews for not responding "You please make it so". In that case the Jews' own prayers and requests would have caused G-d to make it so. This is also the justification of our daily prayer "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah", and of all similar prayers. It is utterly obvious that once a person opens himself to repentance at all, he is assisted in his intention to become pure<sup>m</sup>, and that this is not considered Divine interference with human power-to-choose. Indeed, without His help, may He be blessed, "who could conquer those mighty mountains<sup>n</sup>"?

On the contrary - we can actually use this text to support our thesis. The reason they should have said "You make it so" is that without their request the evil inclination could not be removed from their hearts. Moshe was upset because he thought G-d might grant this to them if they requested it, but clearly it could only happen through their request - otherwise, what would stop Him from doing what He wanted? Furthermore, Moshe didn't pray himself when they failed to rise to the occasion. It is therefore evident that for someone else to pray for this seems a little like a vain prayer, as it appears to be a prayer against G-d's established rule "All is in the hands of Heaven but the fear of Heaven", which is generally true.

The story of Abba Chilkyah and wife in Chapter Seder Taanit<sup>o</sup>, in which Abba Chilkyah says "alternatively, when there were "biryonim" in my neighborhood,

I prayed for their deaths, while she prayed for them to repent, and they did", and it appears that he is explaining why they would have been better off asking his wife to pray for them, as G-d acted in accordance with her prayer, is really not very similar to our case when analyzed closely. This is clear from Rashi, who translates the word "biryani" in the context of that story as "ignorant louts", but in Tractate Berakhot<sup>p</sup> and other places<sup>q</sup> translates the same word as "unbounded people" (as in "unbounded son and bloodshedder<sup>x</sup>"), and in Gittin<sup>s</sup> as "amoral and worthless people". The reason for his differing translations is certainly that he found it difficult that praying for the repentance of these "biryani" was considered good and worthy of reward when, for the reasons explained above, it was like a vain prayer. Thus he explained that they were "ignorant louts", whose lack of education caused them to behave as they did. One can pray for such people to gain knowledge, and as a result repent, just as one prays for the relief of any wound or illness.

It is further possible that even if we don't distinguish the cases, this story cannot be treated as evidence at all. Why should we assume that Abba Chilkyah's wife behaved properly by praying for their repentance, as in general "There is no wisdom in women other than that of the loom<sup>t</sup>"? The clouds may have appeared on her side because she benefited the poor more directly than her husband, as is the case in the story about Mar Ukva in Ketubot<sup>u</sup>, where her feet are not burned while his are! Certainly this is the reason Abba Chilkyah prefaces this explanation of the superiority of his wife's prayer with "alternatively", when "furthermore" seems more appropriate - he was unsure himself whether she had acted properly in praying for the repentance of the "biryani"!

However, neither of these arguments apply to the parallel story in Berakhot<sup>v</sup> involving R. Meir. Rashi there translates "biryani" as "unbounded people", and R. Meir accepts his wife's contention that he should pray for their repentance.

Maharsha challenges R. Meir's wife's contention on the grounds that "All is in the hands of Heaven but the fear of Heaven<sup>w</sup>". He then says that a resolution is easily available, but doesn't provide one. To my mind the resolution is, as per our earlier conclusion, that G-d does occasionally "incline hearts" for His own reasons. Thus R. Meir was not necessarily praying in vain when he prayed for G-d to cause them to repent so that they would stop bothering him.

However, since G-d does not interfere with human power-to-choose without good reason, R. Meir's wife first suggested that he pray for G-d to remove their evil inclination only with regard to the sin of bothering R. Meir, and didn't suggest immediately that R. Meir pray for their repentance. If this interpretation is incorrect, we would be troubled by the "and furthermore", as it seems to be the straightforward explanation of what was already said! Also, why didn't R. Meir's wife pray for them herself, as Abba Chilkyah's wife did?

So certainly it is as we wrote above, that doing so would have been inappropriate, and this story is not identical to the one in Taanit. In this case, R. Meir's wife originally asked only that he pray for the removal of their evil inclination with regard to this specific matter. We have seen that G-d granted several holy people similar requests with regard to themselves because it was decreed against them in Heaven<sup>x</sup>, and that He accepted the decision of the Men of the Great Assembly to banish the evil inclination for idolatry entirely<sup>y</sup>. But to pray for the power-to-choose to be removed from them entirely would have been wrong because of the question raised above.

In the end, though, R. Meir's wife derived from the end of the verse - "and the wicked are no more", which seems redundant once one has said "let causers-of-sin cease from the earth" - that once he had permission to pray for G-d to remove the "biryani"'s annoyance from him, perhaps he was permitted to pray for their complete repentance, as King David of blessed memory had prayed "Let chattaim cease from the earth", "chattaim" with a patach implying that it is causative and thus, as Maharshal explains, refers to the evil inclination which causes sin. She thought that her husband had the right to pray, but that she herself didn't, since the biryani were bothering only him. But before

working through this argument it never occurred to either of them to pray for the "biryani"'s repentance, since for all the above reasons it seemed clear that one ought not to pray that G-d compel the repentance of wicked people who are steadfast in their rebellion.

It is true - and we are aware - that the Ari z"l wrote in The Book of Directed Meditations<sup>z</sup> and the Gate of Unifications<sup>aa</sup> that he commanded a particular pious man whose son had apostasized to cause the son's repentance by having that intention in mind while saying the amidah blessing "Cause us to repent" and adding during that blessing the words "Let it be Your will that You should make a tunnel under the Throne of Glory and receive in repentance x son of y, for Your right hand is extended to receive the repentant". It seems to me that this pious man knew that his son was already reconsidering and regretting what he had done, and as a result his father's prayer was only assisting his repentance. This is implied by the language of the prayer when it says "You should make a tunnel".

Indeed, the Ari himself<sup>bb</sup>, commenting on the amidah blessing "On the righteous", raises the same difficulty, and I quote:

"Regarding that which we pray "and place our portion among them etc.", we could perhaps have said say that this is a prayer for G-d to inspire us to His service, but this is impossible, as the human being possesses the power-to-choose."

I am astonished at his failure to raise the same difficulty with regard to the amidah blessing "Return us". But the truth is that there is no difficulty with regard to either blessing. The Maharsha explains in Berakhot<sup>cc</sup> that these blessings follows the principle "One who comes to purify himself, Heaven assists him<sup>dd</sup>" - even though Heaven assists, we view the purification as being caused by the sinner's coming forward. This also holds true when one includes oneself within a congregation that is seeking G-d's favor in this matter.

Perhaps the Ari z"l had a particular difficulty with regard to the prayer "On the righteous" because in it we ask G-d to place us in the paths of super-piety, and with regard to super-piety there is no assistance from Heaven at all.

With regard to our case, I see a further argument for leniency. I think that a father may pray for his son's repentance. We find that "a son provides merit for his father<sup>ee</sup>", and thus there is no greater pain than watching him behave unmeritoriously, especially as we have found that the father is also punished for the son's apostasy<sup>ff</sup>. This is exactly like the story of R. Meir as we have explained it.

For this reason, the people of Izmir are permitted to pray for the child who has been "captured<sup>gg</sup>" with the apostate. If physical pain enables us to pray for another's repentance how much more so the pain of the Divine presence! Also, since the apostate's child is a minor, and we have the principle that "we are the fathers of orphans<sup>hh</sup>", the child's wellbeing is our concern, and with regard to such cases we apply the verse "open your mouth on behalf of the dumb<sup>ii</sup>". Also, since there is no hope for the child other than via the father's repentance, there is room also to pray for the father lest he completely assimilate. Perhaps if there is another potential way out for the child one should pray for that other way to be realized rather than for the repentance of the father.

In the prayer-leader's book for fast days<sup>jj</sup> I have found the following text:

"Let it be Your will that You should tunnel . . . and those who are stiff-necked, return them to You in repentance via the thoughts of repentance in their hearts, so that they return in complete repentance."

It seems to me that this text was written by a very precise author, and that he deliberately and appropriately extended the prayer by writing that G-d should return them via the thoughts of repentance already in their hearts, thus making it as if they began repenting on their own and accordingly earned assistance from Heaven.

This is an appropriate text for praying for all the wicked, even those who have completely left the community and no longer believe in Divinity, because it

is impossible that even such people won't at least think about repenting. G-d will treat their thought as if they it were an actual verbal deed of repentance, for with regard to Jews G-d forges a good thought into a deed<sup>kk</sup>. This applies even to those who have left the community, as "even though he sinned He is still a Jew<sup>ll</sup>", as is true with regard to several laws of interest and marriage<sup>mm</sup>.

In Berakhot Chapter HaRoeh<sup>nn</sup>, a discussion about a prayer regarding idolaters concludes that we say straightforwardly "and return the hearts of their servants to Your service". It seems to me that this is not a prayer that G-d should cause them to repent, but rather a prayer for the eradication of idolatry, may it happen speedily and in our day, that will happen in the days of the Messiah our justifier. He will fill the whole land with knowledge of G-d, thus causing the sinners to repent naturally. This is to my mind the intent of this prayer.

Via this explanation we can understand Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar's claim<sup>oo</sup> that even outside Israel we say this prayer, for even outside Israel all idolaters will eventually convert. This seems difficult: Granted that we pray for their conversion, what is meant by "they will eventually convert"? But according to what I have written this makes a great deal of sense. Certainly we cannot pray for this to happen in our day, while human beings have the power-to-choose, that G-d should tilt the hearts of human beings, but rather it refers to the Ultimate future. And Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says "lehitgayer", using the singular, because they will all convert as one. Examine this and you will see it works out easily.

In Ruth Rabbah<sup>pp</sup> this question is asked explicitly regarding that which we say "and turn the hearts of their servants to serve You with truth". Ruth Rabbah asks:

"Do we not therefore turn out to be praying for the wicked?" Said Rabbi Y: It is written YBCHR<sup>qq</sup> - even those who sacked the Temple will be treated faithfully."

It seems to me that Rabbi Y meant by his answer that since it is written YBCHR, we don't judge them all as wicked people, for whom it is forbidden to pray. Rather, most of them are considered as compelled in that they are merely continuing their ancestors' actions and consider their actions proper, and for those considered compelled there is hope even if they sacked the Temple, and it is for them that we pray. The explanation of the Anaf is forced, and my explanation is explicit in the Yerushalmi there<sup>xx</sup>, as is the alternate version, and the matter is clear.

In Masekhet Sotah<sup>ss</sup> at the end of the first chapter it says:

"and he caused many to return from sin<sup>tt</sup>" - He sought mercy for the sinners of Israel who do not believe that there is Divinity, that they should repent."<sup>uu</sup>

Perhaps this is also as explained above, that they should merit complete repentance as a result of the thoughts of repentance in their hearts. Thus he prayed only for the sinners of Israel.

(More investigation is necessary to explain the problematic Sefer Chassidim 688<sup>vv</sup>.)

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## 1. Avodah Zarah 5a-b

תנו רבנן: {דברים ה'} "מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם ליראה אותי ולשמור את מצותי כל הימים" - אמר להן משה לישראל: כפויי טובה בני כפויי טובה! בשעה שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל "מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם", היה להם לומר "תן אתה!" כפויי טובה - דכתיב {במדבר כא} "ונפשנו קצה בלחם הקלוקל".

בני כפויי טובה - דכתיב {בראשית ג} "האשה אשר נתתה עמדי היא נתנה לי מן העץ ואוכל".  
אף משה רבינו לא רמזה להן לישראל אלא לאחר ארבעים שנה, שנאמר {דברים כט} "ואולך אתכם במדבר ארבעים שנה", וכתיב {דברים כט} "ולא נתן ה' לכם לב וגו'".  
אמר רבה: ש"מ לא קאי איניש אדעתיה דרביה עד ארבעין שנין.

The Rabbis taught (in a *beraita*): "Who would make it that they maintain this heart of theirs to be in awe of Me and observe all My commandments forever" - Moshe said to the Jews: Ingrates descended from ingrates! When The Holy One Blessed Be He said to Israel "Who would make it that this heart of theirs etc.", they should have said "You make it so"!

Ingrates - as it is written "our soul loathes this miserable bread".

Descended from ingrates - as it is written, "the woman you placed with me - she gave me from the tree, and I ate".

Moshe didn't even hint to the Jews about the opportunity they had missed until the end of the forty years, as it says "And I led you in the desert forty years", and it is written "and G-d did not give you an understanding heart".

Said Rabbah: Learn from this that a person does not understand his mentor until studying with him for forty years.

## 2. Taanit 23a

אבא חלקיה בר בריה דחוני המעגל הוה, וכי מצטרין עלמא למיטרא, הוו משדרי רבנן לגביה, ובעי רחמי, ואתי מיטרא. זימנא חדא איצטרין עלמא למיטרא. שדור רבנן זוגא דרבנן לגביה למבעי רחמי דניתי מיטרא. אזול לביתיה ולא אשכחוהו. אזול בדברא ואשכחוהו דהוה קא רפיק. הבו ליה שלמא ולא אסבר להו אפיה בפניא. כי הוה מנקט ציבי, דרא ציבי ומרא בחד כתפא וגלימא בחד כתפא. כולה אורחא לא סיים מסאני - כי מטי למיא, סיים מסאניה. כי מטא להיזמי והיגי, דלינהו למניה. כי מטא למתא, נפקא דביתהו לאפיה כי מיקשטא. כי מטא לביתהו, עלת דביתהו ברישא, והדר עייל איהו, והדר עיילי רבנן. יתיב וכריך ריפתא, ולא אמר להו לרבנן "תו כרוכו". פלג ריפתא לינוקי - לקשישא חדא, ולזוטרא תרי. אמר לה לדביתהו: ידענא דרבנן משום מיטרא קא אתו. ניסק לאיגרא וניבעי רחמי - אפשר דמרצי הקדוש ברוך הוא וייתי מיטרא, ולא נחזיק טיבותא לנפשין.

סקו לאיגרא. קם איהו בחדא זזיתא, ואיהו בחדא זזיתא. קדים סלוק ענני מהך זזיתא דדביתהו.

Abba Chilkyah was the grandson of Choni the Circlemaker. When the world needed rain, the Rabbis would send a delegation to him, and he would pray, and it would rain.

Once the world needed rain. The Rabbis sent two rabbis to Abba Chilkyah to ask him to pray for rain. They went to his house but didn't find him, so they went to the field and found him plowing. They greeted him, but he did not return their greeting. When he took his tools, he put them on one shoulder and his cloak on the other shoulder. All the way home he walked barefoot - when he had to walk through water, he put shoes on. When he had to walk through brambles, he took his clothes off. When he came to his village, his wife came out to greet him all made up. When he came to his house, his wife went in first, then he went in, then the rabbis. He sat at the table and cut bread, but did not invite the rabbis to cut pieces for themselves. He cut bread for his children - one piece for the older, two for the younger.

Said his wife to him: I know that the rabbis have come about rain. Let's go to the roof and pray - maybe G-d will have mercy and send rain, and no one will know that we were the cause, so we won't have to receive gratitude.

They went to the roof. She stood in one corner and he in another corner. The first clouds came from her corner.

כי נחית, אמר להו: אמאי אתו רבנן?  
אמרו ליה: שדרי לן רבנן לגבי דמר למיבעי רחמי אמיטרא.  
אמר להו: ברוך המקום שלא הצריך אתכם לאבא חלקיה.  
אמרו ליה: ידעינן דמיטרא מחמת מר הוא דאתא. אלא, לימא לן מר הני מילי דתמיהא לן. מאי טעמא כי יהיבנא למר שלמא לא  
אסבר לן מר אפיה?

אמר להו: שכיר יום הואי, ואמינא לא איפגר.  
ומאי טעמא דרא מר ציבי אחד כתפיה וגלימא אחד כתפיה?  
אמר להו: טלית שאולה היתה. להכי שאל, ולהכי לא שאל.  
מאי טעמא כולה אורחא לא סיים מר מסאניה, וכי מטי למיא סיים מסאניה?  
אמר להו: כולה אורחא חזינא, במיא לא קא חזינא.  
מאי טעמא כי מטא מר להיזמי והיגי דלינהו למניה?  
אמר להו: זה מעלה ארוכה, וזה אינה מעלה ארוכה.  
מאי טעמא כי מטא מר למתא נפקא דביתהו דמר כי מיקשטא?  
אמר להו: כדי שלא אתן עיני באשה אחרת.  
מאי טעמא עיילא היא ברישא, והדר עייל מר אבתרה, והדר עיילין אנן?  
אמר להו: משום דלא בדקיטו לי.

מאי טעמא כי כריך מר ריפתא לא אמר לן איתו כרוכו?  
משום דלא נפישא ריפתא, ואמינא לא אחזיק בהו ברבנן טיבותא בחנן.  
מאי טעמא יהיב מר לינוקא קשישא חדא ריפתא ולזוטרא תרי?  
אמר להו: האי קאי בביתא, והאי יתיב בבי כנישתא.

ומאי טעמא קדים סלוק ענני מהך זזיתא דהוות קיימא דביתהו דמר לעננא דידיה?  
משום דאיתתא שכיחא בביתא ויהבא ריפתא לעני ומקרבא הנייתה, [ואנא יהיבנא] זוזא ולא מקרבא הנייתה.  
אי נמי, הנהו בריוני דהוו בשיבבותן - [אנא] בעי רחמי דלימותו, והיא בעיא רחמי דליהדרו בתיובתא [ואהדרו].

When they came back down, he said to them: Why have the rabbis come?

They replied: The rabbis sent us to you so that you would pray for rain.

He replied: He replied: Blessed be G-d who did not make you dependent on Abba Chilkyah!

They replied: We know that the rain came because of you. But can you explain to us the astonishing things you did earlier? For example, why didn't you return our greeting?

He replied: I am paid for my time, and I didn't want to give my employer less than full value.

Why did you put your tools on one shoulder and your cloak on the other?

He replied: It was a borrowed cloak, and it was lent to cover me, not to hold tools.

Why did you put on shoes only to cross water?

He replied: Everywhere else I could see the hazards.

Why did you take your clothes off to walk through brambles?

He replied: Skin heals, but cloth doesn't.

Why did your wife meet you at the village entrance all made up?

He replied: So I would not look other women.

Why did your wife go in first, then you, then us?

He replied: Because I didn't know you well.

Why did you give the older child one piece of bread, but the younger two pieces?

He replied: The older stays in the house, but the younger one goes to school.

Why did the first clouds come from your wife's side?

Because my wife is generally home, so she gives bread to the poor, which gives them immediate benefit, whereas I give money, which gives delayed benefit.

Alternatively, there were some *biryoni* in our neighborhood - I prayed for their deaths, but she prayed for their repentance, and they repented.

### 3. Taanit 67b

מר עוקבא הוה עניא בשיבביתיה דהוה רגיל כל יומא דשדי ליה ארבעה זוזי בצינורא דדשא. יום אחד אמר: איזיל איחזי מאן קעביד בי ההוא טיבותא. ההוא יומא נגהא ליה למר עוקבא לבי מדרשא. אתיא דביתיה בהדיה. כיון דחזויה דקא מצלי ליה לדשא נפק בתרייהו, רהוט מקמיה. עיילי לההוא אתונא דהוה גרופה נורא. הוה קא מיקליין כרעיה דמר עוקבא. אמרה ליה דביתהו: שקול כרעיך אותיב אכרעאי. חלש דעתיה.

אמרה ליה: אנא שכיחנא בגויה דביתא ומקרבא אהנייתי.

ומאי כולי האי? דאמר מר זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב, ואמרי לה אמר רב הונא בר ביזנא אמר ר"ש חסידא, ואמרי לה א"ר יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי: נוח לו לאדם שימסור עצמו לתוך כבשן האש ואל ילבין פני חברו ברבים".  
מנא לן? דכתיב "היא מוצאת..."

Mar Ukva would send a poor man in his neighborhood four zuzim each day. One day the poor man said to himself: "Let me see who is doing me this great favor". That day Mar Ukva went early to the study hall, and his wife came with him. When the poor man saw them at the hinge, he came out to greet them. They ran from him. They went into an oven whose fire was banked. Mar Ukva's feet burned.

His wife said to him: "Take your feet and rest them on mine".

He became depressed.

She said to him: "I'm in the house and so I give the poor direct benefit".

Why did they go to such an extent? Because Mar Zutra bar Tuvyah said in the name of Rav, or Rav Huna bar Bizna in the name of R. Shimon Chasida, or R. Yochanan in the name of R. Shimon bar Yochai: It is better to throw oneself into a burning furnace than to humiliate someone else publicly.

From where do we know this? From the verse "When she was being taken out (to be burnt), she sent a message to her father in-law saying: I was impregnated by the man to whom these objects belong".

### 4. Sanhedrin 37a

הנהו בריוני דהוה בשיבביתיה דרבי זירא דהוה מקרב להו כי היכי דניהדרו להו בתיובתא, והוּו קפדי רבנן. כי נח נפשייה דרבי זירא, אמרי: "עד האידנא הוה חריכא קטין שקיה דהוה בעי עלן רחמי. השתא, מאן בעי עלן רחמי?" הרהרו בלבייהו ועבדו תשובה:

R. Zayra befriended some *biryoni* in his neighborhood so that they would repent, but the other rabbis objected.

When R. Zayra died, the *biryoni* said: "Until now there was that little cripple to pray for us. Now, who will pray for us?"

They pondered this and then repented.

### 5. Berakhot 10a

הנהו בריוני דהוּו בשבביתיה דרבי מאיר והוּו קא מצערו ליה טובא. הוה קא בעי רבי מאיר רחמי עלויהו כי היכי דלימותו. אמרה ליה ברוריא דביתהו: מאי דעתך? משום דכתיב {תהלים ק"ד} "יתמו חטאים". מי כתיב "חוטאים"? "חטאים" כתיב! ועוד, שפיל לסיפיה דקרא - "ורשעים עוד אינם". כיון דיתמו חטאים, ורשעים עוד אינם? אלא בעי רחמי עלויהו דלהדרו בתשובה, ורשעים עוד אינם.

Some *biryoni* in R. Meir's neighborhood bothered him greatly. He responded by praying for their deaths.

Said Beruria, R. Meir's wife: What are you thinking? That it is written "Let *chattaim* cease". Is it written "*chot'im*" (sinners)? It is written "*chattaim*" (causes of sin)!

Furthermore, look at the end of the verse - "and the wicked are no more". Once it is written that *chattaim* have ceased, what does "and the wicked are no more" add?

Rather, it means "pray that they repent", and thus "the wicked are no more".



## 6. Berakhot 57b

תנו רבנן: הוואה מרקוליס אומר "ברוך שנתן ארך אפים לעוברי רצונו". מקום שנעקרה ממנו עבודת כוכבים אומר "ברוך שעקר עבודת כוכבים מארצו. וכשם שנעקרה ממקום זה, כן תעקר מכל מקומות ישראל, והשב לב עובדיהם לעבדך". ובחוץ לארץ אין צריך לומר "והשב לב עובדיהם לעבדך" מפני שרובה עובדי כוכבים. רבי שמעון בן אלעזר אומר: אף בחוץ לארץ צריך לומר כן, מפני שעתידים להתגייר, שנאמר {צפניה ג'} "אז אהפוך אל עמים שפה ברורה".

The Rabbis taught: One who sees a shrine to Mercury says: "Blessed be the One who is patient with those who transgress His will". One who sees a place from which idolatry has been uprooted says: "Blessed be the One who uprooted idolatry from our land. Just as it was uprooted from this place, so will it uprooted from all places in Israel, and return their servants to Your service". Outside the Land one need not say "and return their servants to Your service". Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: Even outside the Land one must say this, for they will ultimately convert, as it says "then I will convert the nations to a purer language".

## 7. Sotah 14a

דרש רבי שמלאי: מפני מה נתאוה משה רבינו ליכנס לא"י? וכי לאכול מפריה הוא צריך? או לשבוע מטובה הוא צריך? אלא כך אמר משה: הרבה מצות נצטוו ישראל ואין מתקיימין אלא בא"י, אכנס אני לארץ כדי שיתקיימו כולן על ידי. אמר לו הקב"ה: כלום אתה מבקש אלא לקבל שכר? מעלה אני עליך כאילו עשיתם, שנאמר "לכן אחלק לו ברבים ואת עוזי יחלק שלל תחת אשר הערה למות נפשו ואת פושעים נמנה והוא חטא רבים נשא ולפושעים יפגיע". לכן אחלק לו ברבים - יכול כאחרונים ולא כראשונים? ת"ל: ואת עוזי יחלק שלל, כאברהם יצחק ויעקב שהן עוזים בתורה ובמצות.

תחת אשר הערה למות נפשו - שמר עצמו למיתה, שנאמר "ואם אין מחני נא וגו'".  
ואת פושעים נמנה - שנמנה עם מתי מדבר.  
והוא חטא רבים נשא - שכיפר על מעשה העגל.

ולפושעים יפגיע - שביקש רחמים על פושעי ישראל שיחזרו בתשובה.

R. Simlai taught: Why did Moshe want so badly to enter the Land of Israel? Did he need to eat its fruit, or satisfy himself from its other goods?

Rather, Moshe said: The Jews have received many commandments that can only be fulfilled in the Land. Let me enter the Land so that they will all be fulfilled under my leadership.

G-d said to him: Your only purpose is to receive the reward? I will consider it as if you had accomplished this, as it says (Isaiah 53:12) "Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the powerful, because he poured his soul out to the point of death, and was counted among sinners. He bore the sin of many, and interceded for sinners".

"Therefore I will give him a portion among the great" - Perhaps like the later great ones, and not the early great ones? Therefore it says "and he shall divide the spoil with the powerful" - like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were powerful in Torah and mitzvot.

"because he poured his soul out to the point of death" - he declared himself willing to die, as it says "if not, please erase me etc."

"and was counted among sinners" - he was counted among those who died in the desert.

"He bore the sin of many" - he atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf.

"and interceded for sinners" - he prayed for the sinners of Israel to repent.

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a a prayer regarding something that prayer cannot change, e.g. a prayer to change the past – see Berakhot 54a.

b Talmud Berakhot 33b and others

c The phrase is taken from a Talmudic dialogue (source?) in which King Chizkiyah tries to avoid having children because he sees prophetically that his children will be evil, and is told that such calculations are not for him to make - "what are you doing dealing with these deep secrets of the Torah".

d Mishlei 21:1. "The heart of a king is like waves of water in the hand of G-d – He inclines it to whichever side He desires." Rabbi Landsofer seems to be quoting from memory, as the verse says "king" rather than "kings".

e Bereishit 20:6

f Exodus 10:1

g Ezekiel 11:19

h ?

i Jeremiah 18:6

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j This appears to be a conflation of Zechariah 10:2 and Isaiah 47:13

k Talmud Avodah Zarah 5:1

l Deuteronomy 5:25

m Talmud Yoma 38a and others.

n See Sukkah 52a, which puts this phrase in the mouth of the righteous when shown the evil inclination after their deaths (the wicked see it as a mere thread). The Talmudic text is in Hebrew, but Rabbi Landsofer quotes it in Aramaic.

o In the story, a delegation is sent to Abba Chilkyah to ask him to pray for rain. Abba Chilkyah and his wife eventually both pray, and their prayer is successful, but the first clouds come from the direction toward which the wife was praying.

p 10a

q I have found only Sanhedrin 37a. Note that Rashi does translate it there as “unbounded people”, but says the etymology is “lout”.

r Ezekiel 18:10

s 56a

t Talmud Yoma 66b

u Talmud Ketubot 67b

v Talmud berakhot 10a. R. Meir is harassed by “biryoni”, and prays for their death. Beuriah, R. Meir’s wife, convinces him to pray for their repentance instead.

w See ftnt. 2

x See Talmud Kiddushin 81a, but there is no mention there of requests

y

z Derush 6

aa Shaar 18

bb

cc 10a

dd See ftnt. 13

ee Talmud Sanhedrin 104a

ff?

gg See Talmud Shabbat 68b

hh See Talmud Bava Kamma 37a

ii See Talmud Ketubot 36a and others

jj Derush 6?

kk Kiddushin 40a

ll Sanhedrin 44a. See the discussion of this phrase in Jacob Katz, [Halakhah Vagabbalah](#)

mm See for example Beit Yosef Even HaEzer 42:5

nn 57b

oo Ibid

pp 3:2

qq Kohelet 9:4

rr See Berakhot Chapter 9 Halakhah 1 (page 13 column 2 in the Venice edition).

ss Sotah 14a

tt Malachi 2:6. The Talmud actually cites Isaiah 53:12, “and he caused the sins of many to be forgiven”.

uu While this is presented as a quote, and R. Landsofer may have remembered it as such, the Talmud states only that Moshe atoned for the sin of the Golden Calf and that he prayed for the sinners of Israel to repent.

vv