RETURN US TO YOUR TORAH
BACK TO BLANK
Rape victim meets attacker to forgive him


A rape victim has met her attacker in prison to tell him she has forgiven him - and called it a "great" experience to seek "peace and forgiveness together".

Katja Rosenberg, 40, from London, said she felt she could forgive soon after the 2006 rape, believing things must have gone wrong in her attacker's life.
"You wouldn't ever do that if you felt happy," she told BBC Radio 5 live.

Of their meeting last year, she said he was "completely" remorseful and "so focused" on no longer being violent.
Ms Rosenberg was cycling home from a drink after work when she was attacked by a 16-year-old stranger.
He was jailed for 14 years after admitting that attack and another rape of a 51-year-old woman shortly afterwards.

"I realized very much straight away or after the incident, it hadn't really or would not traumatize me the way it usually traumatizes people," Ms Rosenberg told 5 live's Victoria Derbyshire.
"It had a very strong impact on my life but not so much in the way that I couldn't make peace with that having been done to me, strangely more about life being very sad or things going wrong in life.
"I felt very, very sad, but I didn't feel attacked."
She continued: "Life deals very different cards to all of us, and why somebody does something which is not applaudable - it was more about thinking, something's wrong with society.
"Some of us don't know where to go. You wouldn't ever do that if you felt happy."
Ms Rosenberg, who was also punched in the face, chest and stomach before being raped, said she had always felt in the years since that she should meet her attacker.
She finally visited him in prison last September, for a meeting arranged through the restorative justice scheme with the support of the Probation Service.
Partly, this was motivated by a wish to assure him "life's not hopeless, that he knows he's got a future", she said. "I just felt I could give that. I also thought the exchange would be good for me to somehow get some kind of closure - I mean, I didn't really need a 'Sorry', but it was somehow just good to see that you walk into the same direction of peace and forgiveness together."

She added: "He was in no way looking for excuses or explanations. He was very, very self-effacing - and I thought that was fantastic in itself. "He just really is very, very upset about his past."

A spokeswoman for the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) said rape was a particularly sensitive and complex offence to handle with restorative justice, and that it was quite rare for rape victims to meet their attackers. "In a rape case, it's vital that the victim doesn't get re-victimized by meeting the offender," she said. "Similarly, if there's any danger that a rapist - or other sexual offender - is going to achieve sexual gratification from the meeting, it's likely to be inappropriate."

She added: "It sounds like Katja Rosenberg had a very unique response to her attack."

In the Daily Mirror newspaper, columnist Alison Phillips said Ms Rosenberg's story was "incredibly inspirational" and that she had "taken control of what happened to her that day". The RJC spokeswoman said restorative justice "meets victims' needs in a way that a court process alone can't, by giving them the chance to tell offenders the real impact of their crime, to get answers to their questions, and an apology."

"Hearing from the victim they've harmed holds the offender to account, helps them understand the real impact of what they've done, to take responsibility and make amends," she said. "Many victims want to see the offender turn their life around and stop offending, because they don't want anyone else to go through what they have been through."

While Ms Rosenberg has waived her own right as a victim of rape to anonymity for life, she has insisted that her attacker not be identified in media coverage to allow him to start to build a new life.

She told 5 live: "It's just great to go to a healthy place together. It's just great to go to a place that overrides or reaches beyond what happened."

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- **WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO THIS STORY?**
- **IS MS ROSENBERG ADMIRABLE?**
- **DO YOU BELIEVE FORGIVENESS IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE?**
FATHER AND TORAH

Tehillim 103
The way a father has mercy on his children, so Hashem has mercy on those who fear Him.

Tur Orach Chaim 115
It was instituted to say Our Father in the brachos of Hashiveinu and Selach Lanu and not so by other brachos is because of the idea that father must teach his son Torah, therefore we say to return us to Your Torah.

Abudraham
It is comparable to a prince who is taken captive overseas when he is young. If he wants to return, even after many years, he is not embarrassed to return, for he says that I am returning to my inheritance, so too a scholar, when he separates from the Torah and involves himself in useless acts he can always return to the Torah, even after many years, for he can say that he is returning to that which is rightfully his, and this is why it says Our father, for the son is returning to his inheritance bequeathed to him by His father.

Why do you think Torah is specifically mentioned with regard to returning?

What is the connection between Torah and calling God our father?
Nefesh Hachaim 4:31

"I pour out my heart like water” just as waters purify the Jewish people and everything created in the world, so too the words of Torah are a form of purification for the Jewish people wherever they may live. Come and see how great the power of Torah is, for it purifies the sinners amongst the Jewish people when they repent, even from idol worship, as it says “I will sprinkle on them waters of purification and they will become pure.”

For the main form of complete repentance out of life can only come about through proper engagement in Torah, as it says that one of the ways to acquire to Torah is to love Hashem, as it says “Return us, Our Father, to Your Torah, and accept a complete repentance from before You.”

Vilna Gaon: Commentary on Mishlei

And that which it says will you be King over us, or will you rule over us, the king is equal amongst all the people and they appoint him king, however a ruler is like a dictator, he is stronger than everyone else and conquers them. And this is what it means when it says that Hashem will be the King, for then the foreign nations will accept Him as King, for now He rules over them by force.

TORAH TO COME BACK

KING OF SERVICE

The title of King is specifically used in reference to our relationship with God as opposed to other nations to whom He is referred to as a Ruler.

TORAH IS OFTEN COMPARED TO WATER. WHY DO YOU THINK TORAH IS SO CLEANSING?
**Shemoneh Esrei**

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<th>BASED ON THIS, WHY DO WE ASK “AND BRING US CLOSER, OUR KING, TO YOUR SERVICE”?</th>
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<td>And bring us close, Our King, to Your worship, this refers to the worship of mitzvos which a person is obligated to serve like a servant, and therefore it says Our King, and we find that mitzvos are called worship.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Abudraham</strong></th>
<th>אבדרהם שמונה עשרה</th>
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| Our King, and we find that mitzvos are called worship. | עלbservה של מענה ומנהיגים כ模范 וכתלמוד בברכות דא |}

**THE POWER OF TESHUVA**

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<th>Talmud Bavli: Pesachim 54a</th>
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| There were seven things created before the world, and they are Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Hell, The Heavenly Throne, the Holy Temple, and the name of the Messiah. | שבעה דברים נבראו לפני שנברא העולם, ואלו הן תורה ותשובה וגן עדן והו建て בשמים ובית המקדש והשם של เมשיח |}

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<th>WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS THAT THESE THINGS WERE CREATED BEFORE THE WORLD?</th>
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<td>Rabbi Avihu said: In the place where a master of Teshuva stands, even perfectly righteous people cannot stand.</td>
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<th>Talmud Bavli: Brachos 34b</th>
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| Rabbi Avihu said: In the place where a master of Teshuva stands, even perfectly righteous people cannot stand. | אמר רב אביה: מקום שבלי תשובה 우מודין - זכרים נמוכים זכרים זמוכין |}

| WHY DO YOU THINK THAT PEOPLE WHO RETURN TO GOD ARE CONSIDERED SO SPECIAL? |
|---|---|
The Midrash relates that after Kayin killed his brother Hevel, his father, Adam HaRishon, asked him, “What was your judgment?” Kayin answered, “I did teshuvah, and the full impact of justice was not applied to me.” “Such is the power of teshuvah?!” Adam exclaimed. “I did not realize that by doing teshuvah a person’s past misdeeds are erased so completely and considered by God as if they had never taken place!”

| Bereishis Rabbah 22 | וכם שנאמר: "אָלָּם אֶמְעַת בְּדוּכַת, אַל-לֹּא יְשַׁעֵר הַשׁוּבָה וּנְפַשְׁתוֹת, הַתָּהוֹל אָדָם = אֲלַמִּי הָרָאשׁוֹם = כִּי יִהְיֶה כָּךְ שָׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלֵי אָל-יוֹיִית יוֹדֵעַ | מה נעשנ בְּאָדָם הָרָאשׁוֹם אֲלֵי כָּלִים נְעַשֶּׁת בְּדוּכַת, אָל-לֹא יְשַׁעֵר הַשׁוּבָה וּנְפַשְׁתּוֹת, הַתָּהוֹל אָדָם = אֲלַמִּי הָרָאשׁוֹם = כִּי יִהְיֶה כָּךְ שָׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלֵי אָל-יוֹיִית יוֹדֵעַ |

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WHAT DOES THIS MIDRASH TELL YOU ABOUT THE POWER OF TESHUVA?

HOW DOES IT HELP EXPLAIN THE PREVIOUS SOURCE?

EVERYDAY IS THE DAY

Avos D’Rabbi Nosson

One should repent one day before his death. The students asked R’ Eliezer, how does a person know when his day of death is to repent? He said to them certainly he should repent every day for maybe he will die tomorrow and it will come out that his entire life he is involved in repentance.

WHAT INTENTION SHOULD WE HAVE WHEN WE SAY THE BLESSING OF HASHIVEINU?
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

❖ Forgiveness is a central idea in Judaism. God forgives us for anything we do towards Him providing there is genuine repentance.
❖ We ask God to help us return to Him, as a Father through our inheritance, the Torah.
❖ Torah is the unique path to access repentance because it is the source of everything and is cleansing and purifying like water.
❖ We approach God as a King who we have accepted on ourselves and ask Him to allow us access to Him through service and mitzvos.
❖ The power of Teshuva is so strong that it can literally erase all sin, so much so that a true Master of Teshuva can be stronger than a righteous person.
❖ We never know when our last day will be, so we take the opportunity every day to return back to God in this blessing.