

Excerpt from Midrash L'olam, Chapter 3

ORIGINAL TRANSLATION BY HOWARD KOSOVSKÉ

Concerning the Matter of Repentance

A person should always see himself as if [his lifetime's deeds are hanging evenly balanced] half innocent and half guilty. If he performs [just] one *mitzvah*, happy shall he be for he tips the balance [totally] to the side of innocence. If he commits [just] one transgression, woe unto him for he tips the balance [totally] to the side of guilt, just as Scripture teaches, *A person who commits one sin shall destroy much good.*¹

A person should always see himself as if being close to dying. For if he performs [just] one *mitzvah*, all of his sins will be forgiven; and if he commits just one transgression, all of his good deeds will be reckoned as being not [worth] anything [at all].

A person should never consider himself a sinner. If he thinks of himself as a sinner, it will not be difficult in his eyes to commit a trespass because he will say, "Since I am a sinner, what does this additional sin add to all of my transgressions?"² Our Sages [consequently] taught, Do not be evil in your own sight.³

A person should always be afraid [because] of and feel angst over his sins. Let him return in full repentance before the Holy-One-of-Blessing from whom he should seek forgiveness and atonement.

A person should always stir up his Good Inclination [to gain sway] over his Evil Inclination, just as Scripture teaches, *Stir up and you will not sin.*⁴ If that works, well and good,⁵ but if not, let him recite the *Shema*, just as Scripture teaches, *Commune in your heart upon your bed.*⁶ If that works, well and good, but if not, let him be mindful of the day of death, just as Scripture teaches, *and be silent, Selah.*⁷

¹ Ecc. 9:18. This is a slight distortion of the original text which means, *One sinner will destroy much good.*

² Lit., for he will say, 'Since he is a sinner, what will this trespass add to all of his transgressions?'

³ M. Avot 2:13. Lit., Do not be evil before yourself.

⁴ Ps. 4:5. The text in its original context means *Tremble, and you will not sin.*

⁵ Lit., If it goes, it is good.

⁶ Ps. 4:9. The midrash understands the words, *Commune in your heart upon your bed*, to be a reference to the recitation of the bedtime *Shema*.

⁷ Ibid.