

THE CONFESSION

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Joseph and his younger brother Benny went with their father to the synagogue on the Saturday night before *Rosh Hashanah*, for the special first *Selichot* service. It was the first time that Benny went to the synagogue at such an unusual hour, for it was well past midnight. He had, however, managed to get some sleep that Sabbath afternoon, and was wide-awake.

Benny was still too young to say the prayers, but he knew that *Selichot* meant "forgiveness", and that everybody was praying to G-d for forgiveness. He sat near his father and watched him all the time. He had never seen his father looking so serious before, especially when he was saying a certain prayer with his head bent down, at the same time touching his heart again and again with his right hand.

After the service, Benny asked his older brother about it. Joseph opened the prayer book and showed him the prayer.

"This is the prayer of Confession," he explained.

"What is confession?" asked Benny.

"Well, when you do something wrong and you say, 'I'm sorry I did so-and-so, *that* is confession."

"What does this prayer say?"

"This prayer follows the *Aleph-Beit*. You see, *Oshamnu* begins with an *aleph*, *Bogadnu* --with a *beit*, and so on. These words mean, 'We have sinned& we have been false& we have robbed& But what's the matter, Benny? Why are you crying?'"

"I thought father was the most wonderful man in the world. How could he do such things?!"

"Wait a minute! You don't really think *he* did these things, do you Benny?"

"Then, why did he say so? And he meant it! I watched him!"

Joseph could not help smiling. "Listen," he said, " I'll explain it to you. This prayer is said by all Jews, even by the holiest Rabbis. You see, all Jews are like one body. When some part of the body hurts, the whole body is sick. When one Jew sins, he hurts our whole people. Therefore, the prayer mentions all possible sins, in the order of the *Aleph-Beit*, that any Jew, anywhere, may have done. That's why the prayer is *We* have sinned --that is, all together! This goes to show how responsible we are for one another, and how we must always help each other to do only good&"

Benny wiped his tears and felt much better, for he knew that his father was still the most wonderful man in the world, and he was praying not only for himself, but also for others.

Taken from:

http://www.chabadofboulder.com/holidays/JewishNewYear/template_cdo/aid/1012/jewish/The-Confession.htm