

Psalm 32

Joseph, who resisted the temptations of Potiphar's wife, is an example of faithfulness under pressure. King David, who succumbed to the temptation for Bathsheba and paid for it, is an example of repentance. That comparison is why this psalm is the Haftarah reading for the week.

David was called "He who lifted the burden of repentance" (Moed Katan16b). This is the first of many psalms focusing on the subject of repentance.

See <http://nazarenespace.com/profiles/blogs/psalm-32-a-detailed>

According to the Sage Menachem ben Solomon Meiri (1249 – 1306) a "Maskil" is a musical instrument that derives its name from its capacity to enlighten the human intellect. The chords of the Maskil focus the mind upon what is being said. Furthermore it inspired the heart to repentance.

Meiri holds that the intentional sin discussed here is removed only through painful affliction; as we find, 'and they will suffer for their iniquity' (**Numbers 18:23**).

He goes on to explain that in the first two verses of the psalm David enumerates four different groups of people who will enter the Hereafter cleansed of sin. However their means of achieving this state differ greatly. The man described as cleansed through affliction represents the first group.

However, it's hard to see how these categories can apply to anyone but Christ.

Psalm 32:1 - "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

"...whose sin is covered."

This is not the word for "cover," kippur, used for atonement on the mercy seat. But it provides another way of seeing the same thing.

kâçâh, kaw-saw'; a primitive root, to clothe or cover. Often used of sin - "to cover over sin" i.e. to pardon.

Psalm 85:2 - "Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered (kâçâh) all their sin."

Ezekiel 16:8 - "I spread my skirt over thee, and covered (kâçâh) thy nakedness"

Compare **Ruth 3:9** - "I am Ruth your handmaid: spread therefore your skirt over your handmaid; for you are a near kinsman." as a picture of Christ and the Bride.

Rabbi Radak (1160–1235) quotes his father, who explains that this refers to the man who has an abundance of merits and righteous deeds to his credit, but has also

committed a relatively minor sin. This misdeed is covered by his countless merits and is not visible, like a lone kernel of millet which fell into many bushels of wheat.

But this is more suitable to our pardoning the transgressions of others against us, than for God's forgiveness.

Compare:

Proverbs 10:12 - "Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs."

1 Peter 4:8 - "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins."

1 Corinthians 13:5 - love "keeps no record of wrongs"

This doesn't mean we should ignore it or "sweep sin under the rug." In interpersonal relationships, love "covers" sin in that it is willing to forgive, but also is willing to rebuke with discretion and restraint. Love "covers" when it draws a person back to Christ's true covering of sin, which he accomplished through his atoning work by shedding his blood on the cross.

Psalm 32:2 - "Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

"...to whom the Lord does not account iniquity" - Although he has sinned, this man has repented so sincerely that Elohim ascribes no sin to him, having forgiven him completely (Rashi).

"...and whose spirit is without deceit or guile." This is a category of the righteous composed of "those who do not contemplate deceitful acts," according to Meiri.

Only Christ fits that category.

Psalm 32:3 - "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long."

"When I refrained from confessing my sins before You" (Rashi).

Psalm 32:5 - "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou (already) forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah."

This statement is in the present tense to indicate that David continuously confesses his sins and seeks forgiveness for them (Rashi). i.e. David walked in repentance.

Rashi and Sforno comment that this alludes to the harsh rebuke which Nathan the Prophet hurled against David after he sinned concerning BathSheba. David responded with a heartfelt confession: 'I have sinned to the LORD' (**2 Samuel 12:13**). Then Nathan informed David that God had completely forgiven his transgression with BathSheba. The Zohar (Bereishis 8b) says that Nathan made this pronouncement on Yom Kippur.

Thus, the Ashkenazi Jews recite this psalm on the sabbath before Yom Kippur.

God's forgiveness here seems more morally and ethically shocking than David's sin. David's adultery and murder, completely forgiven? How can that be? Under the Mosaic Law, both sins, adultery (**Leviticus 20:10**) and murder (**Leviticus 24:17**), were punishable by death.

But this is tempered by God's mercy for the repentant. Repentance is counted as if one had perfectly kept the Law and properly done every sacrifice, according to the Talmud. This was incarnated in Jesus and fulfilled on the Cross.

Psalm 103:14-15 - "Just as a father has compassion on his children, So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him. For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust. As for man, his days are like grass..."

Consequences of Sin

There were still consequences for David's sin.

Galatians 6:7-9 - "God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

As a result of David's sin with Bathsheba, he would now reap many great pains; among them: a son's betrayal, the verbal abuse by Shimei, and then the physical abuse and death threats of Absalom.

Nathan hinted of a fourfold restitution:

2 Samuel 12:6 - "And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."

It could be an allusion to the death of four of David's sons:

Bathsheba's first son (2 Samuel 12:18);
Amnon (2 Samuel 13:28-9);
Absalom (2 Samuel 16:14-15); and
Adonijah (1 Kings 2:25).

There were four disasters marking the final days of David's reign:

Amnon's rape of his sister Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-22) and his death at the hand of his brother Absalom (2 Samuel 13:23-33).
Absalom's treasonous rebellion (2 Samuel 15:1-18:8) and death at the hand of Joab (2 Samuel 18:9-19:8).
Sheba the Bichrites rebellion (2 Samuel 20:1-22) and the plague following David's numbering of the people (2 Samuel 24:1-25).
The plot of Adonijah to grasp the throne, endangering Solomon and Bathsheba's lives (1 Kings 1:1-53).

The summary: “the sword shall never depart from your house. ... I will raise up evil against you from your own household,” and “the child also that is born to you shall surely die” (2 Samuel 12:10–11, 14).

But part of genuine repentance is the grace to go forward—no matter what life may bring. And that’s what David did.

*See “David's Sin, God's Grace and the Inescapable Consequences of Sin”
<http://buff.ly/2uvSgu4>*

“...my iniquity I do not hide...” We must recognize and take responsibility for our sins.

The words “I have sinned” in **2 Samuel 12:13** are followed by a pause in the Torah, i.e., an open space left after the word “sinned.” This indicates that, originally, David had intended to continue his confession, but Nathan interrupted him. The confession of the penitent should consist of at least three words, I have sinned [Unintentionally], I have committed iniquity [intentionally], I have rebelled (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 1:2). This is what the High Priest confesses of the nation of Israel on Yom Kippur.

Psalm 32:6 - “For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.”

David did not pray that afflictions (which are likened to the raging waters) should not reach him at all, for without affliction one cannot be cleansed of his sins. Rather, he prayed that he should not be overwhelmed by a sudden wave of tragedy (Metzudas David).

Psalm 32:9 (NET) - “Do not be like an unintelligent horse or mule, which will not obey you unless they are controlled by a bridle and bit.”

Talmud Berachos 7a: ‘One self-inflicted blow of rebuke inside the heart of a man is far more effective than many external beatings.’

Psalm 32:10 - “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.”

Like Joseph, who said **Genesis 50:20** - “...you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good.”

Romans 8:28 - “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.”

Psalm 32:11 - “Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.”

“Cry out in joy, all upright of heart.” This literally means make others cry out in joy. As the righteous rejoice over their own good fortune, let them share their experiences with all men of upright hearts so that they, too, may be made happy by the knowledge of God’s goodness (Radak).