

# I'm Sorry, So Sorry

## Topic

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur

## Grade Level(s)

3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

## Big Ideas

Asking for *mehilah/selilah* is not easy, but doing so can help to repair and grow relationships among people.

Holidays present periodic opportunities to reflect on interpersonal relationships and how they can be improved.

## Learning Targets

Students will:

1. Understand the tradition to apologize to people leading up to and during the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*
2. Consider what goes into making a sincere apology
3. Develop a plan to sincerely ask for *mehilah/selilah* from the people in their lives

## Relevant Vocabulary

עֲשֶׂרֶת יָמֵי תְּשׁוּבָה ( <i>Aseret Yemei Teshuvah</i> )	The Ten Days of Repentance (The ten days from Rosh Hashanah through Yom Kippur)
מְחִילָה/סְלִיחָה ( <i>Mehilah/Selilah</i> )	Forgiveness
רַחוּם וְחַנוּן ( <i>Rahum v'Hanun</i> )	Compassionate and Gracious (as attributes of God in the Bible)
וַיִּקְרָא ( <i>Vayikra</i> )	The Book of Leviticus
דְּבָרִים ( <i>Devarim</i> )	The Book of Deuteronomy
שְׁמוֹת ( <i>Shemot</i> )	The Book of Exodus

## Materials / Technology Needed

- Sorry! board games (An online version is available [here](#).)
- “I’m Sorry” Memes. Some examples are [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).
- [Poll Everywhere](#)

## Prepare in Advance

Set up Poll Everywhere (if using it) with questions for learners.

## Background

From [Brenda Lee](#) to [U2](#) to the [Decemberists](#) to [Taylor Swift](#), artists have used their music to make amends, publicly asking for forgiveness for something real or imagined.

Asking for *mehilah*, essentially the act of saying “I am sorry,” is a particularly important concept in Jewish tradition. According to the Talmud, Yom Kippur atones for transgressions between people and God; but people must ask for *mehilah* and receive it (and therefore give it as well) in order to atone for interpersonal transgressions (see Mishnah [Bava Kama 8:7](#) and Mishnah [Yoma 8:9](#)).

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While the Torah commands people not to hold grudges ([Vayikra 19:18](#)), the idea behind being open to giving *mehilah* can also be seen as trying to follow the Torah's dictate to walk in the ways of God (e.g. [Devarim 28:9](#)) as God is described as *rahum v'hanun* and forgiving iniquity ([Shemot 34:6-7](#)). These attributes of God are a central part of the traditional liturgy in the days leading up to and during the *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah*.

The Rambam points out that, while one should seek *mehilah* and *selihah* throughout the year, the time from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur is an especially good time to do so (*Mishnah Torah*, [Laws of Repentance 2:6](#)). As such, it is a custom in many communities for people to seek *mehilah*\* from loved ones and friends during this time.

It is worth noting that one is not obligated to continue to ask for *mehilah* if the wronged party is unwilling accept an apology (*Mishneh Torah*, [Laws of Repentance 2:9](#)).

\* Note that, while the Rambam does mention both *mehilah* and *selihah* in the *Mishneh Torah*, it has become common in many places to use shorthand and ask just for *mehilah*.

### Description of Activities

1. Divide learners into groups to play Sorry!
2. After learners play, ask why they think the game is called Sorry!
  - a. Steer discussion to issues of needing to send opponents back in order to win the game.
  - b. Ask: Do you really feel bad when you send someone back? Is it really a sincere apology when you say "Sorry" for sending someone back during the game?
3. Transition the discussion to real-life apologies.
4. Explain that Yom Kippur can help us focus on how we can be better, but only true *mehilah* makes things right between two people. The *Aseret Yemei Teshuvah* are a special time to ask for *mehilah* from people you might have wronged, intentionally or unintentionally during the year.
5. Show "I'm Sorry" memes. For each meme, use Poll Everywhere to ask learners whether the apology seems sincere and why. If technology is not an option, simply use a show of hands and ask learners to share their ideas.
6. Discuss: What common elements contributed to the meme apologies seeming sincere and what common elements contributed to the apologies seeming insincere?

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7. On their own, learners brainstorm three people from whom they will ask *mehilah* and compose apologies. Apologies can take whatever form learners feel comfortable with. Some possibilities include:
  - a. Writing a letter
  - b. Speaking with the person
  - c. Creating a meme
  - d. Choosing a song
    - i. **For more advanced learners:**
      1. Learners compare and contrast different forms of apology. How are the different forms more or less effective? How might they seem more or less sincere?
      2. Learners discuss how the response of the person being apologized to affects the person apologizing. At which point should a person be absolved even if the recipient of the apology will not accept it? What if someone sends a letter but the letter is never received?
8. If learners feel comfortable doing so, do a check-in after *Yom Kippur* to see how their requests for *mehilah* went.

### Differentiation Options

Knowing that students learn in a variety of ways and modalities, the following options are provided to adjust the above lesson to meet the unique needs of your learners.

#### **For learners who need more assistance**

- Learners choose a meme to give as an apology letter.
- Learners record a sample apology using different tones of voice.

#### **For learners who need extension opportunities**

- Learners create a rubric for what makes a good apology.
- Learners search the Maḥzor for the text of *Shemot* 34: 6 – 7. In what context do the attributes of God appear?