

## Ways Of Atonement

Contributed by Michael  
 Tuesday, 09 May 2006  
 Last Updated Sunday, 09 July 2006

The Road To Rectification2. Ways Of AtonementWe have already seen the halachic severity of wasting semen. To start off on the path of tikun, we will quote the detailed remedies listed in the Kitzur Shulchan Oruch. (Ch. 152) In doing so, we don't mean to suggest that a person follow each and every item on the list. Rather, it is important to see the depth of repentance that the halacha demands.

1. One who desires to avoid this sin should guard his mouth against obscene talk, lies, tale bearing, slander and mockery. He should likewise guard his ears against listening to such speech. One should also be careful to fulfill his vows, not worry too much, and guard himself against lewd thoughts. Before retiring, he should engage in the study of Torah, or he should recite the first four chapters of the Psalms, and he should not sleep alone in a room.
2. The means of salvation for one who has succumbed to this sin are recorded in the book "Yesod Yosef" which the author culled from holy and ancient texts. I will only cite some of them briefly: he should make an endeavor to be a Sandek, to have infants circumcised on his lap, especially for poor families. He should increase his donations to charity, observe the Sabbath properly, honor it and light many candles. He should honor and love students of Torah, pray with fervor and tears, cultivate humility, and when insulted he should be quiet and forgiving. When performing a precept, he should do it energetically and speedily, until it warms him, especially when preparing the matzot for Pesach. He should raise his children in the study of Torah and train them to be G-d fearing; raise an orphan in his house and treat him as he treats his own children. He should engage himself in the noble act of dowering poor brides. He should be called up to the reading of the Torah at least once a month, pronounce the blessings in an audible voice, look into the Torah and read silently with the reader. He should be one of the first ten men who come to the synagogue, and awake in the middle of the night to recite the midnight lament (Tikun Hatzot) for the destruction of the Temple. If he is unable to rise at midnight, he should perform this ritual thereafter, and he should love peace and pursue peace.

The Kitzur Shulchan Oruch continues:

Whoever has had a pollution at night, G-d forbid, shall upon awakening in the morning, wash his hands, and say with a contrite heart, "Master of the Universe, I have done this unwittingly, but it has been caused due to evil musings and reflections. May it be therefore Thy will, O my G-d, and G-d of my fathers, that Thou, in Thy great mercy, erase this iniquity of mine, and save me from sinful thoughts, forever and ever. Amen, so may it be Thy will." (Ch. 151)

The Arizal said that to do atonement for spilling semen in vain, a person should make 84 fasts for each transgression. If he sinned many times, he should conduct a cycle of 84 fasts three times in his lifetime, or 252 fasts. Today, because people are weaker than in days past, most rabbis frown on excessive fasting. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note the depth of cleansing required to uproot the stain of wasting semen, and the enormous effort required to atone for the egotistic pleasures of one's past. (Tanya, Letter of Tshuva 83) Today, increased Torah learning, acts of kindness, and the generous giving of charity are recommended instead of rigorous flagellations and fasts. (Siddur of the Gra, Pgs.583-584) Rabbi Eliahu Leon Levi, who has championed the importance of Tikun HaBrit in Israel for over forty years, stresses the role of special prayers, called "Tikunim," to rectify the transgressions of the past.