# Yonah, Iyov, & Darth Vader: What do Tragic Heroes Teach us about Repentance?

Source Sheet by Raphael Elspas

# 1. Darth Vader

#### Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith

**PALPATINE**: You are fulfilling your destiny, Anakin. Become my apprentice. Learn to use the dark side of the Force.

**ANAKIN**: I will do whatever you ask.

PALPATINE: Good.

**ANAKIN**: Just help me save Padme's life. I can't live without her. I won't let her die. I want the power to stop death.

**PALPATINE**: To cheat death is a power only one has achieved, but if we work together, I know we can discover the secret.

ANAKIN kneels before PALPATINE.

**ANAKIN**: I pledge myself to your teachings. To the ways of the Sith.

**PALPATINE**: Good. Good. The Force is strong with you. A powerful Sith you will become. Henceforth, you shall be known as Darth . . . Vader.

#### Definitions

- **Tragic Hero:** a protagonist who has some downfall caused by something internal or external
- Tragic Flaw/Hamartia: the flaw that causes the downfall of the hero
- What makes Darth Vader/Anakin the tragic hero? What is his tragic flaw?

#### Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi

VADER: The Emperor has been expecting you.

LUKE: I know, father.

VADER: So, you have accepted the truth.

LUKE: I've accepted the truth that you were once Anakin Skywalker, my father.

VADER (turning to face him): That name no longer has any meaning for me.

LUKE: It is the name of your true self. You've only forgotten. I know there is good in you. The Emperor hasn't driven it from you fully. That is why you couldn't destroy me. That's why you won't bring me to your Emperor now.

Vader looks down from Luke to the lightsaber in his own black-gloved hand. **He seems to ponder Luke's words.** 

VADER (indicating lightsaber): I see you have constructed a new lightsaber.

Vader ignites the lightsaber and holds it to examine its humming, brilliant blade.

VADER: Your skills are complete. Indeed, you are powerful, as the Emperor has foreseen.

They stand for a moment, Vader extinguishes the lightsaber.

LUKE: Come with me.

VADER: Obi-Wan once thought as you do.

Luke steps close to Vader, then stops. Vader is still.

VADER: You don't know the power of the dark side. I *must* obey my master.

LUKE: I will not turn... and you'll be forced to kill me.

VADER: If that is your destiny.

LUKE: Search your feelings, father. You can't do this. I feel the conflict within you. Let go of your hate.

VADER: It is too late for me, son.

• Darth Vader is pulled in both directions once his son faces death. How does this parallel the process and struggle with teshuva?

#### Star Wars Episode VI: Return of the Jedi

In the midst of this uproar, Luke is trying to carry the enormous weight of his father's weakening body toward an Imperial shuttle. Finally, Luke collapses from the strain. The explosions grow louder as Vader draws him closer.

**VADER/ANAKIN** (a whisper) Luke, help me take this mask off.

**LUKE** But you'll die.

**VADER/ANAKIN** Nothing can stop that now. Just for once... let me look on you with my own eyes.

Slowly, hesitantly, Luke removes the mask from his father's face. There beneath the scars is an elderly man. His eyes do not focus. But the dying man smiles at the sight before him.

VADER/ANAKIN (very weak) Now...go, my son. Leave me.

**LUKE** No. You're coming with me. I can't leave you here. I've got to save you.

**VADER/ANAKIN** You already have, Luke. You were right about me. Tell your sister...you were right.

**LUKE** Father...I won't leave you.

Darth Vader, Anakin Skywalker...Luke's father, dies.

• Darth Vader killed many during his life. Does dying to save his son serve as repentance? Does killing Palpatine serve as repentance?

- What is required for teshuva? Action?
- What is Darth Vader's motivation for killing Palpatine? Is he motivated by saving his son's life, or by leaving the dark side and returning to the Jedi?
  - What is required for teshuva? thought/mindset?

### Devarim 30:11,14 (Nitzavim)

דברים לי

11) Surely, **this commandment** which I command upon you today is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach.

14) No, the thing is very close to you, **in your mouth and in your heart, to do it.** 

י״א) ְכִּי **הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת** אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכְי מְצַוּךָ הַיִּוֹם לְא־נִפְלֵאת הָוֹא מִמְּךָ וְלָא רְחֹקָה הְוֹא: י״ד) כְּי־קָרָוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מְאֶד **בְּפִיךָ** וּבִלְבַבָּרָ לעשׂתַוֹ: (ס)

#### Ramban on Devarim 30:11

רמב''ן על דברים ל׳:י״א

...But "this commandment" refers to repentance. Because [the verses] "you will return in your hearts" (Devarim 30:1) and "you will return to the Lord your God" (ibid 30:2) [prove that] the commandment (to return) that He commanded us to do [is a commandment] ... And this is the meaning of "in your mouth and in your heart to do it": That they should confess their sins and the sins of their ancestors with their mouths and return in their hearts to God...

...אבל **המצוה הזאת על התשובה**הנזכרת כי "והשבות אל לבבך"
(בפסוק א) "ושבת עד ה' אלהיך"
(בפסוק ב) מצוה שיצוה אותנו
לעשות כן ... וזה טעם **בפיך ובלבבך**לעשותו שיתודו את עונם ואת עון
אבותם בפיהם וישובו בלבם אל ה'...

• Ramban says that teshuva is a mitzvah, in contrast with Rambam, who says it is not a mitzvah. (Teshuva is one of Taryag Mitzvot L'Ramban, but not L'Rambam. Mitzvah 73 he lists only "confession" as a mitzvah). See Rambam's Hilchot Teshuva 1:1.

#### Kli Yakar on Devarim 30:11

כלי יקר על דברים ל׳:י״א

That in every mitzvah there are two examinations, (1) one is the doing itself to do the actual mitzvah, the other (2) is the intention of the mitzvah, to understand and enlighten in the secrets of the Torah

שיש בכל מצוה שני בחינות האחת היא העשיה עצמה לעשות המצוה בפועל, השניה הוא כוונת המצוה להבין ולהשכיל בסודות התורה אשר

- Ideally one should do both, but kli yakar later says doing is enough, since it puts you in the mindset.
- According to Kli Yakar & Ramban, is Darth Vader fulfilled in his teshuva?
- (*Shabbat* 153a) that Rabbi Eliezer taught his disciples, "Repent one day before your death." The disciples politely questioned whether one can know the day of one's death, so Rabbi Eliezer answered, "All the more reason, therefore, to repent today, lest one die tomorrow."

# 2. Iyov

Iyov 1:8-12 איוב א*י*:ח׳-י״ב

(8) The LORD said to the Satan, "Have you noticed My servant Job? There is no one like him on earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and shuns evil!" (9) The Satan answered the LORD, "What reason does Job have to fear God? (10) Isn't it You who have fenced him round, him and his household and all that he has. You have blessed his efforts so that his possessions spread out in the land. (11) But lay Your hand upon all that he has and he will surely blaspheme You to Your face." (12) The LORD replied to the Satan, "See, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on him." The Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

(ח) וַיָּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־הַשָּׂטָׁן הֲשַׂמְּתָּ לִבְּךָ עַל־עַבְדַּי אִיּוֹב כֵּי אֵין כָּמֹהוּ בָּאָרֶץ אַישׁ תָּם וְיָשָׁר יְרָא אֱלֹהָים וְסָר מֵרְע: (ט) וַיַּעַן הַשָּׁטָן אֶת־יְהוֻה וַיֹּאמֶר הְחִנָּם יָרָא אִיּוֹב אֱלֹהְים: (י) הְלְא־את [אַתָּה] שַׂכְתָּ בַעֲדְוֹ וּבְעַד־בֵּיתוֹ וּבְעְד כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לִוֹ מִסָּבִיב מֵעֲשֻׂה יָדִיוֹ בּרַכְתָּ וּמְקְנָהוּ פָּרַץ בָּאֶרֶץ: (יא) וְאוּלָם שְׁלְח־נָּא יְדְרָ וְגָע בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לִוֹ אְם־לִא עַל־פָּנֶיךָ יְבָרְכֶרָּ: (יב) וַיִּאמֶר יְהֹוָה אֶל־הַשָּׂטִ וְ הִנְּה כָל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיָדֶרְ רָק אֵלָיו אַל־תִּשְׁלָח יִדֶּךָ וַיִּצֵאׂ הַשְּׂטָן מֵעָם פָּנָי יְהוָה:

- What is Iyov's tragic flaw?
- How does he repent? Is it sincere?

Iyov 11:6 איוב י״א׳:ו׳

(Tzofar says to Iyov) He would tell you the secrets of wisdom, For there are many sides to sagacity; And know that God has 

overlooked some of your sins for you.	מֵעֲוֹנֶך:
	T   T

# Ibn Ezra on Iyov 11:6

אבן עזרא על איוב י״א׳:ו׳

Kiflayim: that which man could not know about

**כפלים** - שלא ידעו בני אדם.

- Iyov (and man in general) can sin and deserve punishment even though he doesn't and couldn't know what he did wrong.
- In your opinion, is this fair?

#### Rashi on Iyov 11:6

רש"י על איוב י״א׳:ו׳

Like (Dvarim 24: 10) "When you make any loan to a friend, you must not enter his house to seize his pledge." (that is) he has a lot more debt to you in the matters of your poverty:

כי ישה. כמו (דברים כ״ד:י׳) כי תשה ברעך (כלומר) הרבה יש לו עוד חוב עליך בדברי עוניך:

• Iyov did something wrong because God's will is so demanding, no one could possibly do enough. There will always be sins of which you are not aware.

## Rabbi Moshe Eiseman on Gra on Iyov 1:8 Intro, Iyov, Artscroll Tanach Series

But perhaps, suffering has a different function. Perhaps it is meant to stimulate a search. Perhaps, when Tzofar says that we are called to suffer for sins of which we cannot know, he means only that we cannot know of them as long as we live superficial lives. Perhaps, goaded by pain, we can become aware of new vistas, deeper, more intimate visions of ourselves, our responsibilities and abilities...Iyov, the old Iyov, was indeed blameless. So he felt about himself, and so did God testify. Had he asked himself about his silence as he sat in on Pharaoh's deliberations he would have experienced no compunction, would have found a hundred different reasons why just this reaction was, under the circumstances, correct. He feels no guilt and -- at this stage of his development -- Satan does not impute any. But, in times when an uncompromising Attribute of Justice holds sway, more is demanded.

- Does Iyov not feel enough guilt? How much guilt should we feel while doing repentance; is it necessary?
- Guilt is a component in teshuva; Iyov develops his guilt to Hashem in the final Perek.
- "Shame is I am bad. Guilt is I did something bad." Helen Block Lewis
- God in last perek says that, he vocalizes that Iyov is to praise and his friends are to condemn (not including elihu for some reason).

# 3. Yonah

Jonah 1:1-3 יונה א׳:א׳-ג׳

(1) The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: (2) Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim judgment upon it; for their wickedness has come before Me. (3) Jonah, however, started out to flee to Tarshish from the LORD's service. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to sail with the others to Tarshish, away from the service of the LORD.

(א) וְיְהִי דְּבַר־יְהֹנָה אֶל־יוֹנָה בֶּן־אֲמִתָּי לֵאמְר: (ב) קוּם לֶּךְ אֶל־נְינְוֵה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ כְּי־עָלְתָה רָעָתֶם לְפָנָי: (ג) וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה לִבְרַחַ תַּרְשִּׁישָׁה מִלְפְנֵי יְהוֶה וַיִּרֶד יְפׁו וַיִּמְצְא אָנִיָּה ו בָּאָה תַרְשִׁ־יִשׁ וַיִּתֵּן שְׂכָרָהּ וַיְּרֶד בָּהּ לָבָוֹא עִמָּהֶם תַּרָשִׁישָׁה מִלְפְנֵי יְהוָה:

What's Yonah's Tragic Flaw?

יונה א':ד'-ו' Jonah 1:4-6

(4) But the LORD cast a mighty wind upon the sea, and such a great tempest came upon the sea that the ship was in danger of breaking up. (5) In their fright, the sailors cried out, each to his own god; and they flung the ship's cargo overboard to make it lighter for them. Jonah, meanwhile, had gone down into the hold of the vessel where he lay down and fell asleep. (6) The captain went over to him and cried out, "How can you be sleeping so soundly! Up, call upon your god! Perhaps the god will be kind to us and we will not perish."

(ד) וְיהוָ־ה הֵטֶיל רְוּחַ־גְּדוֹלָה ׁ אֶל־הַּיָּם וַיְהְי סְעַר־גָּדִוֹל בַּיָּם וְהַאֱנִּיָּה חִשְּׁבָּה לְהִשָּׁבְר: (ה) וַיְיִרְאוּ הַמֵּלָּחִ־ים וְיִּזְעֲקוּ אַישׁ אֶל־אֱלֹהָיוֹ וַיִּטְלוּ אֶת־הַכֵּלִים אֲשֶׁר בְּאֲנִיֻּה אֶל־הַיָּם לְהָקֻל מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וְיוֹנָ ה יָרַד אֶל־יַרְכְּתֵי הַסְּפִּינָה וַיִּשְׁכָּב וַיִּרְדְם: (ו) וַיִּקְרָב אֵלָיוֹ רָב הַחֹבֵּל וַיִּאמֶר לְוֹ מַה־לְּךָ נִרְדָּם קוּם קְרָא אֶל־אֱלֹהֶיךָ אוּלֵי יִתְעַשַּת הָאֱלֹהֵים לָנוּ וְלֹא נֹאבֵד: • What is Yonah's new Tragic Flaw?

יונה ג׳:ג׳-ה׳ Jonah 3:3-5

(3) Jonah went at once to Nineveh in accordance with the LORD's command. Nineveh was an enormously large city a three days' walk across. (4) Jonah started out and made his way into the city the distance of one day's walk, and proclaimed: "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (5) The people of Nineveh believed God. They proclaimed a fast, and great and small alike put on sackcloth.

(ג) וַיַּקָם יוֹנָ־ה וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶל־רְנְינְוֶה כִּדְבַּר יְהוֶה וְנְינְוֵ־ה הָיְתֶה עִיר־גְּדוֹלָה לְאלֹהִים מַהֲלֶךְ שְׁלְשֶׁת יָמְים: (ד) וַיָּחֶל יוֹנָה לָבַוֹא בָעִיר מַהֲלֶךְ יִוֹם אֶחֶד וַיִּקְרָא וַיֹּאמֵר עוֹד אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וְנְינְוֵה נֵהְפָּכֶת: (ה) וְיַּאֲמֵינוּ אַנְשֵׁי נְינְוֵה בְּאלֹהְים וַיִּקְרְאוּ־צוֹם וַיִּלְבְּשַׁוּ שַׂקִּים מִגְּדוֹלָם וְעַד־קטַנָּם:

יונה ג':י'-ד':ד'

(10) God saw what they did, how they were turning back from their evil ways. And God renounced the punishment He had planned to bring upon them, and did not carry it out. (1) This displeased Jonah greatly, and he was grieved. (2) He prayed to the LORD, saying, "O LORD! Isn't this just what I said when I was still in my own country? That is why I fled beforehand to Tarshish. For I know that You are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in kindness, renouncing punishment. (3) Please, LORD, take my life, for I would rather die than live." (4) The LORD replied, "Are you that deeply grieved?"

(י) וַיַּרְא הָאֱלֹהִים ֹ אֶת־מַּעֲשֵׂיהֶּם פִּי־שֶׁבוּ מִדַּרְכָּם הָרָעָה וַיִּנָּחֶם הָאֱלֹהִים עַלֹּ-הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר לַעֲשׂוֹת־לָהֶם וְלָא עָשָׂה: (א) וַיָּרַע אֶל־יוֹנָה רָעָה גְדוֹלָה וַיִּאמֵיר אָנָה יְהוָה וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל אֶל־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֵיר אֻנָּה יְהוָה עַל־כָּן קִדָּמְתִּי לִבְרִי עַד־הֵיוֹתִי עַל־אַדְמָתִי עַל־כָּן קִדָּמְתִּי לִבְרָי עַד־הֵיוֹתִי עַל־אַדְמָתִי עַל־כָּן קִדָּמְתִּי לִבְרָי עַד־הֵיוֹתִי עַל־אַדְמָתִי עַל־כָּן קִדָּמְתִּי לִבְרָי עַד־הֵיוֹתִי עַל־הָרָעָה: (ג) אַפִּיִם וְרַבִּיחֶסֶד וְנָחָם עַל־הָרָעָה: (ג) עִוֹב מוֹתֶי מֵחַיָּי: (ס) (ד) וַיִּאמֶר יְהֹוָה הַבִּיטֵב חֶרָה לָּךְ:

• What's going on here? What is Yonah so upset about? What is wrong with God forgiving a nation that Yonah has so much trouble with?

Rashi on Jonah 4:1 "יונה ג':י'-ד':ד'

This displeased Jonah: he said, "now the idolaters will say that I am a false

וירע אל יונה. אמר עכשיו יאמרו

prophet." : העכו"ם שאני נבי' השקר

Does Yonah really care about his image or God's image?

#### Abarbanel on Jonah 2:9:1

# The truth of the matter is that Yonah regretted fleeing HaShem and promised in his heart to fulfill His command regarding Nineveh. But he was comforted in his realizing that the people of Nineveh were worshippers of nothingness and, so, even if they did Teshuva because his call, they would not be steadfast in their repentance— after a few days, they would leave their righteousness and return to their evil

# אברבנאל על יונה ב׳:ט׳

אמתת הענין הוא שיונה נתחרט ממה שברח מלפני השם וגמר בלבו לעשות מצוותו בענין ננוה אבל היה מתנחם באומרו שאנשי ננוה שהם משמרים הבלי שוא אף על פי שיעשו תשובה מפני קריאתו לא יתמידו בתשובתם כי לימים מועטים חסדם יעזובו וישובו לרשעתם

• How does the Abarbanel see Yonah's decision making? Does it conflict with what you first assumed? According to the Abarbanel, is yonah justified in running away/would Yonah even need to make teshuva?

# יונה ד':ה'-י"א Jonah 4:5-11

(5) Now Jonah had left the city and found a place east of the city. He made a booth there and sat under it in the shade, until he should see what happened to the city. (6) The LORD God provided a ricinus plant, which grew up over Jonah, to provide shade for his head and save him from discomfort. Jonah was very happy about the plant. (7) But the next day at dawn God provided a worm, which attacked the plant so that it withered. (8) And when the sun rose, God provided a sultry east wind; the sun beat down on Jonah's head, and he became faint. He begged for death, saying, "I would rather die than live." (9) Then God said to Jonah, "Are you so deeply grieved about the plant?" "Yes," he replied, "so deeply that I want to die." (10) Then the LORD said: "You cared about the plant, which you did not work

ה) וַיֵּצָא יוֹנַה מָן־הַעִּיר וַיֵּשָׁב מִקְדֵם (ה) ָּלָעֶיר וַיַעש לוֹ שַּׁם סְכָּ ֹה וַיַשֵּׁב תַּחתיה בּצַל עד אשָר יראה מה־יהוֶה בּעיר: וֹ) ויִמָן יָהוה־אַלהים קיקיון ויעל ׁן) מעל ליוֹנ ֹה להיוֹת צל על־ראשׁוֹ להצִיל לִוֹ מרעתוֹ וישׁמַח יוֹנה על־הקיקיון שמחה גדולה: (ז) ויִמַן האלהים תולעת בעלות השחר לַמַחַרָת וַתַּך אֶת־הַקּיקיוֹן וַיִּיבַש: (ח) ויָהִי וֹ כַּזַרָח השׁ משׁ ויִמֹן אלהים רַוּח קדים חרישית ותך השמש על־ראש יוֹנָה ויתעלף וישאל את־נפשוֹ למוּת וויאמר טוב מוֹתִי מחיַי: (ט) ויַאמר אלהִים אַל־יוֹנָה הַהֵיטֵב חָרָה־לְךָ על־הקיקיון וואמר היטב חרה־לַי ֹעד־מוֹת: (י) ויאמר יהוה אתה חסת

for and which you did not grow, which appeared overnight and perished overnight. (11) And should not I care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not yet know their right hand from their left, and many beasts as well!"

עַל־הַקִּילֶּיוֹן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָמֵלְתָּ בְּוֹ וְלַּא גִדַּלְתִּוֹ שֶׁבְּן־לִיְלָה הָיֶה וּבִן־לַיְלָה אָבְד: (יא) וְאֲנִי לַא אָחוּס עַל־נִינְוֻה הָעֲיר הַגְּדוֹלָה אֲשֶׁר יֶשׁ־בָּה הַרְבֵּה מְשְׁתֵּים־עֶשְׂרֵה רִבּוֹ אָדָ־ם אֲשֶׁר לְא־יָדַע בֵּין־יִמִינַוֹ לִשְׂמֹאלוֹ וּבְהֵמֶּה רַבָּה:

- After reading this, we get the full picture of Sefer Yonah. Yonah never responds, and this is the end of the book. He was cutoff? was his teshuva before not sincere enough? maybe it was...but he didn't learn from his mistake.
- We can now compile a more complete picture of Yonah's tragic character. Now why is Yonah a tragic hero?

# Rambam, Mishna Torah, Hilchot Teshuva 1:1

...But how ought we to confess?—We ought to say thus: "I beseech Thee, O God! I have sinned; I have done perversely; I have committed wickedness before Thee, and I have done so and so; and behold! I repent and am ashamed of my doings, and I will never relapse into these sins again."...

# משנה תורה, הלכות תשובה א׳

...כֵּיצַד מִתְוַדִּין. אוֹמֵר אָנָּא הַשֵּׁם חָטָאתִי עָוִיתִי פָּשַּעְתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ וְעָשִּׂיתִי כָּךְ וְכָךְ וַהְרֵי נִחַמְתִּי וּבֹשְׁתִּי בְּמֵעֲשַׂי וּלְעוֹלָם **אֵינִי חוֹזֵר לְדָבָר זָה**...

• Say they won't do it again in the same situation

# Rambam, Mishna Torah, Hilchot Teshuva 2:2

Now what is that repentance to consist in?—In this, that the sinner forsake his sin, and remove it from his thoughts; moreover that he **resolve in his heart**, **never to do it again**...

# משנה תורה, הלכות תשובה ב׳

וּמַה הִיא הַתְּשׁוּבָה. הוּא שֶׁיַעֲזֹב הַחוֹטֵא חֶטְאוֹ וִיסִירוֹ מִמַּחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ וְיִגְמֹר בִּלְבּוֹ **שַׁלֹּא יַעשֵּׂהוּ עוֹד**...

• Believe that you won't do it again in the same situation/actually not doing it again.

# Takeaways:

What we learn from each tragic hero about repentance

- Yonah Our tragic flaws can change over time; we don't get unlimited chances to right our wrongs. We're lucky to get another shot
- **Iyov** even if we think we're innocent--we're not and we can repent. Guilt is an important component in teshuva.
- Darth Vader repentance must be for the right reason. Requires action and thought.

#### Extra Sources:

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