SELIHOT: The 13 attributes of God’s compassion

The core of the Selichot prayer is the Biblical text ‘Amonay, Amonay, E-l Rachum veChanun….”. These words are known as the 13 attributes of God’s compassion.

” 1. haShem, 2. haShem, our 3. God, you are 4. compassionate and 5. gracious, 6. slow to anger, and 7.abounding in kindness and 8.truth you 9.keep kindness for thousands [of generations], you 10.forgive iniquity, 11. transgression and 12. sin, 13. cleansing …”.

Rabbi Yochanan explained that God Almighty showed Moshe Rabbenu that by saying these 13 principles they will be forgiven. Other rabbis added that in order to be forgiven God demands that we actually act according to these 13 principles, not just recite them!

Let me illustrate:

1: haShem, 2. haShem: the repetition of the name of God requires an explanation. Our rabbis taught from this repetition we learn a wonderful lesson about God complete forgiveness: when we truly repent for our misdeeds, God forgive us completely, and will never remind us again of that sin. He will behave with us after we repent (SECOND ‘haShem’), exactly as He behaved with us before we sinned (FIRST ‘haShem’). There is no resentment of leftovers but a complete forgiveness.

If we want to be forgiven by God, we need to act toward others as we want God to act toward us. When we forgive, we should delete and erased all bad feelings toward the repenting offender and act toward him as we did before the offense.

Shabbat Shalom!

For a brief analysis of the 13 attributes see:http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thirteen_Attributes_of_MercyATTENTION: The Great Neck Eruv will NOT be up this Shabbat, Aug. 13-14.