

## חובות הלבבות • שער התשובה • פרק רביעי

Sentence by Sentence • Punctuated Hebrew with Translation and Notes • Navy &amp; Gold Edition

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In this chapter, Rabbeinu Bachya lays out the four fundamental components that comprise true teshuvah. He explains that each of these elements is crucial for a complete repentance, allowing us to truly turn back to Hashem.

For each component, Rabbeinu Bachya provides pesukim from Tanach that support its importance, and also offers powerful mashalim from human relationships to help us grasp the depth and truth of these principles. This helps us understand how these spiritual dynamics play out in our own lives.

*All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.*

אבל גִּדְרֵי הַתְּשׁוּבָה הֵם אַרְבָּעָה.

However, the essential components of teshuvah are four.

הָרִאשׁוֹן הַחֲרָטָה עַל מָה שֶׁקֵּדַם לוֹ מִן הָעוֹנוֹת.

The first is regret for the sins he committed in the past.

וְהַשֵּׁנִי שִׁיעֲזָבָם וַיִּסּוּר מֵהֶם.

The second is that he should abandon them and turn away from them.

וְהַשְׁלִישִׁי שִׁיתַּוְדָּה בָּהֶם וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמַּחִילָה עֲלֵיהֶם.

The third is that he should confess them and seek forgiveness for them.

וְהָרְבִיעִי שֶׁיִּקְבַּל עַל נַפְשׁוֹ שֶׁלֹּא יָשׁוּב לַעֲשׂוֹתָם בְּלִבּוֹ וּבְמַצְפוּנוֹ.

And the fourth is that he should accept upon himself, with his heart and conscience, not to repeat them.

וְהַחֲרָטָה אוֹת עַל גְּנוּת מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּעֵינָיו כְּמִ"ש (שם) מִי יוֹדֵעַ יָשׁוּב וְנָחָם וְהַשְׁאִיר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה, וְאָמַר בְּמִי שֶׁהִתְמִיד עַל חֲטָאֵיו (ירמיה ח) אֵין אִישׁ נָחַם עַל רָעָתוֹ וְאֶנְחֲנוּ רֹאִים כָּזֶה בֵּין בְּנֵי אָדָם כְּשֶׁמֵּרָאָה הַחוּטָא לַחֲבֵרוֹ הַחֲרָטָה עַל מָה שֶׁחָטָא לוֹ הוּא הַסִּבָּה הַחֲזָקָה לְמַחֵל לוֹ.

Regret is a sign that his deed is disgraceful in his eyes, as it is written (Yoel 2:14), "Who knows if He will return and regret and leave a blessing behind Him"; and it says about one who persists in his sins (Yirmiyahu 8:6), "No man repented himself of his wickedness." We see this among people: when a person who wronged his friend shows regret for what he did, it is the strongest reason for his friend to forgive him.

וְהִזְיָכָה אוֹת עַל בְּרוּר אֱמוּנָתוֹ בְּגִמּוּל וּבְעֲנָשׁ כַּמִּשָּׁשׁ (ישעיהו נ"ה:ז) יַעֲזֹב רָשָׁע דְּרָכּוֹ וְגו', וְאָמַר בְּמִי שֶׁהִתְמַיד עַל חַטָּאֵיו (שם מ) בְּעֶזְרִי בְּצִעּוֹ קִצְפָּתִי וְאִכָּהוּ וְגו'.

Abandonment of sin is a sign of his clear emunah in reward and punishment, as it is written (Yeshayahu 55:7), "Let the wicked abandon his way, etc."; and it says about one who persists in his sins (Yeshayahu 57:17), "For the iniquity of his covetousness was I angry, and I smote him, etc."

וְכִמּוֹ זֶה נִרְאָה בֵּין בְּנֵי אָדָם כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר יִמְנַע הַמַּרְעֵ לַחֲבֵרוֹ מִהֲרַע אֵלָיו אַחֵר הַחֲרָטָה אִזְּזָה יִהְיֶה רָאוּי לְמַחֵל לוֹ וּלְעֵבֶר עַל פִּשְׁעוֹ.

Similarly, we see among people that when one who wronged his friend refrains from harming him further after expressing regret, then it is proper to forgive him and overlook his transgression.

וּבִקְשַׁת הַמַּחִילָה אוֹת עַל כְּנִיעָתוֹ וְשִׁפּוּלוֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְהַתְּנֻדָּתוֹ בְּעֹנּוֹ סִבַּת הַמַּחִילָה לוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (משלי כח) וּמוֹדָה וְעֹזֵב יִרְחָם וְאָמַר בְּהִפּוֹף זֶה (ירמיה ב) הַנְּנִי נִשְׁפָּט אוֹתָךְ עַל אֲמָרְךָ לֹא חַטָּאתִי וְאָמַר (משלי כח) מִכֶּסֶה פִּשְׁעָיו לֹא יִצְלִיחַ. וְכִזָּה נִרְאָה בֵּין בְּנֵי אָדָם כִּי הַחוּטָא לַחֲבֵרוֹ כְּשִׁיכָנַע לוֹ וַיּוֹדֶה שֶׁחַטָּא לוֹ וְהֲרַע אֵלָיו וּבִקֵּשׁ מִמֶּנּוּ הַמַּחִילָה וְהַכִּיר חֲבֵרוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ שֶׁהוּא מִתְחַרֵּט עַל מָה שֶׁקָּדַם לוֹ מִן הַחַטָּא לֹא יִתְעַכֵּב מִלְּמַחֵל לוֹ וּמִעֵבֶר עַל פִּשְׁעוֹ וְיִסִּיר מָה שֶׁיֵּשׁ לוֹ בְּלִבּוֹ מִן הַנְּטִירָה.

Seeking forgiveness is a sign of his submission and humility before Hashem, and his confession of his sin is a reason for Him to forgive him, as it is said (Mishlei 28:13), "He who confesses and renounces them will obtain mercy." And regarding the opposite of this, it says (Yirmiyahu 2:35), "Behold, I will contend with you, because you say, 'I have not sinned'"; and it says (Mishlei 28:13), "He that conceals his transgressions will not succeed." Similarly, we see among people that when one who wronged his friend humbles himself before him, admits that he sinned against him and wronged him, and asks for his forgiveness, and his friend recognizes that he truly regrets the wrong he committed, his friend will not hesitate to forgive him and overlook his transgression, and the grudge in his heart against him will be removed.

אֲבָל הַקִּבְלָה שְׁלֵא יִשְׁנָה אוֹת עַל יְדִיעָתוֹ בְּרַע מַעֲשָׂהוּ וּגְדֹל חַטָּאוֹ כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (איוב לד) אִם עָוֹל פָּעַלְתִּי לֹא אֶסִּיף וְנֶאֱמַר (הושע יד) אֲשׁוּר לֹא יוֹשִׁיעֵנּוּ וְגו' וְנֶאֱמַר בְּהִפּוֹכוֹ (ירמיה יג) הִיִּהְפֹּךְ כּוֹשֵׁי עוֹרוֹ וְנֶאֱמַר חֲבִרְבָּרְתִּיו וְגו'.

However, the resolution not to repeat the sin is a sign of his understanding of the wickedness of his deed and the gravity of his sin, as it is said (Iyov 34:32), "If I have committed iniquity, I will do no more"; and it is said (Hoshea 14:4), "Assyria shall not save us, etc."; and regarding the opposite, it is said (Yirmiyahu 13:23), "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? etc."

וְכִמּוֹ זֶה נִרְאָה בֵּין בְּנֵי אָדָם כְּשִׁיִּקְבֵּל הַחוּטָא לַחֲבֵרוֹ עַל עֲצָמוֹ שְׁלֵא יִשְׁנָה לְהֲרַע לוֹ וְיִרְאָה הַחֲרָטָה וְהִזְיָכָה וַיִּתְּנֶה יִהְיֶה זֶה גִּמּוּל סְבוֹת הַמַּחִילָה לוֹ וְהִסֵּר הָאֲשָׁמָה מִמֶּנּוּ וּדְחוּת הָעֲנָשׁ מֵעָלָיו.

And similarly, we see among people that when one who wronged his friend accepts upon himself not to harm him again, and demonstrates regret and abandonment of the sin, and confesses it, this will complete the reasons for his forgiveness, the removal of his guilt, and the warding off of punishment from him.

וְכִשְׁיִתְקַבְּצוּ בְּשֵׁב אֱלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ גְּדָרִים בְּתִנְאִיָּהֶם אֲשֶׁר אָנוּ עֹתִידִים לְבָאֲרָם יְכַפֵּר לוֹ הַבּוֹרָא עֲוֹנוֹ וַיַּעֲבִיר  
עַל פְּשָׁעוֹ, וְאִם יִהְיֶה הָעֶזְרָן מִמָּה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בּוֹ (שְׁמוֹת כ) לֹא יִנָּקֶה כְּשִׁבּוּעַת שְׁוֹא וְאִשָּׁת אִישׁ מִקַּל הַבּוֹרָא  
עֲנִשׁוֹ בַּעֲוֹה"ז וּמִטֵּיב לוֹ בַּעֲוֹה"ב וַיִּכְנַס בְּכַת הַצְדִּיקִים כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (יִשְׁעִיָּה נט) וְכֹא לְצִיּוֹן גּוֹאֵל וּלְשִׁבִּי  
פֶּשַׁע בִּי־עֲקֹב וְגו' וְאָמַר (יִרְמְיָה ד) אִם תָּשׁוּב יִשְׂרָאֵל נָאִם ה' אֵלֵי תָשׁוּב וְאָמַר (שם טו) אִם תָּשׁוּב וְאֲשִׁיבָךְ  
לְפָנַי תַּעֲמֹד:

And when these four components, with their conditions which we are destined to explain, are gathered in the ba'al teshuvah, the Creator will atone for his sin and overlook his transgression. And if the sin is of the type about which it is said (Shemos 20:7), "He will not hold him guiltless," such as a false oath or adultery, the Creator will lighten his punishment in this world and be good to him in Olam Haba, and he will enter the group of tzaddikim, as it is said (Yeshayahu 59:20), "And a redeemer shall come to Tzion, and to those who repent of transgression in Yaakov, etc."; and it says (Yirmiyahu 4:1), "If you return, O Yisrael, says Hashem, to Me you shall return"; and it says (Yirmiyahu 15:19), "If you return, then will I bring you again, and you shall stand before Me."

**NOTE** A 'ba'al teshuvah' is someone who has done teshuvah, a penitent. 'Olam Haba' refers to the World to Come, the spiritual existence after this life. 'Tzaddikim' are righteous individuals.

#### WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

The chapter details the four essential components of teshuvah: regret for past sins, abandoning them, confessing them and seeking forgiveness, and resolving not to repeat them. For each component, Rabbeinu Bachya provides scriptural support and illustrates its significance through analogies to human interactions, showing how these actions lead to forgiveness. He concludes by explaining that when these four components are fulfilled, Hashem forgives the sinner, even for severe transgressions, reducing punishment in this world and granting grace in Olam Haba, thereby including the penitent among the tzadikim.

My dear friend, the Chovos HaLevavos lays out for us the four clear steps of teshuvah. It's not just a feeling, it's a process, a ladder we climb back to Hashem. And what's so powerful is how he shows us that these aren't just abstract spiritual ideas; they are the very same steps we take when we want to fix a relationship with another person. Just as a friend needs to see our regret, our commitment to change, our apology, and our promise for the future, so too does Hashem, in His infinite kindness, respond to these very human, very real efforts.

But let's focus on the fourth step, the \*kabbalah al yadi\* – the firm resolve not to repeat the sin. This isn't just a wish; it's a deep, internal commitment. It means truly understanding the damage the sin caused, not just to others or to our relationship with Hashem, but to \*ourselves\*. It's recognizing that this action is not who we want to be, not who our neshama truly is. It's a decision to break free from that pattern, to say, "No more. I am better than this, and with Hashem's help, I will not go back."

This resolve is what truly seals the teshuvah. It shows Hashem that we're not just sorry for getting caught or for the consequences, but that we've grown, we've learned, and we're ready to move forward as a different person. It's the ultimate expression of our desire to be close to Him, to live a life that brings Him nachas.

So, for today, let's take a moment to reflect on one area where we want to improve. After expressing regret, abandoning the action, and confessing, let's make a firm, heartfelt \*kabbalah\* – a resolution – that we will not return to that particular misstep. Let's truly mean it, knowing that this commitment is a powerful step towards complete teshuvah and a closer relationship with Hashem.